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Maat For Peace, Development, and Human Rights

UPR Mid-term report

On the Egyptian government progress in the 2014 recommendations implementation

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Preface

In November 2014, the Arab Republic of Egypt was subordinated to the Universal Periodic Review, receiving 300 recommendations during the interactive dialogue session, in March 2015, and during the report adoption session, the government fully and partially accepted 247 recommendations, and during the period between March 2015 and January 2017 (22 months), the Egyptian political arena witnessed political stability upon the second revolutionary wave in June 30th 2013, where the national forces consented to meet the demands on tens of millions who gathered in the streets demanding the isolation of previous president Mohamed Morsi, affiliated the Muslim Brotherhood, whom had numerous human rights violations and aggression against the democratic path practiced during his rule following the January 2011 revolution.

The Egyptian Parliament was elected by the end of 2015, the first convening period and almost half the second convening period completed by the time of this report preparation, the same period witnessed severe economic pressures upon the Egyptian government implementation of a financial reform program, along with the impact of the economic procedures on the national currency sharp decline leading to the significant inflammation, leaving behind high rates of unemployment, poverty and rates of those subject to living under the poverty line.

During the same period, MAAT for Peace, Development and Human Rights called for the establishment of the *"Egyptian Civil Society Coalition for the Universal Periodic Review"*, composing till the time of this report preparation 227 non-governmental organizations, with a democratically elected Board of Trustees in May 2016.

Methodology

The CSOs Coalition observed and followed-up the Egyptian government commitment to the UPR recommendations implementation approved in March 2015, till January 2017, where the observation process based on highlighting the following information:

1. Relative topics to the recommendations (25 topics), as well as the linked recommendations to every topic;
2. Relative constitutional framework to every topic;
3. Legal developments;
4. The gaps in the legal and institutional system;
5. The key statics and facts linked to the issues.

Progress in the recommendations implementation:

• Strengthening the efforts to counter terrorism

6 recommendations were presented to the Egyptian government concerning the efforts to counter terrorism, those recommendations were fully accepted.

The Egyptian constitution stipulates in Art. 237 "The State shall fight all types and forms of terrorism, and track its funding sources as a threat to the nation and its citizens, within a specific timeframe while guaranteeing basic rights and freedoms. .

The law shall regulate the provisions and procedures of fighting terrorism, and fair compensation for the damages resulting therefrom and because thereof".

In August 2015, the Anti-Terrorism Law No. 94/2015 was issued, defining the terms terrorist groups and terrorist acts, specified special department in the Criminal and Misdemeanors Courts to review the cases, the Law stipulated on the protection of the law implementers including the in case of the use of force during the implementation of the Law. The Law fines those whom transmit or disseminate "false information" on the attacks or military operations inconsistent with the official version stated by the official authorities. The Law, is considered one of the most significant laws adopted by the Egyptian governorate in light of its fights against terrorism, despite the criticism addressed to the Law as being considered restrictive to rights and freedoms in some of its articles.

Egypt, during the past two years witnessed several terror acts taking the lives of innocent civilians, police and military members, prominent judicial leaders, and public figures. Led by the assassination of former Prosecutor General Hesham Barakat and the attempt to assassinate the Deputy Attorney General, the attempt to assassinate Dr. Ali Gomaa, one of the most moderate religious figures, and the assassination of Rev. Raphael Moussa priest of St. George Church in El-Arish.

- **Promoting child and family rights**

The Egyptian government received 7 recommendations linked to the promotion and protection of child and family rights, all of them were accepted.

The constitution, in Art. 10 stipulates "The family is the nucleus of society, and is founded on religion, morality, and patriotism. The State shall ensure its cohesion, stability and the establishment of its values."

Art. 80 stated "The State shall provide children with care and protection from all forms of violence, abuse, mistreatment and commercial and sexual exploitation."

During the reporting period, the Prime Minister Decree to amend some articles of the Executive Regulations of the Child Law was issued, Decree No. 178/2016 stipulated the amendment of some of the Executive Regulations articles issued in 2010, allowing the delivery of children aged 3 months, instead of 2 years to the alternative families willing to adopt them, along with expanding the alternative families base whom are entitled to adopt unknown descent children via increasing the age of the willing couple to adopt to 60 years instead of 55 years, the conditions to be available in those families were also amended to guarantee the child growing-up in a capable family socially, financially, healthily, and psychologically, along with eliminating the paid children adoption.

During the same period, the decree to establish the childhood and maternity care fund headed by the secretary general of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood in August 2016, while the Ministry of Social Solidarity launched a national project addressing the Street Children Phenomena in July 2016.

