



**Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

**Sixth periodic report submitted by Lebanon under  
article 18 of the Convention, due in 2019<sup>\*,\*\*</sup>**

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

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



**Sixth periodic report on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

**Lebanon**

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## **Preface**

1. Lebanon ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 21 April 1997. In so doing, the Lebanese State gave substance to its commitment to ending discrimination against women and guaranteeing equality between women and men, although it expressed reservations to article 9 (2); article 16 (1) (c) (d) (f) and (g); and article 29 (2).

2. The present report was prepared by the National Commission for Lebanese Women, an official body established by the Office of the Prime Minister under Act No. 720 (1998). In preparing the report, the Commission employed a broad collaborative methodology based on input from detailed surveys distributed to State ministries, public institutions, the relevant parliamentary committees, civil society organizations and active political parties. The Commission collected information about what was being done to implement the Convention and the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The data collection was followed up by four consultative meetings to discuss the results and a session to adopt the final text. The current report documents the outcomes of that process and surveys what has been done to implement the Convention and the Committee's recommendations from 2015 to the present.

3. Since 2015, Lebanese Government ministerial statements have expressed a firm conviction about the importance of the role of women and their contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and advancement for the country at all levels. Those statements have all declared – albeit in different formulations – a commitment to working to eliminate discrimination against women. That commitment is based on constitutional provisions, international agreements ratified by Lebanon (most notably the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women), and also the recommendations and concluding observations that Lebanon has agreed to and is committed to implementing. That commitment was reflected in the enactment of a number of laws, and the development of numerous national strategies, plans and programmes aimed at enshrining and promoting women's rights, human rights and gender equality, both *de jure* and *de facto*.

4. The Lebanese State recognizes that although much has been achieved over the past four years, the road to full equality is long and fraught with challenges and obstacles. However, there is ample good-faith commitment to work hard to reach that goal, and stakeholders are well on their way to removing obstacles and challenges at all levels.

## **Executive summary**

5. The current report is the sixth periodic report submitted by Lebanon to the Committee under article 18 of the Convention. It opens with an introduction and an executive summary, followed by a brief survey of the social, political and economic situation and the legislative framework. The remainder of the report is divided into two main parts. The first part covers what the State has done to implement the Committee's recommendations contained in its concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports. The second part covers what has been done to implement the articles of the Convention.

6. The National Commission for Lebanese Women circulated the Committee's concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports and the recommendations contained therein to all ministries, public institutions and civil society organizations, combined with a public awareness campaign about the Convention and the Committee's recommendations. The Commission works to raise awareness of the Convention by carrying out various campaigns and activities,

especially on international and national women's occasions. It organized an introductory workshop on "International mechanisms for eliminating all forms of discrimination against women: provisions and judicial application". The workshop focused on how international conventions are used in judicial decisions. It was attended by more than 30 judges, including judges from the Muslim and Christian religious courts. The results of the survey sent to ministries, public institutions and civil society organizations in preparation for this report showed that the overwhelming majority had taken guidance from the Committee's recommendations, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals.

7. The past three years have seen evidence of serious political will to improve the conditions of women and bring about equality with men under the law and in actual practice. There has also been serious and diligent work to overcome challenges and obstacles that have long hindered the achievement of those goals. That political will is evident in all three branches of the Government.

### **The executive branch**

8. The ministerial statements of both Governments formed since the end of the presidential crisis in autumn of 2016 contained explicit formulations of the Government's commitment to promoting women's participation in public life and decision-making positions, and to purging laws of any discrimination against women. That commitment is based on provisions of the Constitution and of international agreements signed by Lebanon, most notably the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

9. In implementation of that commitment, women's representation increased in the second Government of the current Presidency (31 January 2019). Recent appointments also increased women's representation in political, administrative and judicial decision-making centres, and in the makeup of Lebanese delegations to various conferences. A number of draft laws aimed at purging certain laws of discrimination against women have been approved and submitted to Parliament. The Cabinet also launched the National Plan for Women's Economic Empowerment and has made sure to mainstream gender into a number of its other national strategies and plans, such as the National Plan to Combat Violent Extremism and the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan, as well as its voluntary review of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda presented at the United Nations in July 2018. In another notable sign the Government's commitment, the Office of the Prime Minister charged the National Commission for Women's Affairs with drawing up a national plan for implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2017). The Commission drafted a plan using a broad participatory approach that included a projected implementation budget and submitted it to the Cabinet, which approved it on 12 September 2019.

10. The Lebanese State continues to provide various types of services to displaced Syrians, even though the burdens exceed the State's resources at all levels. It also continues to adhere to the principle of non-refoulement and to ensure that displaced persons from Syria have access to legal standing, as dictated by Lebanese laws and legislation.

11. The Government, in collaboration with the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, has mobilized the support of the international community to share burdens and provide a greater share of services to displaced persons and host communities. However, the level of international and Arab cooperation and support is still falling short of needs. Moreover, a large proportion of the support being provided to Lebanon is in the form of loans, albeit preferential, which increases the burdens of public debt and creates a bigger problem for Lebanon than the one it is trying to solve.

12. Most ministries, as well as the security forces, are committed to mainstreaming gender into the national strategies and plans they are drafting or updating (such as the Ministry of Environment and Agriculture) and into many of the programmes and projects they are implementing. A number of ministries and the National Commission for Lebanese Women have launched national strategies and plans and implemented programmes and projects exclusively for women without any distinction between Lebanese women on the one hand and displaced women and refugees on the other. Some of them target rural women and other marginalized groups of women. The National Commission, in collaboration with the relevant ministries and civil society, has launched coalitions and awareness campaigns for women's rights in various fields and at all levels. They have drafted laws to enshrine the rights of women and girls and followed up on those drafts they make their way through parliamentary committees. All of these strategies, plans, projects and activities serve the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. However, the effectiveness and sustainability of the implementation of these national strategies and plans remains contingent on the availability of resources, especially in the light of the austerity policy adopted by the Government to reduce the accumulating budget deficit.

13. In 2017, the Ministry of Justice began holding reform projects and workshops to enhance legal aid and attorney specialization. It embarked on three projects aimed at modernizing the judicial system, mechanizing court processes and procedures, providing technical support to strengthen the capacity of judicial institutions, and supporting the legal aid system to increase access to justice for marginalized groups. The Ministry of Justice cooperates with the Legal Aid Committee of the Bar Association to provide legal services to those in need. Women benefit more than men from legal aid services in divorce and alimony proceedings before the ecclesiastical and sharia courts, as well as in enforcement suits and other personal status cases. The Legal Aid Committee coordinates with the Ministry of Social Affairs to counsel women and other family members in domestic violence and personal status cases, and to register unregistered minors and adults.

14. In the area of combating human trafficking, the Ministry of Justice, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), has drawn up a draft law to eliminate loopholes from Act No. 164 (2011) concerning the criminalization of human trafficking. It was submitted to the Cabinet on 10 May 2018. In collaboration with other ministries, the relevant departments, official and civilian agencies, and IOM, the Ministry of Justice also contributed to a non-final draft of standard operating procedures to serve as a manual for all parties and persons involved in the fight against human trafficking crimes in Lebanon, particularly those involving women and children. The General Directorate of General Security has taken a series of measures to curb human trafficking operations (particularly those involving domestic workers and persons entering on artist visas) and punish the perpetrators. It has trained its staff in detecting such operations and provided guidelines for handling the victims. Since 2016, both the General Security and Internal Security directorates have scored significant successes in uncovering human trafficking operations and networks.

15. In 2014, the General Directorate of Internal Security Forces put in place a centralized information system linking sectors concerned with domestic violence in various Lebanese regions, and has adopted a standardized form to document reported cases of domestic violence, violence against women and girls, and sexual harassment. In addition to that information system, there are also the annual reports issued by the Ministry of Justice on all sentences handed down by the competent judicial authorities in matters involving human trafficking, the annual statistics prepared by the General

Directorate of General Security, and the data that will be provided by implementation of the national project to calculate the economic cost of violence against women and girls and its various types, forms and the frequency. All these constitute essential and significant steps towards compiling national statistics on these phenomena.

16. The Ministry of Social Affairs is circulating its experience conducting gender audits of a number of projects to other departments and is training decision makers to mainstream gender into their work. The National Commission for Lebanese Women is currently conducting activities aimed at identifying the extent to which the principle of gender mainstreaming is being applied in the policies, programmes and organizational hierarchies of institutions, municipalities, ministries, trade unions and parties. The Institute of Finance of the Ministry of Finance has conducted training courses on gender mainstreaming in budgets for public sector employees and other interested parties.

### **The legislative branch**

17. During the 2017-2019 period, the political will to eliminate discrimination against women has been very much in evidence in the dynamics that characterize the work of the parliamentary committees and in the high degree of cooperation and consultation with the national machinery for the advancement of women, the relevant ministries and civil society organizations. Some 35 proposals and draft laws have been considered that either concern women exclusively or have a bearing on the condition of women. Parliament passed four laws that eliminated discrimination against women in areas identified by the Committee's recommendations, and more than eight laws that have positive repercussions of the condition of women.

18. In 2017, Parliament passed a new electoral law that adopted the proportional system. Although it does not provide for a female quota, the law has played an effective role in bringing about an increase in the number of women candidates that was unprecedented since women gained political rights in 1953, as well in encouraging political parties to nominate women on their electoral lists.

19. In June 2019, as part of parliamentary oversight of the executive authority and follow-up of its implementation of laws passed by the Parliament, the Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister a list of laws that had not yet had implementing regulations issued. In early 2019, the parliamentary Human Rights Committee conducted a follow-up of implementation of Act No. 293 (2014) concerning the protection of women and other family members from domestic violence as part of its consideration various proposed amendments to the Act.

### **The judicial branch**

20. The judicial corps has already reached equality between males and females. A number of women judges occupy senior judicial posts. There have been two important developments in the judiciary that have implications for judicial protection of the rights of women and girls. The first has been a noticeable tendency on the part of a number of judges and lawyers to make reference to international instruments and international law, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in their rulings and arguments, and to stress the role of judges in protecting rights and freedoms by making sure that laws keep pace with the latest developments in human rights and women's rights. The second development has been the issuance of judicial decisions that have refrained from prosecuting victims of sexual exploitation and children exploited for begging and forced labour. That reflects a move from a penal approach to a protective approach towards victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking.

### **The political parties**

21. The 2017–2019 period saw progress in enhancing the role of women in parties. A number of parties active on the Lebanese scene appointed women to the highest leadership positions, such as secretary-general, vice-president, adviser to the party chairperson and coordinator of parliamentary bloc. A number of parties have adopted voluntary women’s quotas for appointments and/or elections to their central or regional councils. Some have developed strategies aimed at encouraging women to serve in capacities outside the prevailing stereotypes about the role of women in political parties.

### **Introduction: The Lebanese framework and basic challenges**

22. Lebanon is located on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean. It has an area of 10,452 km<sup>2</sup>. As of October 2018, it had an estimated population of 6 million, of whom 4,500,000 were Lebanese nationals. In addition to resident Lebanese nationals, there are 1,500,000 persons displaced from Syria, who include 28,000 displaced Palestinians, 35,000 Lebanese who have returned from Syria because of recent events, and 180,000 Palestinian refugees who were already on Lebanese soil.

### **The economic situation**

23. Lebanon is classified as a middle-income country. Although efforts are being made to strengthen the industrial and agricultural sectors, its economy remains heavily dependent on the services and tourism, making it vulnerable to surrounding events and political crises.

24. Since the turn of the century, Lebanon has suffered a significant deterioration in economic conditions. Growth rates have declined from an average of 8 per cent for the 2007–2010 period to between 1 and 2 per cent for the 2011–2017 period. According to national accounts estimates for 2017 published by the Central Administration of Statistics, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth declined from 0.6 per cent in 2017 to 0.2 per cent in 2018 and remains low, despite having climbed to 1.3 per cent in 2019. According to the Bank of Lebanon, since the beginning of 2019, economic growth has been 0 per cent.

25. Statistics show that the rate of inflation was 4.01 per cent in May 2019, which was 1.32 higher than the average for the 2008-2019 period (2.69 per cent). World Bank estimates indicate that unemployment has doubled in recent years, from 10 per cent in 2012 to 20 per cent in 2018. Statistics from the World Economic Forum for 2018 show that unemployment is 40 per cent among women and 60 per cent among young people.

26. The current Government has made a significant effort to launch reforms, reduce waste and corruption, and implement the decisions and plans of the Cedar Conference.

### **Constitutional framework**

27. Lebanon is a parliamentary democratic republic. Its system is based on the separation, balance and cooperation of powers. Although it uses gender-neutral language and contains no provisions explicitly prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex, the Constitution enshrines public freedoms and guarantees private enterprise, private property, equality of rights and duties among citizens, and civil and political rights without distinction or preference (preamble, paragraph C, and article 7).

28. The preamble to the Lebanese Constitution enshrines the State’s commitment to the Charter of the League of Arab States, the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to embodiment by the State of these principles with respect to all rights and in all areas without exception (paragraph B). The Code of Civil Procedure, article 2, provides that implementation of international

agreements takes precedence over national law where there is a conflict between the two. That guarantees that Lebanon will implement its international obligations with respect to human rights in general and women's rights in particular.

29. The past four years have seen a noticeable tendency on the part of a number of judges and lawyers to make reference to international instruments and international law, and to stress the role of judges in protecting rights and freedoms by making sure that laws keep pace with the latest developments in human rights and women's rights. That trend has been reflected in the rulings handed down in cases of domestic violence, such as ruling No. 85 (2015) handed down by a Jubb Jannin area urgent-matters judge; ruling No. 271 (2015) handed down by a single urgent-matters judge in Jubayl; a ruling handed down by an urgent-matters judge on 21 May 2015; and a ruling handed down by an urgent-matters criminal judge in Matn on 26 January 2017 in a case involving male and female homosexuals. In the latter case, it was declared impermissible to treat homosexual relations as contrary to nature under the Penal Code, article 534. The grounds were that a judge is not authorized to define what acts are contrary to nature, and that the application of article 534 should be refrained from because it conflicts with international agreements, the principles of human dignity and the right to mental health under the Code of Civil Procedure, article 2, as well as with the general principles of the law, and in particular the principle of freedom to use of one's body and the right to express one's sexual inclinations by engaging in sexual activity, which is considered a natural right to which the Penal Code, article 183 is applicable. On 12 July 2018, the Mount Lebanon Court of Criminal Appeals (12th Chamber) upheld that ruling by a majority of its members. In its decision, the Court stressed the need to interpret text to keep up with social development. It upheld the position of the trial judge, who had declared that a judge's job is to "protect rights and freedoms".

#### **The socio-political framework**

30. Because of the centrality of personal status and the position of women in the family and society to sectarian identity, any attempt at civil legislation in the area of personal status faces opposition from spiritual and sectarian leaders. That opposition is based on a narrow interpretation of article 9 of the Constitution, which places personal status laws under the exclusive control of the religious communities. That has resulted in in discrimination between women within the same community on the one hand, and between women of different communities on the other.

31. In the past four years, Lebanon has seen a solidification of serious political will, reflected by positive developments that are in line with the Committee's recommendations concerning the enshrinement and promotion of women's rights and breaking the sectarian stranglehold on them. Those developments include the following:

(a) There has been a marked increase in the number of proposals and draft laws concerning women's rights before Parliament. They include amendments to Act No. 293 (2014) concerning the protection of women and other family members from domestic violence, which removed domestic violence from the private sphere and made it a civil matter under the responsibility of the State.

(b) The Minister of the Interior gained significant support for her announcement in early 2019 of her intention to start a serious dialogue with political, party and spiritual leaders on adoption of civil marriage.

(c) There has been a positive turnaround in the positions of the major political parties on women assuming leadership positions both within the parties and outside of them.

(d) Women have been appointed to advisory positions in the Office of the President of the Republic, the Office of the Prime Minister and party leadership offices.

(e) There are more women candidates for Parliament than ever before as a result of the adoption of a proportional representation system. We will provide more detail on these positive developments in the main body of the report.

### **Political, legal and administrative measures adopted by the State to implement the Convention**

32. Despite a succession of political crises, a two-and-a-half-year presidential vacuum, a nine-month government vacuum (under a caretaker government), and the accompanying disruption of the work of the legislative institution, the period between 2015 and the beginning of 2019 did see some diligent work and close cooperation among the ministries of State, public institutions, various parliamentary committees, civil society organizations and international donors to implement the Convention. That work was guided by the Committee's recommendations and concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports submitted by the Government to the Committee in 2014, well as by the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to the advancement of women and gender equality.

33. In addition to the national machinery for the advancement of women in Lebanon, the last two Governments, for the first time in Lebanon's history, included a Ministry of State for Women's Affairs (2016), which was replaced by the Ministry of State for Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth (2019). The most recent Government included four women, one of them was Minister of the Interior and Municipalities, a first in the history of Lebanon and the Arab world.

34. In early 2017, the Ministry of State for Women's Affairs developed an action plan for the 2017–2022 period that included the launch of a legal workshop on repealing laws that detract from the rights of women and girls and introducing new laws that reinforce their rights. In so doing, it has joined forces with existing efforts to update laws being conducted by the National Commission for Lebanese Women, the Ministry of Social Affairs and civil society organizations. That was accompanied by the development and adoption of national strategies and programmes, and a number of other measures to guarantee the rights of women in Lebanon.

35. Lebanon has conducted a voluntary national review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The Lebanese Crisis Response Plan was updated in 2019. The National Plan to Combat Violent Extremism was adopted in 2018. The Government approved the national plan for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). A broadly inclusive approach was adopted in the preparation of each of these documents, with gender mainstreamed in all three.

### **Responses to the Committee's recommendations contained in its concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Lebanon**

#### **Recommendations contained in paragraph 12 concerning women refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless women**

36. The Lebanese Government reiterates its position that any attempt to resettle persons of non-Lebanese descent in Lebanon is a violation of the Constitution, which explicitly prohibits resettlement in its preamble, paragraph I. Therefore, the resettlement of displaced Syrians and/or Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is not a permanent solution to their problem. The Government continues to distinguish between refugees and displaced persons. The Government emphasizes that the only permanent and preferred solution for displaced persons is to ensure their safe return to Syria, as dictated by the rules of international law and the vital interests of Lebanon as the host country.

37. Until that solution is available, Lebanon, with the assistance of the international community, will remain committed to providing various kinds of humanitarian

assistance to displaced persons in line with its international obligations, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the comprehensive refugee response framework (2016). That is what Lebanon has been doing since the onset of the Syrian crisis without discrimination on any basis, even though the burdens resulting from this displacement exceed the State's resources at all levels.

38. The 2019 Lebanese Crisis Response Plan reaffirmed the Lebanese Government's respect for the principle of non-refoulement and its commitment to ensuring that persons displaced from Syria have access to legal status, as dictated by Lebanese laws and legislation, pending their safe and dignified return to their country, which is the permanent and preferred solution to their problem. It also provides that exceptional humanitarian cases should continue to be granted entry through approval from the Ministry of Social Affairs. In addition, the capacities of General Security offices have been reinforced to enable them to process more applications and allow them to waive fees.

39. Under the partnership paper signed in Brussels in 2018, the Government undertook to remove obstacles that prevent displaced persons from registering and obtaining residency papers. In February 2018, a mechanism was established to enter the children of displaced Syrians born in Lebanon in the register of foreigners and to send birth certificates to the Syrian Embassy through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates.

40. Since the onset of the events in Syria, the General Directorate of General Security has followed a policy of not deporting or forcibly returning any Syrian, except in cases where a crime has been committed or there is a threat to civil security and peace.

41. The Lebanese Government, in collaboration with the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, has tried to mobilize the support of the international community to share burdens and provide a greater share of services to displaced persons and host communities. Several conferences have been held, including the London Conference (2016), the Brussels Conferences (2017 and 2018), the Cedar Conference (2018) and the Arab Economic Summit (2019). As of now, however, the level of international and Arab cooperation and support is still less than desired and falls short of needs. Moreover, a large proportion of the support being provided to Lebanon is in the form of loans, albeit preferential, which increases the burdens of public debt and creates a bigger problem for Lebanon than the one it is trying to solve.

42. With regard to the recommendation in paragraph 12 (a) concerning establishing gender-sensitive asylum procedures and including gender-based violence as a ground for asylum, the Government wishes to draw the Committee's attention to the challenges and difficulties that would stand in the way of such procedures in the light of the tortuous path that must be travelled by any measures to enact or amend laws to protect women and girls in Lebanon.

43. The Government continues its policy of looking into every case of immigration or asylum individually. It places priority on providing humanitarian services to displaced persons without any discrimination on the basis of sex, controlling infiltration and illegal entry, penalizing human traffickers, and arranging deportations for infiltrators and persons without legal residency papers.

44. In 2014, the General Directorate of Internal Security Forces – in close partnership and cooperation with the National Commission for Lebanese Women, United Nations agencies and civil society organizations – put in place a centralized information system linking sectors concerned with domestic violence in various Lebanese regions. The system uses a standardized form to document cases of

domestic violence and violence against women and girls. Although this system is important for collecting data on cases of violence, it is still limited to incidents reported to the Internal Security Forces.

45. In that regard, as part of its efforts to implement the Committee's recommendations, the National Commission for Lebanese Women included in its 2016 annual report on the implementation of the National Strategy for Women in Lebanon and its first action plan (2013-2016) an integrated project to expand the information programme of the General Directorate of Internal Security Forces to include all relevant ministries and providers of services to victims of violent incidents. The project was incorporated into the National Strategy for Combating Violence against Women and Girls prepared by the Ministry of State for Women's Affairs, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), which was launched on 8 February 2019. The project was also included in the recommendations emerging from the follow-up of implementation of Act 293 (2014).

46. In 2017, the Prime Minister formally charged the National Commission for Lebanese Women with developing a national action plan for implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). With the support of United Nations agencies, the Commission has been going about that task through an inclusive approach. It has formed a steering committee and conducted sectoral meetings with the relevant ministries, government institutions and civil society organizations. It has also held consultative meetings with various stakeholders, including religious leaders, displaced Syrians and Iraqis, Palestinian refugees, academics, youth and media figures. It has been guided by best practices in this area. In August 2018, the steering committee reviewed the draft national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The United Nations praised the inclusive approach adopted in the drafting of the plan, its use of monitoring and analysis indicators, and the inclusion of an estimate of the financial resources required for implementation of the plan. Lebanon was commended for providing a more developed budget estimate than other States. In May 2019, the Executive Office of the National Commission approved the action plan and submitted it to the Cabinet, which approved it on 12 September 2019.

**Recommendations contained in paragraph 13 concerning seeking international support and establishing a coordination mechanism to implement the recommendations**

47. For international support, please see the fifth paragraph of our response to the recommendations contained in paragraph 12 of the concluding observations.

48. The Lebanese State has established a national committee for drafting reports and following up recommendations issued by treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council. It is made up of representatives of the relevant departments and ministries, including the National Commission for Lebanese Women. It was established by Decree No. 3268 of 19 June 2018. Members have been trained in the mechanism for preparing these reports with the support of the European Union and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Following the abolition of the Ministry of State for Human Rights in early 2019, the committee was attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates.

49. The period following the recent parliamentary elections, with the help of international support, has seen an increase in cooperation by various national mechanisms both with each other and with parliamentary committees, the relevant ministries, civil society and the two bar associations to expedite the overhaul of existing laws and/or the enactment of new laws to ensure equal rights for men and

women, and to train judges, lawyers, members of the security forces and media professionals on gender and gender discrimination issues.

### **Recommendations contained in paragraph 14 concerning Parliament**

50. Since the end of the presidential crisis in the fall of 2016, parliamentary committees have considered several proposals and draft laws, including a number having to do with women's rights that are in line with most of the Committee's recommendations. During its legislative sessions, Parliament enacted a number of those laws. Four of them related specifically to women, and eight had direct or indirect positive repercussions for the situation of women. They are listed in Table 1 below. The parliamentary committees also considered a large number of draft laws and proposals concerning women. Table 2 below provides a brief synopsis of their contents. Parliament has reactivated the Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee. At the Cabinet meeting of 28 June 2019, the Prime Minister presented ministers with a list of laws for which implementing regulations had not yet been issued that had been referred to him by the Speaker of Parliament. He asked the ministers concerned to issue the relevant decrees to ensure implementation of those laws.

**Table 1. Laws relating to the rights and condition of women approved by the Parliament (2016–2019)**

#### **Laws enacted that concern women**

Act No. 53 (14 September 2017)	Rescinds article 522 of the Penal Code, which exempted the perpetrator of rape from prosecution if the rapist married the victim; amends other articles of the Penal Code.
The Overland Trade Act (29 March 2019)	Provides for women to be treated the same as men in bankruptcy cases.
Act No. 61 (2017) concerning municipalities	Allows women to retain membership in municipal councils even if they get married and their registration is transferred.
Act No. 58 (17 October 2017)	Amends several articles in the 1948 Personal Status Code of the Druze Community; prohibits the marriage of young men under the age of 16 and girls under the age of 15; adds new provisions to make sure that the value of advance dowry is maintained in the face of currency depreciation; regulates marriage contract procedures; raises the age of custody, keeping in mind the interests of the child and the right of both parents to visitation; guarantees daughters the right to full inheritance where there are no male heirs.
Act No. 266 (5 April 2014)	Amends article 38 of Legislative Decree No. 112 of 12 June 1959 concerning public employees to increase maternity leave for women working in the public sector to 10 weeks fully paid.
Act No. 267 (15 April 2014)	Amends articles 28 and 29 of the Lebanese Labour Act of 23 September 1946 to increase maternity leave for women working in the private sector to 10 weeks fully paid.

#### **Laws enacted that have positive repercussions for the situation of women**

Act No. 62 (27 October 2017)	Establishes a Human Rights Commission, including a Committee for the Prevention of Torture; members were appointed by the Cabinet at its meeting on 21 May 2018.
Act No. 65 (26 October 2017)	Penalizes torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Act No. 9 (10 February 2017)	Amends the transfer fee act; exempts the inheritances of martyrs on the field of honour, duty and service in the armed forces from all transfer fees.
Act No. 28 (10 February 2017)	Provides for the right of access to information.
Decree No. 3915 (2 November 2018)	Approves signature of a loan agreement with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development to implement a health resilience project in Lebanon to increase access to quality healthcare services for poor Lebanese and displaced Syrians in Lebanon; includes funds for scaling up the scope and capacity of the primary health care programme, providing health care services in public hospitals and strengthening project management and monitoring.
Act No. 89 (10 October 2018)	Act concerning missing and forcibly displaced persons.
Act No. 105 (30 November 2018)	Approves signature of a loan agreement to support the second phase of the Reaching All Children with Education initiative between the Republic of Lebanon and the International Development Association of the World Bank (No. 19 of 10 February 2017).
Act No. 46 (21 August 2017)	Raises the minimum wage and provides a cost-of-living increase for employees, contractors and wage workers in public departments, the Lebanese University, the Municipalities Union and public institutions not subject to the Labour Act; article 24 provides that a married female employee may work half-time for personal reasons for a maximum of three years during her period of service; by “half-time” is meant that she would work half of the hours specified by law, provided that the schedule to the department’s benefit.

**Table 2. Summary of projects and proposals being considered by the relevant parliamentary committees**

**Draft laws**

Decree No. 392 of 31 March 2017 concerning penalization of the crime of sexual harassment.

Amendment to articles 569 and 570 of the Penal Code (crimes of deprivation of liberty and kidnapping) and article 108 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (pretrial detention).

Decree No. 3357 of 13 July 2018 amending certain provisions of the Social Security Act and establishing a pension system and social protection to ensure gender equality.

Amendment to article 39 of the Labour Code, No. 2166 of 9 January 2018, concerning granting paternity leave.

**Proposed laws**

Creation of a programme to eliminate extreme poverty and destitution in Lebanon (the “Af’al” law) (2016).

Withdrawal of the reservation of Lebanon to article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2018).

Withdrawal of all reservations of Lebanon to the Convention (2018).

Amendment to Act No. 293 of 2014 concerning the protection of women and other family members from domestic violence (2018).

Amendment to Articles 503 and 504 of the Penal Code, which concern the crimes of rape and forced sex.

Proposal for an accelerated law to amend Article 521 of the Penal Code to criminalize sexual harassment and racial abuse.

Amendment to article 1003 of the Code of Civil Procedure (compulsory imprisonment of a mother for refusing to turn over her son).

Regulation of the travel of minors, approved by the Committee for Women and Children on 8 February 2018.

Proposed law regulating of the marriage of minors (2017).

Protection of children from early marriage (2017).

Repeal of a paragraph in the Code of Civil Procedure on the abolition of the use of force and entry into homes in child handover cases (2018).

Exemption of women candidates in parliamentary elections from candidate fees for two sessions only (2017).

Amendments to certain articles of Legislative Decree No. 118 of 30 June 1977 and amendments thereto (the Municipalities Act) requiring 30 per cent of candidates to be women.

Administrative decentralization to adopt the principle of quotas in the distribution of seats of the winners of in each district over four electoral cycles (approximately 50 per cent) and in the distribution of the seats of the winners in the membership of judiciary boards (at least 30 per cent).

Empowering children of a Lebanese mother by a foreigner to exercise their minimum human rights.

Amendment to article 25 of Act No. 422 of 6 June 2002 (concerning at-risk juvenile offenders).

Amendments to articles 505 and 519 and repeal of article 518 of the Penal Code (with the aim of abolishing impunity for someone who has sex with a minor if the victim is over 15 years of age).

Amendment to article 25 of Act No. 422 of 6 June 2002 (concerning at-risk juvenile offenders) to protect and regulate the legal status of unregistered persons.

Proposal to add a provision to the electoral law setting a quota of 30 per cent for seats on elected councils (2019).

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### **Recommendations contained in paragraph 16 concerning the withdrawal of reservations to the Convention**

51. On 7 November 2018, the Office of the Speaker of Parliament deposited a proposed law aimed at withdrawing the reservation of Lebanon to article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women concerning granting women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.

52. Although most national strategies include the goal of withdrawing reservations, there remain many obstacles and challenges to the withdrawal process. The most notable are the following:

(a) Religious leaders oppose civil marriage legislation, which they regard as a violation of article 9 of the Constitution.

(b) Amending that article would require a broad political and sectarian consensus that would be difficult to generate.

(c) Civil equality in sexual and marriage rights has implications for the position of women in the family based on sectarian identity and culture.

53. With regard to the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 16 (c), we draw attention to the following efforts to overcome obstacles made since 2017:

(a) A special parliamentary committee has been set up to reach out to spiritual leaders with a view to overcoming resistance to laws protecting the rights of women and girls.

(b) The Government, the National Commission for Lebanese Women and other political actors are currently working to reach a political consensus on civil marriage and other laws relating to women.

54. With regard to taking into consideration best practice in the region, the National Commission and civil society continue to cooperate and network with other national machinery and civil society organizations in the region and other parts of the world to exchange and benefit from experiences. It should be noted, however, that the imposing and/or realizing change in personal status matters may be easier in countries where rulers belong to an overwhelming religious majority than in a multi-confessional country such as Lebanon.