Still, there is an urgent need to more legislative and procedural reforms to overcome the exploitation of children and minimize the Street Children phenomena, as well as the overcome of the children work in dangerous professions, which requires the amendment of Child Law, Labor Law, Welfare Homes Law, and Penal Code.

- **Supporting the People with Disabilities**

The Egyptian government received 9 recommendations on supporting the rights of the people with disabilities, out of which 8 recommendations were accepted and one was noted.

The Egyptian Constitution, in many of its articles stipulated the necessity to support the people with disability along with working on protecting their rights and guaranteeing the lack of discrimination against them regarding the public rights and freedoms in the context of the constitution guarantee to public rights and freedoms, (Arts. 53-55), in Art. 81, the Constitution stated "The State shall guarantee the health, economic, social, cultural, entertainment, sporting and educational rights of persons with disabilities and dwarves, strive to provide them with job opportunities, allocate a percentage of job opportunities to them, and adapt public facilities and their surrounding environment to their special needs. The State shall also ensure their exercise of all political rights and integration with other citizens in compliance with the principles of equality, justice and equal opportunities."

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Social Solidarity launched the National Strategy for the Protection and Rehabilitation of the Persons with Disabilities, which lasts for three years till 2019, several Ministerial Decrees were also issued supporting the advancement of educational rights for disabled students led by:

1. The issuance of Decree No. 229/2016 on the integration of students with minor disability in the Technical Schools;
2. The Cabinet's adoption to a draft law amending some of the Provisions of the Regulations to the Universities Regulation Law, issued by Law No. 49/1972, stipulating the establishment of the first College for the Sciences of persons with disabilities and rehabilitation at Zagazig University, during the same period, a Decision was issued by the Supreme Council of Universities to open all the university colleges to students with disability in the new students admission for colleges and higher institutes, conditioning the approval of the concerned committee in the college applied for by the student;
3. Decree No. 42/2015 by the Ministry of Education was issued on the admission of students with minor disability in the public and private schools.

Concurrently with the issuance of the current report, the Egyptian parliament is discussing a dedicated law for the persons with disabilities, while experiencing challenges limiting the people with disabilities access to many of their legal rights, the qualified schools to accommodate the students with disabilities are insufficient and have poor capacity, and one of those schools was shut down in Damanhour, Behira governorate in September 2016.

Despite the Egyptian law stipulates the dedication of 5% of job opportunities in any facility to people with disabilities, this right is not activated especially in the economic and service institutions not owned by the state, which negatively impacts the economic and social rights for the people with disabilities, the integration of the people with disabilities is neither clear nor taken into consideration in the legal reality and practical practices in the different community sectors in violation to the Egyptian constitution, most of the public facilities and educational and health institutions are not qualified.

• **Combating Violence Against Women**

The Egyptian government received 28 recommendations linked to fighting violence against women, 25 out of them were accepted and 3 were partially accepted.

The Egyptian constitution in Art.11 stipulated "The State shall protect women against all forms of violence and ensure enabling women to strike a balance between family duties and work requirements. The State shall provide care to and protection of motherhood and childhood, female heads of families, and elderly and neediest women."

During the reporting period, Law No. 78/2016 was issued on the amendment of some of the Penal Code provisions regarding stiffening penalties against the Female Genital Mutilation, where the penalty was increased from no less than three months and not to exceed two years in prison, to no less than five years and not to exceed seven years.

Nevertheless, the FGM rates are still high, most of them are conducted in violation of the law, with no effective mechanisms to limit the phenomena, while the domestic violence against women was promoted without any legal barriers guaranteeing the protection of women from these practices, addition to the prevalence of sexual harassment under the poor legal penalties against the offender and lack of community awareness of its seriousness.

• **Fair Trial Guarantees**

The Egyptian government received 19 recommendations linked to fair trial guarantees, 12 recommendations out of them were accepted, 5 were partially accepted, and two were noted.

The Egyptian constitution in Arts. 96-98 provides proper guarantees for the right in fair trial, the current Code of Criminal Procedure also sets up fair trial guarantees, nevertheless, it does not allow accelerating the pace of litigation to have access to prompt justice, despite the current invitations to amend the law and the initiatives of the concerned ministries to present proposals of the required

amendments, a strong concern exists relative to those amendments implications on the fair trial guarantees.

The reporting period witnessed considerable debate on concluding some of the cases of killing of demonstrators in the wake of January 2011 revolution, and the prolonged trials for some police members accusers in those cases led by the lack of decisiveness in the murder of Shaimaa ElSabagh after two year on her assassination.