#### **Recommendations contained in paragraph 18 concerning the constitutional framework**

55. With regard to the Committee's recommendation to amend the Constitution to include an explicit prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex in accordance with articles 1 and 2 (a) of the Convention, the Government would like to inform the Committee that the Lebanese Constitution guarantees equality under its article 7. Although Lebanese legislation does not define discrimination against women, its recognition of international agreements, and in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which does contain an explicit definition of discrimination against women, means that that expression as used in Lebanese law means the same thing as it does in article 1 of the Convention.

#### **Recommendations contained in paragraph 20 concerning the legislative framework**

56. In early 2017, the Ministry of State for Women's Affairs put forward an action plan for the 2017–2022 period that included the launch of a legal workshop to get rid of laws that detract from the rights of women and girls and propose new laws that reinforce their rights. The parliamentary Committee for Women and Children has recently drawn up a three-year strategic action plan that makes reviewing laws to purge them of discrimination a primary goal. In so doing, it has joined forces with the ongoing efforts of the National Commission for Lebanese Women since its inception to rid laws of any discrimination (see annex 3, table 3, "List of laws that the Legal Committee of the National Commission for Lebanese Women has been working on, 2015–2019").

57. Going back to the information provided above regarding paragraph 14, laws enacted have included repeal of certain discriminatory articles of the Penal Code, and amendment of the Personal Status Codes of certain communities, the Act concerning municipal and mayoral elections and the Labour Code in line with the Committee's recommendations (see annex 3, tables of laws and strategies). In 2019, the Human

Rights Commission conducted a post-legislative review of the implementation of Act No. 293 (2014) on the protection of women and other family members from domestic violence as part of its consideration of proposed amendments.

58. The minutes of legislative sessions and committee sessions show a quantitative and qualitative increase in cooperation with the national machinery for the advancement of women and civil society organizations in the development and consideration of proposals and draft laws relating to women. There has been a notable dynamism in that work, as well as emerging indications of an end to the previous piecemeal approach to the amendment, enactment and harmonization of laws relating to women's rights. This recent trend is evident in the decision by Parliament in plenary session to postpone the vote on a proposal for an accelerated law to amend article 521 of the Penal Code to criminalize sexual harassment and racial abuse, pending submission by the Government of the draft law drafted by the Minister of State for Women's Affairs that addresses that issue comprehensively and ensures harmonization of relevant laws (twenty-second legislative session), and in the work of the Administration and Justice Committee to integrate proposals for acts to regulate the marriage of minors and protect children from early marriage. Although the relevant parties have redoubled their efforts to formulate and put forward draft laws and proposed laws, the process of enacting pro-woman legislation, especially in the area of personal status, faces numerous obstacles and challenges, because personal status codes regulate a large portion of legislative practice owing to the narrow interpretation of article 9 of the Constitution.

#### **Recommendations contained in paragraph 22 concerning access to justice**

59. The Code of Civil Procedure, the Penal Code and the Act regulating the legal profession all provide for the role of the Bar Association in providing a legal aid service and the mechanism for providing such service. The Legal Aid Committee is made up entirely of volunteer lawyers appointed by the Bar Association. There are some 600 lawyers registered on the specialized legal aid rolls. The Legal Aid Committee appoints lawyers from that list. They are charged by the Bar Association to ensure access to the right to a defence and provide basic legal services to those in need of legal assistance before the Lebanese courts regardless of jurisdiction or degree, and before investigating judges. As a rule, women benefit more than men from this service in divorce and alimony cases before the ecclesiastical and sharia courts, as well as enforcement suits and other personal status cases. The Legal Aid Committee, in coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs, offers counselling to women and other family members in domestic violence and personal status cases. In 2015, the Legal Aid Committee started cooperating with the Ministry of Justice to reduce the problem of prison overcrowding. The Directorate of Prisons provided the Committee with lists of detainees who had been in prison for more than a year without any activity in their files, so that lawyers could offer them legal services and move their cases forward. The 2013–2016 period saw a significant increase in the number of applicants for legal aid, including women and non-Lebanese nationals (see annex 1, table 1). During the recent period, there have been a number of men and women lawyers volunteering to provide these services free of charge.

60. Alongside that development, since 2017, the Ministry of Justice has been implementing reform projects and workshops to promote the assignment of lawyers to legal aid (see annex 1). It is currently implementing three European Union-funded projects to modernize the judicial system, mechanize court processes and procedures, provide technical support to strengthen the capacities of judicial institutions, and support the legal aid system to increase access to justice for marginalized groups.

61. The National Commission for Lebanese Women held an introductory workshop on "International mechanisms for eliminating all forms of discrimination against

women: provisions and judicial application”. The workshop focused on how international conventions are used in judicial decisions. It was attended by more than 30 judges, including three judges from the Muslim and Christian religious courts. This workshop was aimed at acquainting judges with national duties and obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and with certain Arab experiences in the use of international conventions in judicial rulings. Several civil society organizations and the national machinery, with the support of United Nations agencies and international donors, have also developed and implemented training workshops for judges, public defenders and private attorneys in concepts having to do with gender, gender discrimination, violence against women and human trafficking, in line with the Commission’s recommendations. The Ministry of State for Women’s Affairs included such issues in its National Strategy for Combating Violence against Women and Girls and the action plan it launched in 2019, as well as the goal of institutionalizing the legal aid system and securing the resources necessary to guarantee its effectiveness.

**Recommendations contained in paragraph 24 concerning strengthening the institutional capacity of the national machinery for the advancement of women**

62. Political and economic crises have precluded any significant increase or enhancement of the resources of the National Commission for Lebanese Women. However, a budget was allocated for the Ministry of State for Women’s Affairs in 2016.

63. Support from United Nations agencies, the European Union and other international agencies has helped our national women’s rights machinery to achieve its strategic objectives, including the National Plan to Safeguard Women and Children, and to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Social Affairs to implement relevant plans and activities in 2018-2019, including the establishment of 12 safe spaces for women and girl victims of violence in a number of development centres in various regions. Approximately 8,500 women and girls made use of these safe spaces in 2018.

64. The Commission was able to follow up implementation of the first National Action Plan (2013–2016) of the National Strategy for Women in Lebanon (2011–2021) and issue annual reports supported by statistical data from all partners. Based on the results of the follow-up process, the Commission developed a second National Action Plan (2017–2019) that details and defines the responsibilities of all partners and makes use of lessons learned from the first National Action Plan to implement the National Strategy more effectively. One of the most important outcomes of the follow-up to implementation of the first plan was an increase in the scope and level of cooperation and coordination between civil society organizations, on the one hand, and the national machinery for the advancement of women, on the other. There was also increased cooperation among national agencies even in the absence of a specific mechanism for such cooperation. In mid-2019, with the support of international donors, the National Commission for Lebanese Women launched an electronic information base that allows judges, lawyers and citizens, men and women, to look at international conventions, national laws and any jurisprudence having to do with women’s issues.

65. With the support of the European Union, a 2016 study in support of quotas suggested ways that the Commission and civil society organizations could cooperate. That study had practical effects in the form of bringing together some 150 organizations in a coalition in support of quotas, a consolidated document demanding quotas and a letter-writing campaign that were firsts in the history of the pro-quota movement in Lebanon. That cooperation is continuing with the following:

- (a) Ongoing networking between the Commission and civil society organizations;
- (b) Large coalitions to advance women’s issues;

(c) Protocols signed with local parties active in the improvement of women's conditions at different levels and in different areas.

66. The Commission is working in cooperation with United Nations agencies to train 54 gender focal points at ministries and public institutions in mainstreaming gender into the policies and programmes of their institutions. The Commission is also conducting an ongoing audit of gender mainstreaming in a number of ministries, municipalities, political parties and trade unions, and in the Economic and Social Council of Lebanon. The Ministry of Social Affairs has conducted a similar audit. It has made use of the analysis and identification of needs to develop a gender mainstreaming policy for the Ministry and has issued a training manual for both male and female staff in this area. However, we must acknowledge the ongoing need to institutionalize the work of these focal points and their relationships with the Commission, the Ministry of Economic Empowerment for Women and Youth, and the Ministry of Social Affairs.

### **Recommendations contained in paragraph 26 concerning stereotypes in the media**

67. The National Commission for Lebanese Women, with the support of the European Union, has held a number of workshops aimed at raising the awareness of media professionals of the role of media in perpetuating stereotypes and the importance of changing the media's treatment of various women's issues. The National Commission's 2018–2022 action plan included workshops aimed at enlisting media professionals in eliminating such stereotypes. It has begun holding such workshops in cooperation with civil society organizations. The Commission has contributed to the development of a code of conduct for men and women media professionals that includes how to treat women's issues in media and advertising. Since 2015, the abolition of stereotypes of women in the media has been a key objective in all national strategies and plans developed by ministries concerned with women's issues. From 2017 to 2019, the Commission launched 17 campaigns aimed at raising awareness on various topics related to women's rights (see annex 1).

68. Several Government and media institutions have joined the National Network to Change Women's Image in Media and Advertising in Lebanon, which was launched by civil society organizations at the end of 2016. These organizations regularly monitor the image of women in the media, television and radio programmes, and advertisements. They publish their results in periodic reports and conduct online campaigns against the objectification of women.

69. Progress in changing the media's approach to women faces several challenges, including the following:

(a) Private for-profit private media predominates over official media (which has over 60 per cent representation for women at all levels).

(b) The majority of private media organizations do not have a gender-sensitive agenda.

(c) There are very few women in decision-making positions in private media.

(d) There is insufficient training for persons involved in pre-production or post-production monitoring of the contents of material broadcast by media about gender and gender discrimination. Based on a number of indicators, it appears that the sheer scope and variety of sustained efforts by the national machinery and civil society organizations will eventually see progress in implementing this recommendation. However, it might take time to change a deep-rooted institutional and social culture, and resources must be provided to ensure uninterrupted efforts.

**Recommendations contained in paragraph 28 concerning violence against women**

70. The relevant parliamentary committees are currently considering a number of draft laws and proposals aimed at amending Act No. 293 (2014) and/or amending relevant articles of the Penal Code. That includes a draft prepared by the Ministry of Justice, the National Commission for Lebanese Women and the KAFA organization, and the recommendations arising from a post-legislative review of the Act by the parliamentary Human Rights Committee. The proposed amendments are the fruit of four years of experience in applying that Act (for details, see annex 1).

71. The amendments put forward are in line with the Committee's recommendations on the subject of violence, except that none of the draft amendments or proposals addresses article 22 of the Act, which concerns the personal status codes. That is because of an abundance of care to avoid any obstacles to approval of the amendments, particularly in the light of the increase in the past three years in the number of women murdered by their husbands despite orders of protection and restraining orders. Also on the rise are rates of violence against women and the marriage of minors among displaced persons and the host communities. A 2016 survey of 1,513 displaced Syrian families in three regions of the Bekaa showed that the marriage rate for females aged 15 to 17 among Syrian displaced persons was nearly four times the rate of marriage for females under 18 in Syria in 2009 (6.7 per cent for the 2009 figure versus 24 per cent for the 2016 figure). Available statistics for 2018 show that the marriage rate for displaced Syrian females between the ages of 15 and 19 was nearly 7 per cent higher than in 2017 (rising from 22 per cent to 30 per cent). Statistics from the Internal Security Forces also show an increase in the number of cases of violence reported between 2015 and 2017. Death threats to females have risen from 12 in 2015 to 44 in 2017. Threats of violence rose from 2 cases in 2015 to 39 in 2017. Cases of beating and abuse rose from 22 in 2015 to 101 in 2016, and to 149 in 2017.

72. Further to the information provided above in response to the recommendations in paragraph 12 of the concluding observations, in 2018, the National Commission, in cooperation with the Internal Security Forces, established a hotline for complaints of violence (number 1745). In addition, the office of the Minister of State for Women's Affairs has designed a national project to calculate the economic cost of violence against women and girls, in partnership and cooperation with United Nations agencies and the Central Administration of Statistics. The project is expected to provide data on violence against women and girls, including its manifestations and forms, the frequency of repeat offences, and its economic cost for women victims of violence, their families, and State and local budgets. It is hoped that resources will be available to aggregate data from different sources into a comprehensive national database. The Ministry of State for Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth is also implementing the Madad project, funded by the Regional Trust Fund of the European Union. It aims to improve social and legal protection and livelihoods for displaced Syrian women and refugees and women in host communities. It is preparing to implement an umbrella fund project on women's participation in economic life and protection of women from gender-based violence in cooperation with Expertise France and the European Union.

73. The Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Social Affairs, through affiliated or contracted centres and a primary health-care network, and in close partnership and cooperation with civil society organizations, United Nations agencies and other international support agencies, are enhancing legal and medical support for as many victims of violence against women and domestic violence as possible. For example, health and physical support services are provided by the Ministry of Public Health. Psycho-social support services, including prevention, response and legal

services, are provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs through its development service centres (about 220 centres) across all regions, and through 12 safe spaces supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which contain childcare facilities for child victims of violence. In 2018, nearly 12,500 women and girls made use of the safe spaces in development services centres funded by UNICEF. However, the ability of State ministries and civil society to expand the scope of services to match demand and ensure their sustainability remains dependent on the availability of material, human and technical resources, especially in the context of deteriorating economic conditions and austerity policies aimed at addressing the budget deficit.

74. The Ministry of Social Affairs has implemented standard national operating procedures for gender-based violence. They provide a framework for the development of quality standards, tools of and mechanisms for dealing with survivors, managing their cases, providing them with protection, and referring them for social, psychological, health, rehabilitation and legal services appropriate to their needs. It has also put in place national mechanisms for monitoring and managing cases of gender-based violence. In that regard, the Ministry has adopted an institutionalized approach that is trying to lay the legal, technical and logistical groundwork for building a national referral system and ensuring consolidated national procedures in cooperation with the relevant authorities (see information relative to paragraph 20 of the concluding observations in annex 1). It should be noted that the Ministry of Social Affairs, from its own budget and outside of any subsidized programmes, signs annual contracts with safe spaces run by non-governmental organizations to take in, care for and rehabilitate women and children victims of violence.

75. With regard to the recommendation on sexual harassment, on 26 September 2019, the parliamentary Committee on Women and Children approved a proposal for a law to punish the crime of sexual harassment. It should be noted that the General Directorate of Internal Security Forces documents allegations of assault and rape that are reported to it and provides grievance procedures before its Human Rights Section against any abuses of power by its staff. The General Directorate has equipped its district offices, as well as the Human Trafficking and Moral Protection Bureau and the Ras Beirut section, with women-friendly assistance rooms. The rooms have examination beds for forensic examinations of women victims of violence. Over 2,900 investigators and operating room staff have been trained to take in and treat women victims of violence, trafficking and sexual assault. On 25 September 2017 a service memorandum was issued on guidelines for handling and investigating trafficking and sexual assault cases and providing support to victims (339/204 *shin* 4). The Internal Security Forces have organized awareness activities and conferences on how to take in and handle victims of sexual assault and human trafficking and provide them with support. Two films have been produced to raise awareness among women of their rights and encourage them to report any violence against them. Popular awareness campaigns have been launched, in the course of which "awareness checkpoints" have been set up all over the country. The Directorate has set up a hotline to receive complaints of domestic violence. It issued general memorandum 204/316 *shin* 4 dated 3 July 2018 on guidelines for relevant staff on communicating with victims and handling domestic violence complaints. It has cracked down on staff who abuse their authority, who are referred to the disciplinary board. Available statistics on workplace complaints, including those submitted to labour arbitration boards, are still not classified on the basis of the sex of the complainant or the content of the complaint (see annex 2 for details on the recommendation contained in paragraph 28 of the concluding observations).

76. It should be noted that there have emerged positive indicators on the effectiveness of the efforts of the General Directorate of the General Security Forces to transform itself from a police force into a social force (see annex 1 for information on the

recommendation contained in paragraph 28 of the concluding observations). That is a reflection of the effectiveness of recently adopted procedures and service memorandums in building the trust of victims of violence against women and domestic violence in the Directorate's seriousness about eliminating any possibility of abuse of authority by its staff in dealing with them. One of the most notable of those indicators is the rise in the number of complaints filed against members of the security forces for abuse of power between 2015 and 2018 (up from 46 in 2015 to 65 in 2016 to 75 in 2017). On the other hand, those numbers declined to 66 in 2018 and 22 in 2019, reflecting the Directorate's success in reducing abuse of power by its personnel (see annex 1).

### **Recommendations contained in paragraph 30 concerning human trafficking**

77. The various security agencies involved in combating human trafficking have taken a series of measures to prevent the use of the decree regulating the entry of artists into Lebanon as a cover for sexual exploitation and/or human trafficking. The security forces have stepped up efforts to uncover trafficking and prostitution networks, including sealing nightclubs with red wax and imposing severe penalties on anyone responsible for promoting prostitution, including accomplices.

78. As part of Lebanon's compliance with international human trafficking conventions and United Nations General Assembly resolution 64/293 resolution entitled "The United Nations Global Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons", the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with IOM, has prepared a draft law aimed at fixing loopholes in Act 164 (2011) concerning the criminalization of human trafficking (for details of proposed amendments in connection with the recommendations contained in paragraph 30 of the concluding observations, see annex 1). The draft law was submitted to the Committee of Legislation and Consultations of the Ministry of Justice, which handed down advisory opinion No. 90 (2018) on 6 February 2018. The observations contained in that opinion were duly noted and referred to the Cabinet on 10 May 2018.

79. The Ministry of Justice prepares annual periodic reports on all criminal rulings and decisions on human trafficking issued by all judicial authorities. The most recent includes rulings and decisions through 31 December 2018 and highlights the ongoing efforts of the Ministry of Justice to combat this crime. According to the report, in 2018, a total of 38 cases involving indictments and prosecutions for human trafficking offences were handled by the appeals prosecutor offices of Beirut, Mount Lebanon and the Bekaa. There were 36 files on detainees of Lebanese, Syrian and Iraqi nationality in 24 prisons. A number of cases are still pending before the courts.

80. As part of capacity-building for staff who work with child victims of trafficking, the Ministry of Justice has initiated a programme to build the capacities of judges, social workers and psychotherapists. The programme consists of the following components: training curricula, field visits, and networking among the various parties involved. The Ministry of Justice, together with other ministries, departments, the relevant official and civil agencies, and IOM, is taking part in drafting standard operating procedures to serve as a guide for all agencies and individuals involved in the fight against human trafficking in Lebanon. That includes especially crimes against women and children, as they are the most vulnerable. The guidelines are intended to increase the effectiveness of all parties in protecting victims. This cooperation has already produced a non-final draft of the standard operating procedures. Work is ongoing to come up with a final formulation in the near future.

81. The five-year Internal Security Forces Strategic Plan (2018–2022) focuses on increasing protection for trafficking victims. It includes the following:

(a) It provides for capacity-building for anti-trafficking staff. Human rights and anti-trafficking training have been incorporated into curricula for all military

personnel, particularly those working in the field of human rights or stationed at border posts.

(b) It provides protection for victims by contracting with associations, service providers and shelters, and a programme for the voluntary and safe return of victims. It has signed numerous memorandums of understanding and cooperation with local and international bodies, organizations and associations. The Directorate refers all potential victims of human trafficking, violence and exploitation to “safe house” where it is verified that they are victims. They are provided with the necessary medical care and social assistance. Special attention is paid to women working as domestics or in nightclubs. The Directorate makes sure to find permanent solutions for them, including voluntary return to their country or granting or renewing a one-year residency permit.

82. With regard to the entry of foreign artists to Lebanon, the General Security Code of Conduct contains clear instructions on how military personnel are to deal with women in their custody who are working on artist visas (for details, see the information on the recommendation contained in paragraph 30 of the concluding observations, annex 1). The General Directorate of General Security reports the detention or interrogation of any foreigner to the embassy of the person in question before beginning an investigation, informs it of the result when the investigation is over, and provides updates upon request. There are also programmes run by IOM for female artists who might be potential victims of human trafficking. The agency concerned provides an escort for the victim during departure from Lebanon back to her country. Female artists have the right to file claims in person before public prosecutors, at security forces stations, or directly to the General Directorate of General Security if they are subject to any kind of violence or exploitation. The section of the Directorate that handles artists monitors proper enforcement of female artists’ contracts and takes appropriate measures against all violators in accordance with the decision of the General Director of General Security of public security and in coordination with the relevant judicial authorities.

83. In order to combat human trafficking crimes, the Directorate General of Public Security has created a Department of Human Rights, Organizations and Migration. It addresses and follows up human rights issues, combats human trafficking, processes international human rights reports, and coordinates with relevant international organizations and other parties. The Department has issued a pamphlet on legal frameworks and how to address social risks related to human trafficking offences. It has been circulated to public security military personnel, most schools and universities, the airport and other public places. The General Directorate of General Security has also issued a pamphlet in both Arabic and English that includes provisions governing workers in “nightclubs, fashion shows and non-medical massage”. It has organized numerous awareness campaigns and educational seminars at various universities and schools, in cooperation with international parties and local organizations involved in combating the crime of human trafficking. The General Directorate of General Security operates hotlines on an ongoing basis to receive reports of abuse and complaints from migrant workers, as well as any reports from citizens of any danger or crime threatening them, particularly human trafficking offences, so that the matter can be pursued by the relevant authorities at the Directorate with complete confidentiality.

84. Since it was created in 2014, the Human Trafficking and Moral Protection Bureau of the Internal Security Forces has been conducting training in the detection of human trafficking. Some 37 of its staff attended 108 training sessions on how to interview migrants and trafficking victims, provide security and health care to potential victims, and manage cases of sexual violence. Since 2017, the Internal Security Forces has referred all potential victims to its Human Rights Section, which verifies that they have been victimized and refers them to specialized associations for care and services. In

addition to the information provided in our response to the recommendations contained in paragraph 28 of the concluding observations, Internal Security also cooperated with the KAFA organization in the development of practical guide and indicators of trafficking in persons and produced an awareness film about the rights of victims.

85. The judiciary has seen progress in avoiding subjecting victims of sexual exploitation to prosecution. That was reflected in a ruling handed down by the Beirut Criminal Court on 27 November 2017, and in the case of the Chez Maurice nightclub trafficking ring (2016). Protection for victims has been provided in cooperation with civil society. These rulings, in addition to those handed down by the judiciary on not subjecting to prosecution child victims of exploitation for begging and forced labour, should be regarded as an indication that jurisprudence is transitioning from a punitive to a protective approach for victims of sexual exploitation and human trafficking. It is hoped that these rulings will set precedents for the courts pending enactment of the necessary amendments to the relevant legislation.

86. The Lebanese Army continues to train its personnel in combating human trafficking, and issues publications that include studies on that topic to raise the awareness of personnel.

87. Although these measures have proven effective in achieving significant progress in the number of trafficking cases detected (see table 3, annex 1), work and cooperation between the relevant ministries are ongoing in the following areas:

- (a) Clearing the court backlog that delays the adjudication of cases;
- (b) Improving conditions at detention centres;
- (c) Adopting and circulating standard operating procedures and a national referral system;
- (d) Providing more effective and sustained protection for victims, including male victims not accepted by organizations;
- (e) Establishing the fund provided for under the law to assist victims of trafficking;
- (f) Compiling accurate national statistics on trafficking cases and sentences imposed on perpetrators.

### **Recommendations contained in paragraph 32 concerning participation in political and public life**

88. The 2017 parliamentary elections act adopted a proportional system. That emboldened some 113 women to stand for Parliament, most of them from outside of the political families. Some 86 of them managed to gain spots on electoral lists. However, only six of them succeeded in getting elected to Parliament, because there is still no female quota despite advocacy and awareness-raising efforts. Nevertheless, an important precedent was set. Since women were granted political rights in 1953, there had never been more than 20 women candidates in any election. Similarly, the 2016 municipal and mayoral elections saw a rise in the percentages of women running and winning (for statistics, see annex 2, tables 3 and 4, and further details in the information provided below in relation to article 7).

89. The Cabinet responded to the proposal of the Minister of State for Women's Affairs to implement a recommendation going back to 2010 to adopt a women's quota for appointments to leadership positions in ministries and public institutions. As a consequence, in the recent period women have accounted for 27 per cent of all appointments in the diplomatic corps, 30 per cent at the Supervisory Commission for Elections, 23 per cent in the security services, 17 per cent at the Economic and Social

Council of Lebanon and 50 per cent at the Ministry of Culture. The second Government of the current Presidency included four women, one of whom was Minister of Energy and one of whom was Minister of the Interior and Municipalities, which was a first in the history of Lebanon and the Arab world.

90. There were other notable positive developments at several levels, including the following:

(a) Women advisers were appointed to the Office of the Presidency of the Republic, the Office of the Prime Minister and some party leadership bodies. The Prime Minister announced that women would make up more than half the members of his working group.

(b) Two Lebanese women were appointed secretary-general of a political party. Women have been appointed deputy party leader.

(c) The internal statute of three parties active on the Lebanese scene provided for a female quota and facilities to encourage women to run for leadership positions in the party. Three major parties adopted female quotas for party elections or appointments without putting it in their internal statutes.

(d) There was a relative increase in the number of women in political office and/or the executive councils of the major parties. The women's contingent in a number of major parties has been active in sensitizing parliamentary representatives and leaders on gender issues and discrimination against women.

(e) Six parties active on the Lebanese scene set forth party strategies to empower women, and make sure their party participation was not limited to women's issues and organizing party celebrations and events

(f) Women were nominated for ministerial positions and/or for major party lists in parliamentary elections.

91. In January 2018, the Ministry of State for Women's Affairs launched a gender road map to help political parties promote women's representation in the 2018 parliamentary elections. That road map provided alternatives to quotas as a means of increasing women's participation in politics. The National Commission for Lebanese Women, in collaboration with civil society organizations, has also established a pro-quota coalition of more than 150 associations. That coalition has stepped up grass-roots awareness campaigns in rural and urban areas through various media and advertising. It has drawn attention to the importance of women's political participation at all levels, the importance of an active role for women in promoting sustainable human, political, economic and social development, and the importance of women's quotas as a temporary measure to guarantee women access to decision-making positions. Training and preparation were provided to a number of women wishing to run for local and national elections to enable them to campaign effectively. There has also been capacity-building for women members of municipal councils, political parties, trade unions and student councils. Although these activities have succeeded in increasing the number of female candidates in local and national elections, and in encouraging women to vote, the numbers of women in the union leadership councils are still not proportional to their membership (see annex 1, table 4).

#### **Recommendations contained in paragraph 34 concerning education**

92. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education determines needs and provides reliable annual resources by maintaining partnerships with a wide network of international and local actors. Its Education Strategy (2019-2030) was developed in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization (UNESCO) with a view to contributing to achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education.

93. The Centre for Educational Research and Development, through its six training centres in the governorates, has provided teachers with training on how to mainstream gender and change stereotypes of women both inside and outside the classroom in the formal education sector. A number of civil society organizations, with the support of United Nations agencies and international donors, have implemented programmes and projects to steer girls towards occupations outside of gender stereotypes. That includes activities run by the Lebanese League for Women in Business, with the support of UNICEF and the Dutch Government, to provide guidance and training to 3,570 female students from all regions of Lebanon during the 2016-2017 period, with a view to encouraging them to take up engineering, science and technology.

94. Both the national machinery and civil society organizations provide training that warns against the unconscious perpetuation of stereotypes by both men and women teachers. The mere fact that women make up more than 80 per cent of the educational and administrative corps has a major impact on perpetuating stereotypes. A programme has been developed and awareness courses held for men and women teachers about the negative repercussions of certain patterns of behaviour. The National Commission for Lebanese Women has also included in its annual reports a recommendation that partners should encourage young males to enrol in the teaching profession to break the virtual female monopoly on teaching at the primary levels, which plays a major (if hidden) role in perpetuating stereotypical images and roles for women.

#### **Recommendations contained in paragraph 36 concerning employment**

95. On 2 May 2018, the Ministry of Labour signed the Lebanon Decent Work Country Programme (2017–2020), sponsored by the International Labour Organization (ILO) Regional Office for Arab States in Beirut, with the General Confederation of Lebanese Workers and the Association of Lebanese Industrialists. The Programme aims to analyse labour law and other relevant legislation to identify gaps and areas where adaptation and review are required in the light of needs of social partners and the national labour market, and to ensure consistency with international labour standards, including those in ILO agreements ratified by Lebanon. A committee has been formed to consider amendments to the Labour Code.

96. In line with the Committee's recommendation, the Office of the Minister of State for Women's Affairs has prepared a draft law to amend article 49 of the Labour Code to include, in addition to paid annual leave, three paid days of paternity leave within the two months following birth. The draft was approved by the Cabinet and submitted to Parliament in January 2018. A draft law criminalizing sexual harassment in the workplace and public places has also been put forward. It would amend articles in labour, civil service and penal codes to ensure consistency. That draft was submitted to Parliament by Decree No. 392 of 31 March 2017. To date, neither draft law has been enacted by Parliament.

97. Act No. 46 of 21 August 2017 embraced the principle of part-time employment to facilitate women's participation in the labour market. However, it did not embrace the principle of flexible work, which would encourage women to enter the labour market in even greater numbers. On September 2018, in a progressive step that was the first of its kind in Lebanon, the General Directorate of General Security established a childcare facility for the children of military personnel, the children of siblings of military personnel, and civilians working under contract with Directorate. The Directorate is currently working to establishing breastfeeding rooms. Working hours have been adjusted for military personnel who are mothers. They are exempted from rotation for six months from the date of their return to work after maternity leave. The

national machinery and civil society organizations are continuing to demand that these services be universalized to all public and private sector institutions.

98. The Basil Fleihan Institute of Finance and Economics of the Ministry of Finance offers training opportunities on an equal and ongoing basis to support career paths and trailblazing roles for women, particularly in economic and financial and economic posts and departments. The proportion of women taking part in training courses increased from 41.19 per cent in 2017 to 50.6 per cent in 2018 to 58.7 in 2019. The Institute has conducted training courses on mainstreaming gender in budgets and has organized field visits to senior women public officials in other countries to benefit from the best experiences in this area. Every year, the Institute puts out knowledge products and specialized publications to facilitate access to information and serve as tools for female employees and businesswomen to improve their understanding of financial and economic affairs. By way of example, publications include a guide to help small and medium enterprises conduct business with the public sector, a citizen's guide to budgeting for men and women, tax guides, and other publications (see the information in annex 1 pertaining to the recommendations contained in paragraph 36 of the concluding observations).

99. Since 2015, civil society organizations, in partnership with public sector institutions and the national machinery for the advancement of women, have been implementing projects to increase opportunities for women's advancement in the public and private sectors. By way of example, we mention the joint programmes run by the National Commission for Lebanese Women and the Lebanese League for Women in Business, including a capacity-building programme to empower women employees to become members of boards of directors and assume other leadership positions in the companies where they work. That is part of the Women on Board initiative which has set the goal of 30 per cent female corporate board membership by 2025, and the 50-50 project launched by the Women in Front organization in 2019.

100. The Cabinet has taken women's representation into account in appointments to senior administrative positions, which are the only positions in the public administration where discrimination against women is plainly obvious, because they are political appointments rather than purely administrative ones. After a series of consultations with the national machinery, the relevant ministries and a number of international associations, universities and institutions (most notably the World Bank Group), the Office of the Prime Minister drafted the National Plan for Women's Economic Empowerment, which it launched it at the Mashreq Conference on Women's Economic Empowerment held at the Grand Serail in Beirut in January 2019. The Plan's primary objective is to increase women's participation in the labour market by 5 per cent over the coming 5 years and to close the wage gap. The Ministry of State for Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth is currently preparing a study on the gender pay gap in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project at the Ministry of Finance. This study aims to break down employment in various fields of work according to the variables of age, gender, sector and governorate, and identify gender pay gaps through the database of the Ministry of Finance. It will develop proactive proposals for addressing the lack of gender equality in employment.

101. The Lebanese Labour Code prohibits employers from discriminating between men and women employees in relation to type of work, amount of pay, hiring, promotion, professional qualification or dress (article 26). It is difficult for large institutions, corporations and banks to violate this prohibition (except at the highest levels). The lion's share of discrimination occurs at small and medium enterprises, which, according to ESCWA, account for more than 95 per cent of companies and provide roughly 90 per cent of jobs. That means that most of the offenders are family or individually run companies. It is harder for women to take part in vocational

training courses than men because of their family responsibilities. Also, deteriorating economic conditions are forcing both women and men to accept whatever is available, or migrate in search of better employment opportunities.

**Recommendations contained in paragraph 38 concerning women migrant domestic workers**

102. The national machinery for the advancement of women, led by the National Commission for Lebanese Women, working in collaboration with civil society organizations concerned with women's rights and human rights, continues to call for the following:

(a) Adoption of a law aimed at enhancing the legal status of female migrant workers.

(b) Amendment of the Labour and Social Security Act so that it covers women in domestic service and agriculture. The national mechanism works with the relevant ministries and civil society organizations to provide various types of services to this category of women, in order to mitigate the impact that the delay in meeting the above-mentioned demands has had on them.

103. Lebanon, with the support of ILO, has launched its first decent work country programme, with a view to improving the country's regulatory framework and implementation mechanisms and strengthening its ability to protect migrant workers. Accordingly, the Ministry of Labour, in cooperation with the security forces, international agencies and civil society organizations, is considering amending the standard employment contract, improving the guide on the rights and duties of migrant workers, activating the complaints hotline and regulating domestic worker recruitment firms. In order to ensure that such workers are better protected, notaries have been provided with a guide on the rights and duties of migrant domestic workers and a copy of the standard work contract translated into the workers' languages has been made available. The domestic worker and the employer must sign the Arabic version of the contract before the notary. The Ministry is currently completing a pilot project to produce a video explaining the terms of the standard employment contract in the languages spoken by domestic workers, because some of them cannot read in their native languages. It should be noted that the proposed amendment to the Human Trafficking Act (see response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 30 of the concluding observations), which would give judges the authority to allow a victim to remain resident during the period required to complete the investigation procedure, applies to migrant workers who are victims of any form of trafficking. The human trafficking cases that were tried by the criminal courts have included several cases involving trafficking and exploitation of female migrant workers. The perpetrators were convicted pursuant to article 586 of the Penal Code (for details on trafficking cases, see the information concerning the recommendation contained in paragraph 30 of the concluding observations, which can be found in annex 1).

104. The Ministry of Labour is currently implementing three internationally supported programmes to help female migrant workers meet their basic needs. The first programme is aimed at ensuring that such workers have health insurance, including mental health-care coverage, and the second at providing training to and raising awareness at recruitment firms that bring in female domestic workers. Those projects are being carried out in cooperation with ILO. The third programme is aimed at combatting human trafficking and being implemented in cooperation with IOM. Given that the exploitation of female migrant workers begins at recruitment offices in the countries of origin, the Ministry continues to work to sign memorandums of understanding with those countries in order to reduce such exploitation in Lebanon and in the countries of origin.

105. With regard to the right of migrant workers to establish unions, Lebanese law does not deny foreign workers the right to join Lebanese unions, but they are not allowed to establish their own unions. The fact that female migrant workers are not covered by the provisions of the Labour Act does not prevent them from filing complaints with labour arbitration boards or the judiciary. However, they rarely take advantage of that right. Instead, the overwhelming majority of female migrant workers choose to resolve disputes through informal means under the auspices of civil society organizations and other stakeholders. As a result, perpetrators go unpunished.

106. The Ministry of Labour, in coordination with the owners of recruitment firms and ILO, has organized a training workshop on fair recruitment practices. In addition, the Ministry responds to complaints in that regard and follows up with the relevant embassies. When it is confirmed that a violation has been committed, the employer is blacklisted and is prevented from recruiting any other female workers. In addition, a lawsuit is filed with the competent court to seek justice for the worker for whom the employer was responsible. The Ministry also advises the female worker that she has right to press criminal charges with the competent judicial authority, if she wishes to do so. The presiding judge in the case takes the appropriate decision, which can include imprisoning the employer.

107. All investigative procedures specified in the applicable penal laws are utilized when investigating the reported death of a migrant female domestic worker due to abnormal causes. Each case is investigated in accordance with the nature the crime committed. Verdicts are handed down quickly in cases where the evidence is overwhelming. However, judgements can be delayed in cases requiring further investigation and evidence-gathering, or when it is necessary to wait for forensic reports to be issued or autopsies to be conducted.

108. The Code of Conduct developed by the General Directorate of General Security governs the conduct of its members and how they deal with right holders (for details on the Code of Conduct, see the information concerning the recommendation contained in paragraph 30 of the concluding observations, which can be found in annex 1). The General Directorate of General Security has established a Department of Human Rights, Organizations and Migration. That Department promotes human rights within the General Directorate by drawing attention to international conventions on human rights and torture, providing training on the Code of Conduct and holding special lectures on migrant workers for public security officers.

109. In addition, the Code of Conduct and service memorandums issued by the General Directorate of Internal Security contain clear instructions to its members on how to deal with victims of violence, including female migrant workers. Between 2015 and 2018, some 1,500 staff members have been trained every year. Many internal security officers have attended “train the trainer” courses, making them qualified to train their colleagues. As a result, there has been a tangible improvement in the manner in which officers deal with female workers in places of detention and during investigations. The Human Rights Section of the General Directorate of Internal Security receives complaints of abuse of power and violations of human rights by any of its officers, and a hotline has been set up to receive complaints about such violations. The Human Rights Committee of Parliament, together with the former Minister of the Interior and Municipalities, have been following up on internal investigations and inquiries into the conduct of internal security forces personnel arising from violations.

### **Recommendation contained paragraph 40 concerning Palestine refugee women**

110. All Palestinian workers, female and male, are entitled to social and health insurance pursuant to the amendments to Acts 128 and 129, which were adopted on 24 August 2010.

111. On 22 December 2013, the Ministry of Labour issued memorandum 27/1 exempting Palestinian workers from the requirement to provide an insurance policy and the results of medical examinations when applying for a work permit. On 15 February 2018, the Minister of Labour issued decision 29/1, in which he specified the occupations that are restricted to Lebanese. However, he excluded Palestinians born in Lebanese territory and who are officially registered in the records of the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities from that requirement, except in relation to self-employed professions and other professions that are regulated by law and the practice of which is prohibited to non-Lebanese (a requirement that has sometimes been bypassed in response to labour market needs). Women are not exempt from the aforementioned measures.

112. As a result, the number of new work permits issued to Palestinian workers increased from 104 in 2016 to 253 in 2017, and the number of permits that were renewed during the same period increased from 487 to 637. The high unemployment rate among Palestinian women is not the result of legal or actual discrimination against them but is a reflection of the nation's high unemployment rate, which is twice as high among women and young people.

### **Recommendations contained paragraph 42 concerning health**

113. The national apparatus, led by the National Commission for Lebanese Women, in cooperation with civil society, continues its efforts to amend the Penal Code, with a view to protecting women's right to health care. However, decision-makers remain divided on the subject of abortion, as some groups insist on maintaining the provisions of the Penal Code that prohibit abortion and penalize the commission thereof, unless the procedure is medically necessary.

114. The Ministry of Public Health continues to offer the reproductive health programme, which is now a primary health-care service. The programme provides various types of care, including preventive care, as well as education and awareness-raising with regard to reproductive health for Lebanese and displaced persons through primary health-care network centres and 57 clinics and health centres outside the national primary health-care network.

115. The Ministry of Social Affairs also participated in the implementation of the reproductive health programme (2017–2019), which has offered the following training courses on reproductive health topics in order to raise awareness of sexually transmitted diseases:

- (a) Two courses for 40 female social workers in the Ministry of Social Affairs (2017).
- (b) Eight courses for 83 social workers and technical and social supervisors at development service centres (2018).
- (c) A course for 25 supervisors from Islamic orphanage institutions (2019).
- (d) Awareness-raising and training workshops for women, men and young people were held at 13 development service centres as part of the project to strengthen reproductive health capacity and reduce gender-based violence in Lebanon, which was implemented in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in 2017. Although the Ministry has set up website for the reproductive and sexual

health unit, in order to raise awareness of the subject, statistics on the number of visitors to that site are still not available; therefore, both the site and the number of persons visiting it need to be monitored.

116. The Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Social Affairs monitor the centres that they operate or those with which they have contracted to ensure the quality of the services provided and that the centres comply with standards.

117. There have been no developments with regard to the inclusion age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health into the curriculums of the various educational stages, because the curriculums are being amended.

**Recommendation contained paragraph 44 concerning rural women**

118. The Ministry of Agriculture has started compiling comprehensive statistics on agricultural holdings. The Ministry is taking into account gender when compiling those statistics. It currently has statistics on women owners, tenants or guarantors of agricultural lands (further information on the response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 44 of the concluding observations can be found in annex 1). The Ministry is implementing its strategy for 2015–2019 and is utilizing a participatory approach to update its strategy for 2020–2024, with a view to integrating the Sustainable Development Goals and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into the strategy of the Ministry to provide food security and reduce poverty and hunger. With the support of international donors, the Ministry of Agriculture is executing several projects that provide technical and financial support to women, in order to encourage them to establish cooperatives to sell products and launch food industry projects, enable them to secure concessional loans, provide them with training in the latest agricultural and marketing techniques and methods (women made up 50 per cent of all trainees) and help them to take part in local and international exhibitions. Among those are the project to promote gender integration in sustainable rural development and food security measures, the rural pioneers project (2019) and the project to implement the 2030 Agenda in relation to the adequate and sustainable supply of water in the Near East. The aforementioned are in addition to projects that were implemented with the support of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) over the past five years that have reached 1,300 beneficiaries. The Ministry of Agriculture, cognizant of its need to integrate gender into its policies and programmes and to sensitize its decision-makers on the matter, has proposed the establishment of a committee composed of Ministry officials and representatives from cooperatives, the Lebanese Agricultural Research Institute (LARI) and the Green Plan that would help the Ministry integrate gender into its activities. The Ministry has also proposed the establishment a special department for rural women as part of its new organizational structure.

119. The National Observatory for Women continues to carry out its activities through a network of gender coordinators who are posted throughout Lebanon. It works with the Ministry in order to reach out to rural women, with a view to developing and executing projects that meet their needs. The Observatory maintains a database of the cooperatives and women pioneers that it supports and the agricultural and manufacturing projects that it has executed.

120. Lebanon is a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and determined its national contribution in 2015, and the Government is cognizant of the negative impact of climate change on the agricultural sector. Accordingly, the Government, by means of the climate change project of the Ministry of the Environment, has integrated gender into the climate change adaptation aspect of its sectoral strategies (agriculture, waste management, energy, etc.). One of those strategies is the national biodiversity strategy and its plan of action (2018). For the

first time, the Ministry of Agriculture has identified responding to the impact of climate change as a key point of action in its strategy for 2015–2019, and into which gender and gender equality have been integrated. The Ministry of Agriculture, with the support of FAO, has launched the first phase of the agricultural register, which will serve as a foundation for all farmers and enable them to obtain social security benefits in the future. In addition, the Ministry has established technical schools that contribute to the empowerment of rural women and has encouraged the establishment of women-only beekeeper cooperatives.

121. Cognizant of the injustice that rural women and women working in agriculture endure at all levels and in various endeavours, the National Commission for Lebanese Women, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Agriculture are studying several proposals on how agricultural workers can benefit from the Labour Act or an alternative law, and they are striving to ensure that such workers can obtain social security benefits. The seasonal nature of agricultural work is the main impediment that stands in the way of efforts by the Ministry of Labour to ensure that agricultural workers can obtain such benefits.

122. The Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities allocates funds to support municipal development projects in rural and remote areas, in particular for projects that are designed to promote the cultural and social role of women by organizing vocational training courses and by helping women to sell their food and handicraft products and securing markets for the sale of those products. Some municipalities, in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs, civil society and donors, hold economic empowerment courses for women and help them secure a decent standard of living. In addition, those municipalities organize awareness-raising seminars on women's diseases and, in cooperation with hospitals and volunteer doctors, carry out laboratory test and X-ray campaigns using mobile medical centres.

123. In 2014, the Ministry of Tourism adopted the rural tourism strategy for Lebanon as part of its efforts to achieve the goals set out in the National Strategy for Women in Lebanon for 2011–2021 and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular the goal of gender equality. The aim is to create jobs in rural accommodation, guest houses, camp sites and small restaurants, and to provide work for local guides, artisans, producers of local foods and agricultural products and many other rural residents, because other employment opportunities are limited. The Ministry also promotes local merchandise produced by rural women in order to encourage them to participate in productive work and the tourism industry, promote development in rural areas and protect the environment.

124. The Ministry of Social Affairs, in partnership with a local and international organizations, has implemented a number of economic and social empowerment and capacity-building projects by providing training in life skills, enhancing women's ability to exercise their rights and giving women a role in community development. In 2016, some 16,454 women were given professional and vocational training at development training centres; rural women in all parts of the country were covered by this activity. The Ministry focuses its efforts on entrepreneurial and enterprising women, in particular those who have established productive women's cooperatives, because they help to empower women and provide them with employment opportunities. Some 800 women have been benefiting from those efforts every year. In addition, civil society organizations and some Lebanese parties organize courses on traditional literacy, legal literacy, economic empowerment and education for rural women, and they organize expositions and/or help find markets for the products that they produce.

**Recommendations contained in paragraph 46 concerning marriage and family relations**

125. The issue of civil marriage is currently being debated by society.

126. The national machinery, the relevant ministries and civil society continue to call for the age of 18 to be adopted as the minimum legal age for marriage; they are working together to develop proposals and bills in order to address underage marriage, which has increased as a result of the displacement of persons from Syria (see the response to the recommendations contained in paragraph 28 of the concluding observations).

127. Pending the adoption by the legislature of 18 as the minimum legal age for marriage, the national machinery, the relevant ministries and civil society organizations are working to raise awareness of underage marriage and educate people about the dangers it presents, mitigate the impact of underage marriage on victims and promote the adoption of the necessary laws. In that connection, the National Commission for Lebanese Women launched a campaign to prevent the marriage of minors. It continues to lead national efforts calling for the adoption of a law that establishes 18 as the minimum age of marriage and, to that end, has participated in several seminars in Parliament regarding the matter. In 2019, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Supreme Council for Children developed a national plan of action on preventing and addressing child marriage. Implementation of the plan, a joint endeavour of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, was to begin in September 2019. The Supreme Council for Children, in coordination with UNICEF and in consultation with stakeholders, is working on a national strategic plan to reduce child marriage in Lebanon. In addition, the Supreme Council conducted a national awareness-raising campaign in 2018 that addressed family education, parenting roles, intergenerational solidarity, positive education and the family budget.

128. In parallel, the national machinery and civil society organizations have been striving assiduously to convince several religious communities to amend their personal status laws in relation to the age of custody. Thanks to the dialogues they have had with clergy and the step-by-step approach that they have adopted, they have been able to make progress towards that goal. Most recently, they were able to convince the Druze community to make amendments relating to the age of marriage, inheritance, the right to bear witness and dowry (Act No. 58 of 17 October 2017). It should be noted that the media have helped to make discrimination against women and the views of various parties, including clerics, the subject of public debate on the basis of international standards pertaining to women's rights and human rights.

**Recommendation contained in paragraph 47 concerning ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention**

129. The national machinery and civil society organizations continue to call for ratification of the Optional Protocol, but their efforts in that regard have yet to bear fruit.

**The recommendation contained in paragraph 48 concerning the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals**

130. The Lebanese Government and the national machinery always strive to take inspiration from the Beijing Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals and all relevant documents and general recommendations. In June 2019, the State submitted its report on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and in 2018 it issued the country's voluntary national review concerning the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Recommendations contained in paragraph 50 concerning dissemination of the Convention**

131. In 2015, Lebanon, acting pursuant to the provisions of the Convention, presented its combined fourth and fifth reports, and, in implementation of the Committee's recommendations, the National Commission for Lebanese Women published and circulated the Committee's concluding observations and recommendations. In that connection, it organized a meeting that was attended by representatives from all ministries, public institutions, security agencies and civil society organizations at which copies of the concluding observations and recommendations were distributed to all. The national machinery and civil society organizations strive assiduously to promote, in all their activities, the Convention, the Committee's recommendations and other international documents relating to women's rights. The results of the surveys that were sent to ministries, public institutions and civil society organizations in the process of preparing this report showed that the overwhelming majority are guided in their work by the Committee's recommendations, the Convention, the Sustainable Development Goals and the National Strategy for Women in Lebanon.

**Part I. Articles 1–6****Article 1. Discrimination**

132. Article 26 of the Labour Act (2000) explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. The definition of discrimination contained in the National Strategy for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls is the one that is set out in the Convention, while the definition of violence, in all its forms, is based on the Committee's general recommendations 19 and 35. The strategy developed by the General Directorate of General Security for 2018–2022 calls for the General Directorate to train its personnel on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, in accordance with the Convention. All national strategies and plans that are directly or indirectly related to women developed since 2015 have also been based on the Convention, the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, thereby indirectly adopting the definition of discrimination set out in the Convention.

133. In 2015, the Ministry of Social Affairs conducted a gender audit of several projects that it had executed and used the findings to develop an internal gender integration policy and to design, develop and execute a capacity-building programme for all staff, in particular those who work in the field. The programme includes training and follow-up mechanisms to ensure that they have the tools to integrate gender into their work. The Ministry, in collaboration with official agencies and partners, is currently seeking to share its experience with other official agencies and train their decision-makers on gender integration. The National Commission for Lebanese Women is currently conducting a participatory gender audit in order to determine the extent to which the principle of gender is integrated into the policies, programmes and organizational structures of institutions, municipalities, ministries, trade unions and parties, with a view to developing appropriate strategies that will lead to work environments in which the principle of equality between women and men is respected and applied in organizational structures and in the prevailing culture. The Finance Institute of the Ministry of Finance has conducted training courses on gender mainstreaming in budgets for public sector employees and other relevant persons, and the Ministry of Social Affairs has conducted similar training for its staff (for a list of participating ministries and institutions, see the section concerning article 1 in annex 2).

**Article 2. Legislation and policies**

134. Lebanon acceded to the Arms Trade Treaty on 9 May 2019, in keeping with the policy of the Lebanese State to protect women and children, in particular during armed conflicts. The Ministry of Tourism has completed the legal procedures required to endorse the Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics, of which article 5 (2) provides that tourism activities should respect the equality of men and women and promote human rights, while its article 5 (3) provides that exploitation of human beings in any form, particularly sexual, conflicts with the fundamental aims of tourism. However, there have been no new developments with regard to the signature by Lebanon of the international human rights instruments and related protocols to which it has not yet acceded, despite the ample calls that have been made by the national machinery for the advancement of women, other national women's and human rights mechanisms and civil society organizations.

135. Parliament adopted four acts that eliminated discriminatory provisions from certain articles of the Penal Code, the Land Trade Act, the Municipalities Act and the Personal Status Act for certain sects. It has also adopted more than eight acts that have positive implications for the status of women. Parliamentary committees continue to consider several proposals and bills aimed at removing discriminatory provisions from other laws or that would see the adoption of new laws that consolidate women's rights (see the response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 14 of the concluding observation and the two related tables).

136. Over the past four years, Parliament has executed several projects and held a series of workshops aimed at building capacity, enhancing performance and raising awareness of gender and gender-based discrimination. Following are some of the most important outcomes of those efforts: the development of a training manual on the methodology for conducting post-legislative review of laws; the establishment of a Parliamentary commission responsible for implementation of the sustainable development plan (8 November 2017); a series of workshops on ways to enhance the work of Parliament and integrate gender into it; helping three Parliamentary committees to develop strategic action plans as first a step that will be pursued with other committees; helping to establish an alliance of women parliamentarians from Arab States to eliminate violence against women; drafting an Arab convention on violence against women that was submitted to the Council of the League of Arab States; and participating in several regional workshops on violence against women and post-legislative review of laws.

137. The amount and forms of cooperation and coordination between the national machinery and civil society organizations has increased over the past four years, including with respect to their participation in the debates of the Parliamentary committees that review proposals and bills concerning women and following up on the progress thereof, as well as the intensification of their campaigns to overhaul laws and raise awareness of women's issues and the discrimination that women face.

**Article 3. Ensuring equality between women and men in the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms**

138. The ministerial statement issued by the first Government formed during the tenure of the President of the Republic (December 2016) reflected significant progress in the approach to women's rights and issues, with respect to both how prominently women's rights and issues figured in that statement and what was said about them. In that statement, the ministers:

(a) Acknowledged the importance of involving women, in particular at the decision-making and leadership levels, with a view to achieving the Government's development, economic, political and cultural objectives.

(b) Set out the Government's approach to and framework for involving women and upholding their rights, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and the international instruments to which Lebanon has acceded, the most significant of which is the Convention, and in keeping with the recommendations that Lebanon has accepted.

(c) Committed to holding a workshop on overhauling laws so as to eliminate provisions that discriminate against women and to introducing bills aimed at achieving justice and equality, in accordance with the undertakings that Lebanon has made. Those commitments were reiterated, albeit in a different language, in the ministerial statement issued by the second Government formed during the tenure of the President of the Republic (February 2019).

139. With a view to implementing those commitments, the Government has taken care to ensure that women hold leadership positions in State ministries and public institutions. In 2016, Lebanon established its first ever Ministry of State for Women's Affairs, which became the Ministry of State for Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth with the installation of the second Government (2019). Those developments demonstrate that economic empowerment is a cornerstone of the country's efforts to promote the advancement of women and they complement the work of the national machinery for the advancement of women.

140. In 2018, at the same time that the Cabinet initiated the voluntary national review of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, the national machinery for the advancement of women and some ministries developed, updated and implemented several national strategies, plans and programmes aimed at ensuring that women in Lebanon are able to exercise their basic human rights and freedoms. Those strategies and plans were developed using a participatory approach that involved stakeholders from civil society organizations, the public and private sectors, experts and political parties (see annex 3, table 4).

141. Despite the hard work that has been done, there are two key challenges that are impeding the implementation of those strategies, plans and programmes. The first is the capacity to provide the resources, of all types, needed to ensure effective and sustainable implementation in view of the current economic and financial and the policy of cutting costs. The second is the fact that there are multiple strategies and programmes in place for a single issue. This leads to poor coordination among donors and leads to waste of resources, effort and time.

#### **Article 4. Special measures**

142. Several ministries and State institutions have adopted strategies and plans aimed at achieving equality and encouraging women to join the labour market and/or pursue educational attainment and participate in public life. Following are some examples:

(a) The National Plan for Women's Economic Empowerment, which was launched by the Prime Minister in early 2019, is aimed increasing women's participation in the labour market by at least of 5 per cent over the next five years.

(b) The Cabinet endorsed a bill on paternity leave and sent it on to Parliament.

(c) The initiative taken by the Directorate General of General Security, which we described in our response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 36 of the concluding observations. The strategic plan for 2018-2022 of the General Directorate calls for females to make up a higher proportion of recruits every year, so that women

constitute 25 per cent of Directorate General personnel by 2022, up from the current proportion of 11 per cent.

(d) The Ministry of Social Affairs now provides official day-care centres in its development service centres in various regions. Every year, the Ministry contracts with community associations to operate approximately 28 day-care centres for children between the ages of 1 and 4 that serve some 1,950 children.

(e) The 2019 Budget Act provides that day-care centres are exempt from taxes, a decision that is expected to have a positive effect.

(f) The Ministry of Interior issued an instruction concerning the employment of municipal police officers that was unprecedented because of the use of gender-sensitive language in that instruction and the fact that females are not subsumed under the masculine plural.

(g) The Ministry of Education and Higher Education reviews the regulations and practices of the student associations of schools and universities and ensures that they incorporate the principle of gender equality by raising their awareness of and circulating information about that principle to student associations at public primary and secondary schools. In addition, the Ministry includes questions on gender in the official annual examinations.

143. The National Commission for Lebanese Women and civil society organizations continue to urge municipalities to establish municipal day-care centres, so as to make affordable day-care services available and enable women to work or study. They also continue to urge the authorities to establish day-care centres in State ministries and public institutions and to urge large private sector companies and institutions to provide such services to their employees.

#### **Article 5. Social roles and stereotypes**

144. With regard to stereotypes in media and education, please see our responses to the recommendation contained in paragraph 26 of the concluding observations and the recommendation contained in paragraph 34 of the concluding observations.

145. Over the past three years, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the National Commission for Lebanese Women and several civil society organizations have redoubled their efforts to get men involved in calling for women's rights, with a view to mitigating the effect of the male-oriented approach of families to raising children. Those efforts have had a positive effect, as there has been unprecedented participation of men, particularly in some universities and regions, in awareness-raising campaigns and workshops that have been held on gender, discrimination, gender-based violence and the risks posed by the marriage of minors. In addition, in 2019, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in coordination with UNICEF, developed a communication strategy aimed at changing social behaviour that includes a group of innovative activities that will help raise community awareness of violence against women and children.

146. There are many factors that will help break down stereotypes, including:

(a) The efforts of various partners who are engaged in empowering women economically to promote the independence of women and their role in the family;

(b) The efforts being made to guide girls towards professions and specialties that have long been the exclusive domain of men;

(c) The employment of women in jobs that have been dominated by men, such as municipal police officer and forest ranger;

(d) The increasing number of women who hold senior academic posts, in particular the posts of dean and chair of scientific faculties, which are positions that have long been dominated by men;

(e) The efforts of female members of political parties to raise the awareness of their male colleagues and party leaders (deputies) regarding gender and discrimination against women, both within and outside their parties.

#### **Article 6. Human trafficking**

147. With regard to cooperation among the security agencies, State institutions and civil society organizations to combat human trafficking and provide services to victims, please see our response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 30 of the concluding observations.

148. The Higher Council for Childhood has put into place the National Programme for Protecting Children from Internet Abuse and Exploitation in order to protect children against the threat of trafficking and exploitation. As part of that programme, regional meetings for children have been held in Beirut, Mount Lebanon and the Bekaa governorates. Approximately 10,000 children between the ages of 13 and 15 in public and private schools have attended those meetings. These activities, which were carried out in collaboration with the Centre for Educational Research and Development, the Internal Security Forces, the Union for the Protection of Juveniles, Internet companies, and specialized non-governmental organizations, were aimed at educating children about their online safety and violent extremism, including attempts to solicit their participation in the commission of acts of terrorism. These awareness-raising workshops are followed up in schools, in order to create a safer environment. The programme included the production of two television programmes, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and with the support of the British Council. The first was aimed at protecting girls from online sexual exploitation and the second at protecting children against the threat of online recruitment.

#### **Part II. Articles 7–9**

##### **Article 7. Participation in political and public life**

149. The judiciary is the most significant institutions in which gender parity has been reached. Women hold high-level positions in the judiciary, including but not limited to prosecutor, first investigating judge, director-general, head of legislation and advisory commission, head of the case department, President of the Institute of Judicial Studies and President of the Criminal Court. The information and statistics available on women's participation in political and public life indicate that significant progress has been towards the implementation of article 7 of the Convention with respect to women holding leadership positions in State ministries, public institutions and political parties (see our response to the recommendations contained in paragraph 32 of the concluding observations). It should be noted, however, that, despite the advances that have been made in promoting women's participation in political parties, the male political mentality continues to dominate in those parties, and that has prevented some parties from taking measures to nominate and encourage women to run for election and/or from giving women candidates special voting status on their lists. Moreover, that mentality has led others to justify their failure to nominate women candidates and/or prohibit the nomination of female candidates from among their membership.

150. The adoption of a proportional system in parliamentary elections has encouraged independent blocs to compete with sectarian parties and traditional political blocs for parliamentary seats. As a result, 113 women declared their

candidacy, of whom 27 withdrew by the deadline for the announcement of the electoral lists. In the end, women made up 14 per cent of the total number of candidates (597). Thus, the number of female candidates who participated in the 2018 parliamentary elections represented an eightfold increase in relation to the number for the 2005 elections, which had seen the highest number of female candidates for the period from 1953 to 2009 (14 candidates). It should be noted that there was a notable female presence at the majority of polling stations during the 2018 elections, and female security forces were stationed in front of the majority of those stations. In addition, better facilities for persons with special needs were available than in previous elections. It should also be noted that the National Commission for Lebanese Women successfully lobbied the Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities to include the candidate's gender on the candidacy forms for national and local elections, a decision that made it possible to obtain accurate figures regarding the number of women candidates who contested those elections.

151. On the other hand, there was only a slight increase (0.9 per cent) in the proportion of women running for municipal council seats in comparison to the 2010 elections. A total of 536 female candidates were elected, of whom seven were elected to the post of mayor and one to the post of president of a union of municipalities. This slight increase in the proportion of female candidates and winners in local elections when compared to the increase in the proportion of female candidates who contested the 2018 parliamentary elections is striking in the light of the following:

(a) Municipal council and other elected council seats are not allocated on a sectarian basis.

(b) National polls showed that more than 65 per cent of respondents from different communities and regions support women's participation in politics, having women in decision-making positions and quotas for women.

(c) Civil society organizations and the national machinery for the advancement of women carried out extensive campaigns to raise women's awareness of the importance of participating in elections, whether as voters or candidates.

(d) A large number of training courses were held for potential female candidates in local and national contests and for female members of political parties, with a view to encouraging them to call for women to be able to exercise their rights. The courses were conducted by several civil society organizations and the National Commission for Lebanese Women, with the support of United Nations agencies and international donors. This can be attributed to the nature of the local election process, in which contests are often family-based and dominated by a male-oriented culture, which holds that women are unable to represent the interests of the family and/or win elections. Women are therefore pressured not to run (see annex 7, table 2).

152. In the 2016 election, the number of female candidates quadrupled from 95 to 381 in comparison to the 2010 elections, and the number of female winners increased from 39 to 57 (see annex 2, table 5). This has important implications, because the position of mayor is dominated by men and has an important political role, because the post of mayor has significant electoral influence in both national and local elections.

153. Statistics for 2018–2019 show that although there were several vacant decision-making positions in a number of State ministries and public institutions (categories 1 to 3), a high proportion of those positions were filled by women (see annex 2, table 6). The Civil Service Council develops the leadership capacity of public administration staff in categories 2 and 3 by running training courses. Those courses cover modern administration concepts, including respecting human rights, involving women in decision-making and giving them key responsibilities so as to ensure that they receive

the same treatment as men with respect to rights and responsibilities, raising awareness of sexual harassment in the workplace and ensuring consideration for gender in the public sector.

154. The Ministry of Social Affairs has encouraged and promoted women's participation in decision-making and political life by:

(a) Launching a media campaign aimed at encouraging Lebanese political parties to nominate women for parliamentary elections and raising social awareness about the importance of women's participation in political life;

(b) Training 40 women from Lebanese political parties, in order to develop their capacities and strengthen their status within those parties;

(c) Providing technical and financial support to female members of municipal councils, in order to motivate them to take part in local decision-making;

(d) Creating a network of women who are active in public life at the national and local levels.

155. There are still only a few women who hold leadership positions in trade unions and the proportion of such positions held by women does not reflect the proportion that they make up of union membership (see annex 1, table 3). No professional unions are currently headed by a woman and the majority of union boards have no more than one woman member, with the exception of the Official Secondary Education Association, the board of which has six female members, and the Editors' Guild, the board of which has three female members.

156. The National Crisis Response Plan and various programmes implemented by civil society organizations with international support have enabled women and young people to be involved in raising the level of cooperation and resolving conflicts between host groups and displaced persons, with a view to preventing the occurrence of any incidents that might threaten their safety and security.

157. On average, women holding 35 per cent of leadership positions in private universities (dean/assistant dean/head of department/head of specialized research or scientific centre), while females make up more than 45 per cent of university faculty members and more than 52 of all part-time contractors. Several women serve as deans or heads of scientific research departments and centres, which are posts that have traditionally been held by men. Women make 25 to 46 per cent of the membership of student club administrative committees at several private universities.

158. The Ministry of Social Affairs has executed several projects as part of its efforts to build a culture of political participation among the younger generation and to train them in local governance concepts. Following are the most notable of those projects:

(a) Developing the rules of procedure for the Children's Parliament of Lebanon. The first draft of those rules of procedure and the working methods of the Children's Parliament were drafted in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders.

(b) The Pioneer Mosaic project, which was funded by the Lebanon office of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation. Thanks to that project, municipal councils for children were established in six partner municipalities, and boys and girls aged 13 to 18 were trained in the application of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including, in particular, the right to express their opinions and participate in decision-making related to their cities. The children studied the members of the municipal councils, identified the needs of their regions and proposed solutions to address them.

**Article 8. Equality of opportunity for women to represent at the international level and serve as diplomatic representatives**

159. Over the past three years, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants has increased the number of women in decision-making positions. There has been a steady increase in the proportion of women in the diplomatic corps and in decision-making positions in the Ministry. The appointment of 16 female ambassadors to serve in the diplomatic missions of Lebanon abroad and another four female ambassadors to serve as departments heads in the central management branch of the Ministry reflects the growth in the number of women who work in this field and the types of posts that they hold (see annex 2, tables 9 and 10).

160. Competence is the criteria on which the Ministry bases its decisions when making appointments to the diplomatic and consular corps, although it does take into account the family circumstances of staff and attempts to keep families together and spouses close to one another. The Ministry seeks to maintain gender parity in the composition of its delegations and to increase the number of women delegates that it dispatches to participate in its various missions. Women made up half of the delegates that the Government dispatched to participate in the Washington and CEDRE (Conférence économique pour le développement, par les réformes et avec les entreprises) conferences. In addition, women serve as members of the delegations dispatched by other ministries, such as the Ministries of Tourism, Information, Environment and Culture, to participate in international conferences. Women make up a large proportion of those delegations.

161. In order to eliminate discrimination against married women, who are prohibited by law from applying for positions in the diplomatic corps, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants submitted a bill to the Cabinet that would amend the last paragraph of article 12 of the Decree-Law No. 1306 (the internal regulations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants), issued on 18 June 1971, and enable women to apply for such positions.

**Article 9. Nationality**

162. The national machinery for the advancement of women and civil society continue to call for the nationality law be amended, so as to remove any provisions that discriminate against women. To that end, they have launched large-scale public awareness-raising campaigns, including the “My nationality is mine and my family’s” and the “My nationality is my dignity” campaigns, and to push Parliament to heed their call. The intensity of those calls and the debate regarding the amendments have heightened in view of the number of bills and draft laws that have been put forward in the past two years and the extent of the proposed amendments, which include the following:

(a) The first proposed amendment would see Lebanon withdraw its reservation to article 9 (2) of the Convention, so as to give women equal rights with men in respect of the nationality of their children

(b) Under the second proposed amendment, the nationality of the mother would be passed on automatically to underage children only. Adult children would be given a “green card” that will entitle them to apply for citizenship once they have satisfied certain conditions.

(c) The third proposed amendment would not stop at allowing Lebanese mothers to pass on their citizenship to their children. It would also enable a broader range of individuals who were not born to either a Lebanese mother or father to acquire or reclaim Lebanese citizenship. The debate centres on how effective each of the proposals would be in achieving equality while avoiding any potential

repercussions, including with respect to the equality of children who have the same mother. The varied proposals have helped to open up a serious debate regarding this issue at the legislative and governmental levels. As a result, the Prime Minister asked the National Commission for Lebanese Women to develop a draft law that would enable Lebanese women married to foreigners to pass on their nationality to their children. The National Commission adopted a participatory approach to the task, including meetings with civil society over a seven-month period, and developed a draft law that would establish full equality. If adopted, the draft law would grant Lebanese nationality to the underage children of Lebanese women. It would also establish a system under which adult children would be given a “green card” that will grant them certain rights and allow them to apply for citizenship, once they have satisfied certain conditions related national security (they must not have been convicted of a serious crime or misdemeanour). The National Commission submitted the draft law to the Prime Minister on 21 May 2019.

163. In order to address problems arising from discrimination in matters of nationality and make matters simpler for those involved in such situations, General Security issued a decision at the beginning of 2019 pursuant to which the residency of a foreign spouse would not be withdrawn and a foreign spouse is granted residency for one year in the event of a dispute between a Lebanese national who has children with a foreign spouse. In August 2016, a decision was issued requiring the consent of the mother and father before a passport could be issued to a minor (18 years or younger), whereas previously the father’s consent was sufficient in order for minor children between the ages of 7 and 18 to be issued a passport. Those two decisions have profoundly limited the ability of men to exploit their position of power and deprive mothers of their children.

164. The National Commission, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, ensured that children whose mother is Lebanese are enrolled in schools with other Lebanese students, not in afternoon schools for non-Lebanese. In addition, the National Commission worked with the administration of the Lebanese Conservatory to ensure that students whose mother is Lebanese but whose father is not are treated on an equal footing with other Lebanese with respect to being exempt from registration fees.

### **Part III. Articles 10–14**

#### **Article 10. Education**

165. In addition to what is set out above in our response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 34 of the concluding observations, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education drafted the implementing decree for Act No. 150 (2011) concerning compulsory and free basic education and submitted it to the Cabinet for processing. However, there are obstacles to the implementation of that Act, the most significant of which are the ability to provide the resources required for implementation and the lack of national statistics on school-age children. The Civil Status Department (Ministry of the Interior) provides the Ministry of Education with information from birth records, so that that the latter can identify annually the children who are covered by the law and ensure that they are enrolled in school. In addition, the Ministry of Education is implementing the Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) I and II crisis response plans, which are in harmony with the Sustainable Development Goals, and seeks to ensure that all Lebanese and displaced children, both male and female, are able to enjoy the right to education. The Ministry has integrated persons with special needs into public schools and equipped more than 75 such schools to meet their needs. It has also provided psychologists. Those measure have had a positive effect, as the number of students with special needs who attended public or private schools during the 2017/18 academic year rose to 6,974. In order to

provide a safe environment for educational achievement, the Ministry launched a policy to protect students in school (2017). In 2017, Parliament recognized the international baccalaureate with a view to promoting global citizenship, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals and the principles of equality and democracy in education.

166. The Education Centre launched its Vision for Education 2030, which includes 17 goals. The Vision takes into account gender and calls for strengthening numeracy skills, providing teachers with training in various topics that will help them improve their performance and working on the basis of the competency framework for teachers that the Ministry of Education and Higher Education developed in 2018. In addition, it places an emphasis on professional skills and ethics, setting standards for evaluating digital and non-digital resources, and modifying curriculums in order to eliminate stereotypes. Effective implementation is being hindered by funding obstacles and a shortage of human resources owing to cost-cutting measures and the suspension of hiring by departments. In June 2019, the Centre signed a partnership agreement with the Ab'ad Institute to integrate gender perspective into future educational programmes and raise awareness of that issue.

167. With the exception of what we stated in our responses to the recommendations contained in paragraphs 26 and 34 of the concluding observations and leaving aside the continued inclusion of social stereotypes in textbooks (see our response with regard to article 5 above), educational policies in Lebanon do not discriminate between females and males in respect of the following:

- (a) Equal access to the various educational levels;
- (b) Awarding of scholarships to outstanding students;
- (c) Academic curriculums;

(d) Examinations or the qualifications of teachers in mixed-sex schools and single-sex schools, with the latter making up only a small percentage of all schools in Lebanon. While the absence of discrimination is important to breaking stereotypes, the majority of Lebanese women choose to pursue careers in the humanities or to join professions that are deemed appropriate for them by society. This can be attributed to:

- Geographical and material impediments, which have long prevented women from studying the sciences. The increase in 1975 of the number of Lebanese University branches made free university education more accessible to girls, who had previously found it difficult to move to the capital in order to pursue a university education. However, the majority of those branches are specialized in the humanities.
- Limited vocational and professional guidance.
- The quality of education and the use of traditional teaching methods, particularly in scientific subjects (for statistics on education, see the tables for article 10 in annex 2).

168. The Education Centre is currently preparing a professional guidance strategy for students, starting at the kindergarten level. It is expected to be released before the end of August 2019. In preparing the guidance strategy, the Centre involved all relevant official and private actors and relied on scientific studies and reports prepared by various relevant ministries. In addition to recommendations and project proposals, the strategy includes a number of life-skills guidance activities aimed at public- and private-school students, regardless of gender or special needs.

169. Every year, the Ministry of Education organizes the Science Olympics, with a view to encouraging students to develop their skills in various scientific disciplines (table 14 of annex 2 shows how successful these efforts have been). The distribution of students across the colleges and branches of the Lebanese University reveals that the majority of female students attending remote branches are enrolled in the humanities, because, as stated earlier, the colleges in those areas have no scientific faculties. Until there is sufficient political will to reform and strengthen the national university, it is hoped that the scientific branches of private universities, which charge low fees and the number of which has increased across the country, will help to increase female enrolment in the scientific disciplines.

170. Educational statistics show that the dropout rate for boys is higher than that for girls. While that statistic might be heartening for women, its negative implications for family relationships cannot be overlooked given the role that men play and the responsibility they have to support their families. In order to address the situation, the Ministry of Social Affairs is implementing the Hayat Card project, which enables eligible families to enrol their children without charge in public schools and public vocational schools, and covers registration, bursary and parents' council fees and the cost of books. It is estimated that 117,741 students enrolled in public primary and secondary schools benefitted from the project in the 2017/18 academic year. On the other hand, it is estimated that 33,408 students enrolled in public vocational and professional schools benefitted from the project in the 2017/18 academic year.

171. The Ministry of Social Affairs continues to implement the national adult education programme and an ever increasing number of civil society organizations are implementing literacy programmes for adult women, electronic literacy programmes for women and girls, and awareness-raising programmes for parents designed to educate about the need to re-enrol their sons and daughters who have dropped out school. The Educational Centre for Research and Development continues to develop and improve school and vocational placement programmes for dropouts, in order to enable them to pursue their education or professional specialization.

172. Women in Lebanon have equal opportunities to participate actively in sports and civic education through schools, universities and clubs. Among the goals set out in the strategy of the Ministry of Youth and Sport are the promotion of sport for all, sporting excellence (producing champions) and promoting the scouting and youth movements. Most of the major sports clubs in Lebanon have female teams that participate in local, regional and international competitions, and many of which have won regional and international championships.

173. The Educational Centre for Research and Development continues to implement a reproductive health programme in schools that it started several years ago, and it has developed age-appropriate curriculum that addresses reproductive health issues. The Centre is currently developing activities that are not age-specific on public health and reproductive health, while taking into account gender-related issues.

#### **Article 11. Employment rights**

174. See our response to the recommendations contained in paragraphs 36 and 44 of the concluding observations and our response with regard to article 4.

175. The Labour Code provides full protection for pregnant women. Under the Code, pregnant women cannot be used to perform hazardous jobs and they cannot be issued a warning or fired when they are on maternity leave unless it is established that they were engaged in other work during such leave. In addition, it provides that women are entitled to 10 weeks paid maternity leave, that workers are entitled to annual paid leave and that workers cannot be dismissed when they are on annual and/or sick leave. Workers can resign without prior notice and entitled to compensation if they or a

member of their family are the victims of violence or any indecent act committed by the employer or his representative. Although married women are allowed to work half-time (M.24) pursuant to Act No. 46 of 21 August 2017 concerning pay-grade and salaries, efforts are under way to enact a law under which the years that a woman works half-time would be considered full working years, instead of half a year as currently stipulated by law, when determining end-of-service compensation. Although the Labour Code and the Public Sector Employee Act guarantee equality, there is clear discrimination:

(a) Between married women and single women with respect to the right to choose an occupation and employment as a result of the reservation that Lebanon maintains to article 16 (g);

(b) In appointments to senior positions, which are subject to political understandings and considerations.

176. Parliamentary committees rejected the bill set out in Decree No. 629 of 25 April 2017 because it contained provisions that discriminate against women. In that bill, the Government was seeking approval for Lebanon to accede to Arab Labour Convention No. 5 (1976) and Arab Convention No. 11 (1979) concerning collective bargaining.

177. The Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Commission for Lebanese Women, in partnership with United Nations agencies, local financial institutions and civil society organizations, have implemented a several programmes and projects to promote women's participation in economic life and help women secure sustainable incomes (see annex 2, table 16, for a detailed list of those programmes and projects). The Ministry of Social Affairs is currently working with ILO and UNICEF to develop a strategic plan to stimulate the handicrafts sector, with a view to providing employment for several groups (women, persons with special needs, prisoners, school dropouts and unemployed youth).

178. On 2 August 2016, the Ministry of Public Health issued circular No. 109 raising the level of coverage for hospitalization for those over 64 years of age from 85 per cent to 100 per cent. In addition, Parliament adopted Act No. 27 of 10 February 2017 (published in *Official Gazette* No. 8 of 16 February 2017), which exempts persons who are above the statutory age from the provisions concerning the illness and maternity insurance branch of the national social security fund. Accordingly, retirees or persons who suffer from a permanent disability are guaranteed insurance coverage, and their entitlements are transferred to their children and partners when they die. The aforementioned act and circular represent a qualitative advance in social care. The Ministry of Social Affairs continues to provide various services to the elderly and those are detailed in annex 2, table 17. The Ministry is considering the possibility of granting special exemptions for seniors. In 2017, the Ministry established standards to ensure the quality of services provided to the elderly by Lebanese institutions.

#### **Article 12. Health care**

179. In 2017, Parliament adopted several laws that have had a positive effect on women's health, including the amendment of the law regulating the practice of the medical profession, the law regulating the psychiatric profession and the law regulating the licensing of aesthetic medicine centres.

180. In 2016, the Ministry of Public Health developed and/or implemented the 2025 Health Strategy, the Mental Health Strategy (2015–2020) and the Inter-Ministerial Strategy for Combating Narcotics and Addiction (2016–2021). It also launched the National e-Health Programme, the aims of which are to utilize various means of communication, such as smartphones and wireless devices, to disseminate

information and provide medical services (m-health); employ e-prescriptions in order to reduce medical errors and costs and ensure the safety and security of telemedicine and the process for prescribing medications; and share medical information electronically between geographical locations in order to provide diagnostic and therapeutic services to individuals, in particular those living in remote areas, persons with disabilities and the elderly (telemedicine).

181. The Ministry continued to provide and develop basic preventive and therapeutic health-care services through its World Bank-supported Emergency Primary Health-care Restoration Programme (2016–2019), with a view to achieving universal health-care coverage. The project was designed to benefit 150,000 low-income persons who had been identified by the National Poverty Targeting Program (NPTP) developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs. On the back of the aforementioned project's success, the Ministry of Public Health decided to broaden the scope of its efforts and launched the Health Resilience Project (May 2019). The aims of this project are to:

(a) Expand the scope of the initial project and strive for universal health-care coverage. The number of displaced Syrians who will benefit from this project is expected to increase from 130,000 to 375,000, and the number of Lebanese beneficiaries from 150,000 to 340,000;

(b) Strengthen the capacity of all 204 primary health-care centres in the national network to provide an expanded package of basic services.

182. According to figures provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Interagency Information Management Unit, there are 218 primary health-care centres, 128 secondary health-care centres and 233 social development centres available to Lebanese nationals and displaced persons. The Ministry of Social Affairs has begun to develop a national social protection strategy (see annex 2, table 18).

183. The Primary Health-Care Department (Ministry of Public Health), in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), provides a variety of reproductive health and family planning services. It also provides preventive services to women, children, young people and men, with a view to improving family health (see the information concerning article 12 in annex 2 for a list of services and procedures). The Ministry has also launched a national campaign for early detection of breast and cervical cancer and a national campaign to promote breastfeeding and raise reproductive health awareness.

184. In 2018, the Ministry of Social Affairs carried out a national awareness-raising campaign that covered the following issues: addiction (addiction to smoking and drugs and cyberaddiction), family education (parenting roles, intergenerational solidarity, positive education and the family budget), reproductive health, nutrition (feeding children, feeding the elderly and persons suffering from chronic illness, feeding pregnant mothers) and social development. Of the overall group of 12,000 beneficiaries, some 8,000 benefited from those awareness-raising campaigns, which were executed in cooperation with more than 25 civil society and non-governmental organizations.

185. Over the past few years, the Ministry of Public Health, in cooperation with its local and international partners, has made some significant achievements:

(a) In 2017, the neonatal mortality rate fell to 6.7 out of every 1,000 live births, while the mortality rate for children under the age of five fell to 9 per 1,000. Both of those rates are lower than the targets established in the Sustainable Development Goals, which are, respectively, 12 per 1,000 and 25 per 1,000.

(b) Although the maternal mortality ratio increased from 9 per 100,000 live births in 2014 to 14 per 100,000 in 2015, and then again to 21 per 100,000 in 2016

(most likely because the Syrian exodus), it fell to 16.9 per 100,000 in 2017, a figure that is still below the target of less than 70 deaths per 100,000 live births that is set out in the Sustainable Development Goals.

186. The Ministry of Social Affairs, the national machinery for the advancement of women and many civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations continue to raise awareness about the necessity of meeting the needs of older persons, in particular elderly women. Studies have shown that elderly women suffer from high levels of exploitation and abuse.

187. Lebanon is one of 54 countries that endorsed the political declaration of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage that was held in October 2019. Pursuant to that declaration, Member States commit themselves to pursuing policies that will reduce out-of-pocket expenditures leading to financial hardship, implementing the most effective interventions to prevent disease, protecting women and children and meeting the needs of women, girls, adolescents, the most marginalized groups and those who are most in need.

### **Article 13. Social and economic rights**

188. We should like to reiterate what we stated in paragraphs 181.1 to 181.8 of our combined fourth and fifth periodic reports regarding the compatibility of the provisions of the Constitution and laws of Lebanon with article 13 of the Convention. In that connection, it should be noted that Parliament amended articles 625 to 627 of the Land Trade Act in 2017 and removed provisions that discriminate against women. In addition, lawmakers amended the title of chapter II, section 5, which concerns bankruptcy. It was changed from “The rights of the wife of a bankrupt person” to “The rights of the spouse of a bankrupt person”, which is more gender-neutral. However, there continue to be discriminatory provisions with regard to benefits in the illness and maternity section of the Social Security Act, the amendments to which have been approved by the parliamentary committees and are awaiting adoption by the plenary (see the response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 14 of the concluding observation and the two related tables). The National Commission for Lebanese Women succeed in persuading the National Association of Banks to issue circular No. 305 (2009), which gives a married woman the right to open a credit account for her minor child without needing to obtain the consent of the peremptory guardian. Nonetheless, there are still several banks that refuse to abide by that circular.

189. As part of the Government’s efforts to ensure that the poorest families are able to enjoy their economic and social rights, the Ministry of Social Affairs continues to implement the National Poverty Targeting Programme, which was launched in 2011. Administration of the programme is partly funded by the World Bank, while the Lebanese Government funds the services provided. The project team works out of the 113 development service centres that the Ministry operates. During the reclassification phase in 2017, the project team developed a system to target the poorest families, in order to ensure effective targeting and identification of families classified as being below the extreme poverty line and to develop means of supporting them. In September 2018, the Cabinet announced results of the reclassification phase and, as a result, the Hayat Cards and the new e-card food voucher were issued (see annex 2, tables 19 and 20, for statistics on beneficiary families). The Ministry of Social Affairs has selected 675 families from among the 10,000 poorest families that recently received the e-card food voucher to participate in a pilot “graduation” programme. Under the programme, at least one female member from those families benefits from the package of services that are provided (see the section on article 13 in annex 2 for details).

190. There is no legal discrimination against women with respect to obtaining bank loans or mortgages. However, the fact that women are not financially independent or have a fixed income or property that can be used as collateral has prevented their entry into business. Several local and international actors have executed several projects to help women overcome that obstacle (see our response regarding article 11 above and also annex 2, table 16).

191. Participation in cultural, sports and social activities and clubs is open to all, with no exclusion or discrimination on the basis of sex. Women participate in the activities of those clubs and the majority of public and private schools and universities have women's sports teams. In addition, there are sports teams for people with special needs. All of these teams participate in local, regional and international competitions. Women make up 25 to 46 per cent of the membership of student club administrative committees at several universities.

192. It should be noted that there has been a significant increase in the number of women who produce, direct and write for the theatre, television and film. Several of those women have addressed social issues, including discrimination against women, in their works that only recently were considered taboo, and some of them have garnered international recognition. The Ministry of Culture supports intellectual, literary, artistic and theatrical work without discrimination. Women made up 152 (22.6 per cent) of the 671 persons who applied for support from the Ministry of Culture.

#### **Article 14. Rural women**

193. With regard to rural women, please see our response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 44 of the concluding observations.

#### *Female Palestine refugees and displaced Syrian women*

194. In addition to the information found in our responses to the recommendation contained in paragraph 12 of the concluding observations concerning displaced women and the recommendation contained in paragraph 40 of the concluding observations concerning female Palestine refugees, it should be noted that, on 1 October 2018, the Ministry of State for Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth, in partnership with the Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation, launched a project to enhance access to protection, promote participation and improve services for refugee and displaced women and host communities. Funded by the European Union "Madad" Regional Trust Fund, the aim of the project is to improve social and legal protection and secure livelihoods for displaced Syrian women and women in host communities. As part of that project, a national observatory for gender equality has been established that is managed by the Ministry of State for Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth. The observatory consists of a steering committee, an administrative unit and a research team. In addition, one of the goals of the Ministry of State for Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth is to develop an action plan to build the capacity of and support job creation for women, young prisoners and persons with special needs.

195. Palestine refugee women fear that interruption of the assistance provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) will adversely affect their situation, in particular given the country's unemployment problem, which has affected Palestinians particularly hard because the implementing decrees for Acts 128 and 129 of 24 August 2010 have yet to be promulgated. In addition, refugee women are unable to lodge a complaint with the Lebanese State because security conditions inside the camps prevent Palestinian women from accessing justice and benefiting from the protection provided by Act

No. 293 (2014) on domestic violence. Palestinian associations inside the camps have developed local mechanisms that are consonant with the situation of Palestinians inside the camps, such as local committees to protect women inside the camps and help them access justice.

196. The Lebanese Government estimates that women make up 25.2 per cent and girls 27.1 per cent of displaced Syrians, or 52.3 per cent of the total Syrian refugee population. More than half of Lebanese, Palestinians and Syrians affected by the crisis are adolescents. Unemployment rates in poor areas are nearly double the national average, thus increasing pressure on host groups. The unemployment rate for working-age Syrian women stands at 84 per cent, and 22 per cent of displaced Syrian girls between the ages of 15 and 19 have been married. Although statistics are not available, it is estimated that cases of violence against women and girls account for 93 per cent of the reported cases of violence among displaced persons. It is also estimated that the proportion of young girls exposed to the worst type of violence (which pushes them into begging and prostitution or leads to their sale) is estimated to be twice as high in female-headed households as in male-headed households. Competition for jobs, resources and services are the most important causes of tension at the local level. This is reflected in the decline in social interaction between Lebanese and Syrians, which fell by 10 per cent between May 2017 and June 2018.

197. With regard to the commitment of the Lebanese State to provide services to displaced persons, please see our response to the recommendation contained in paragraph 12 of the concluding observations.

#### *Female prisoners*

198. Pursuant to Service Note No. 204/469F7 of 26 September 2014, a special room has been made available in each women's prison in order to ensure that children can interact with their imprisoned mothers without any physical barriers, provided that the encounter takes place in the presence of a female prison guard.

199. Since 2017, the parliamentary Human Rights Committee, in keeping with the mandate of the legislature to oversee the work of the executive authorities, has held several sessions with the relevant ministries and stakeholders to discuss prisons, with a focus on three main themes:

(a) Progress made in projects aimed at improving prison conditions through the construction and/or rehabilitation of prisons;

(b) Judicial issues, in particular pre-trial detention (with and without cause) and the occasional slowness of the courts in sentencing;

(c) Progress made in improving social and health conditions in prisons. The parliamentary Human Rights Committee has stated that the relevant ministries, the Internal Security Forces and the Ministry of Justice must develop an action plan to follow up on the day-to-day living conditions of prisoners, including nutrition, sanitation, vocational instruction and such health-related matters as clean living and periodic check-ups. The process of achieving that aim will require all ministries to coordinate their efforts. At the parliamentary Human Rights Committee meeting that was held on 30 May 2019, the Minister of the Interior and Municipalities presented her plan to improve prison conditions and announced that construction of Majdalia prison and another prison, for juveniles, had begun. Those prisons meet the requirements for the rehabilitation of prisoners, afford them the opportunity to live with dignity inside prison and enable them to reintegrate into society after their release. The National Commission for Lebanese Women, in partnership with civil society, has helped to improve health conditions at Ba'abda Prison. Child-friendly rooms have been made available in Barbar Khazan Prison where the children of

female prisoners can be hosted. The latter initiative falls under the contract that the Ministry of Justice concluded with charities and civil society organizations to help victims of human trafficking.

200. The Ministry of Social Affairs, in keeping with its mandate to empower women and promote their rights, provides assistance to imprisoned women because they are one of the most marginalized groups. The Ministry provides social services to female prisoners, pregnant inmates, newborns and children in five prisons (Ba'abda, Barbar al-Khazan, Tripoli, Zahlah and Zahr al-Bashiq for juvenile females) through a specialized team composed of social workers and doctors. The assistance is provided to women prisoners without any discrimination. Indeed, women prisoners of various nationalities are beneficiaries. Table 21 in annex 2 shows how many of the 3,780 female prisoners benefited from each type of service offered by the Ministry of Social Affairs (see annex 2 for a list of services provided by the Ministry to female prisoners). The Ministry is currently developing the institutional framework for the work that it does in women's prisons, with a view to reintegrating imprisoned women into society. As part of that work, a team that is specialized in this field is developing a guide designed to help female prisoners reintegrate into society. The guide contains three main themes:

(a) Improving the conditions of the prisoner and helping her to cope with her new reality inside prison.

(b) Changing the nature of the relationship between the prisoner and her family.

(c) Ensuring that an appropriate and welcoming environment awaits the female prisoner outside prison. The Ministry will adopt this guide and see that it is put into effect. The guide will cover the standards that are to be adopted in prisons, the extent and modalities of intervention (inside prison, with the family and outside prison) and the specialized human resources required. In addition, the Ministry will seek to strengthen networking, coordination and cooperation with the relevant government agencies, civil society organizations and international organizations.

201. Building the capacity and supporting job creation for women, young prisoners persons with special needs is one of the main objectives contained in the action plan of the Ministry of State for Economic Empowerment of Women and Youth.

#### **Part IV. Articles 15–16**

##### **Article 15. Equality before the law**

202. With the exception of the discriminatory provisions contained in certain laws (e.g., the Nationality Act, the Social Security Act, the Personal Status Act and the Penal Code), which are being amended through the submission of the appropriate bills, the civil laws of Lebanon do not discriminate against women in respect of the ability to conclude contracts and to own and manage property. No gender disaggregated data is available on change of ownership of companies, institutions, workshops, factories and land, in particular agricultural land, for the period 2015–2018 because of the criteria established in the relevant information systems. According to the Ministry of Finance, the number of properties registered to individuals in 2019 was 3,648,320, of which 577,516 were owned by women.

203. Lebanese law governing the courts and the procedures followed by civil and criminal courts do not discriminate against women. As noted in various parts of this report (see the third paragraph of the section entitled “Constitutional framework” in the introduction), the courts have upheld women's rights in several decisions on the basis of international instruments and international laws, and the civil and penal courts have handed down many judgements that give women justice. This is

particularly evident in the application of Act No. 422 (2002) on the protection of juveniles offenders or vulnerable juveniles and with regard to the Protecting Women and All Family Members from Domestic Violence Act (293/2014), which is applied by the civil courts. Moreover, the penal courts have issued protection orders that require the respondent to provide money for food, clothing and education, and to bear financial responsibility for the medical treatment and hospitalization of the victim and any other persons covered by the protection order.

#### **Article 16. Marriage and family relations**

204. Most discrimination against women, both in law and in practice, stems from the personal status laws of religious communities and the prevailing male-oriented mentality. Several obstacles stand in the way of amending the Constitution so as to end the control over civil status matters exercised by religious communities, and efforts are under way to dampen opposition among those communities to the adoption of certain laws relating to civil status. It is hoped that Parliament will be able to adopt a law making civil marriage either mandatory or optional, in which case a woman will have the freedom to choose which law shall apply to her marriage and family relationships.

205. There is currently serious political will and a commitment on the part of Government and Parliament to eliminate discrimination against women. In addition, the judiciary is making a serious effort to ensure that laws are interpreted and judgements are handed down in keeping with international law and international conventions, and in line with developments relating to rights and freedoms. Moreover, the various religious communities are constantly being urged to amend their personal status laws in order to ensure that they uphold the principle of equality, which is enshrined in the Constitution. In that connection, we note that the National Commission for Lebanese Women continues to organize and hold dialogues with clerics, the most recent of which was held in 2019, in order to reconcile views on preventing child marriage and adopting a law that would establish a minimum age of marriage.

206. On 26 November 2018, the General Directorate of the Internal Security Forces issued its general memorandum 204/484 *shin* concerning circular No. 76/*sad*/2018 issued by the Office of the Public Prosecutor at the Court of Cassation on 13 November 2018 mandating that the judicial police must rely on the services of a social worker, and record that fact in the case transcript, when executing judicial decisions relating to the custody and surrender of children and minors.

207. The General Directorate of Personal Status issued a circular ordering that the names of the children of a divorced woman and their respective register entry numbers must be included in notes section of the woman's family record.

208. The Druze community has made several significant amendments to its Personal Status Code, which was adopted in 1948. Those amendments prohibit the marriage of young men who are under the age of 16 and girls who are under the age of 15; introduce new provisions to ensure that the value of advance dowry is maintained in the face of currency depreciation; regulate marriage contract procedures; raise the age of custody, so as to ensure that the interests of the child are paramount and guarantee the right of both parents to visitation; guarantees daughters the right to full inheritance where there are no male heirs (Act No. 58 of 17 October 2017). Those amendments were made thanks to the efforts of the National Commission for Lebanese Women and civil society.