• **Protecting Peaceful Assembly**

The Egyptian governorate received 15 recommendations linked to the protection of the right to Peaceful Assembly, out of which 5 recommendations were accepted, 4 were partially accepted, and 6 recommendations were noted.

Art. 73 of the constitution stipulated "Citizens shall have the right to organize public meetings, marches, demonstrations and all forms of peaceful protests, without carrying arms of any kind, by serving a notification as regulated by Law. The right to peaceful and private assembly is guaranteed without need for prior notification. Security forces may not attend, monitor or eavesdrop on such meetings."

Nevertheless, Law No. 107/2013 organizing peaceful assembly is considered an impediment to the realization of the right to demonstrate, which recently encouraged the Constitutional Court to declare the unconstitutionality of the tenth article authorizing the Minister of Interior or the security director concerned to cancel, postpone, or modify the route of a public meeting, parade, protest.

During the reporting period, the Egyptian arena witnessed several incidents concerning banning protests, arresting the participating parties and putting them under trial under the law, along with deciding crippling sanctions against many of them. The sentences against the protesters in the maritime border demarcation between Egypt and Saudi Arabia case are the most evident examples.

• **Protecting the Minorities Rights**

Two recommendations were addressed to Egypt concerning the necessity to protect and guarantee the rights of minorities, they were partially accepted by the government.

The Egyptian constitution in Art. 3 stated "The principles of Christian and Jewish Sharia of Egyptian Christians and Jews are the main source of legislations that regulate their respective personal status, religious affairs, and selection of spiritual leaders.", Art. 64 stated "Freedom of belief is absolute. The freedom of practicing religious rituals and establishing worship places for the followers of heavenly religions is a right regulated by Law."

During the reporting period, Law No. 80/2016 was issued on the Churches Construction and Renovation, when Cairo University issued a Decision to eliminate the religious entry in the official papers and issued certificates by the university.

Some sectarian practices by citizens against Christians still prevail, the most significant incidents included the assault in the Minya province village of Karama on seven houses for Christian families, along with stripping a 70-year-old Christian woman and parading her naked on the streets in May 2016. And the attack of some of native residents in Alola Alsharkia village located at Alnahda area in Ameria, Alexandria, on St. Mary and St. George churches along with the assault of some of the village residents in September 2015.

• **Protecting the Freedom of Expression**

11 recommendations were presented to the Egyptian state on the protection of the Freedom of Expression, out of which 7 were accepted, one was partially accepted and 3 were noted.

The Egyptian constitution in Arts. 65, 67, 70, and 71 guaranteed all forms of freedom of expression, literature and artistic creativity, freedom of journalism and freedom of media, along with prohibiting censorship on newspapers and media outlets.

During the reporting period, Law No. 92/2016 on the Institutional Organization for Journalism and Media was issued, including grave legal shortcomings restricting the freedom of expression, led by paragraph "w" of Art. 98 of the Penal Code, concerning the penalty of contempt of religion, as well as the provisions of other laws restricting the freedom of expression that could be interpreted or used to detract from the newspapers and media rights, such as Art. 35 of Anti-terrorism Law No. 94/2015 stipulating that "Whoever intentionally, by any means, publishes, broadcasts, displays, or promotes false news or statements on terrorist acts inside the country or anti-terrorism operations contrary to the official statements released by the Ministry of Defense shall be punishable by a fine of no less than 200,000 Egyptian pounds and no more than 500,000 Egyptian pounds, without prejudice to the disciplinary penalties prescribed.

In all cases, the court shall prohibit the convicted party from practicing the profession for a period not exceeding one year if the crime is a breach to the ethics of the profession".

During the same period, creators, intellectuals and scholars faced penalties of imprisonment, led by researcher Islam Elbehiary and novelist Ahmed Nagy whom were charged with contempt of religions, as well as the arrest of some press photographers and journalists with accusations relative to violation of Protest Law or publishing media material deemed by the authorities as contrary to the truth.

• Promoting Youth Rights

7 recommendations were addressed to the Egyptian government advancing youth rights, and all of them were accepted, where the Egyptian constitution stipulates in Art. 82 "The State shall guarantee the provision of care to the youth and youngsters shall endeavour to discover their talents; develop their cultural, scientific, psychological, physical and creative abilities, encourage their engagement in group and volunteer activities and enable them to participate in public life."

When Arts.s 180 and 244 dedicated an allocation for youth to be represented in the elected parliaments and local councils.

During the reporting period, the first national congress for youth was conducted, followed by youth monthly congresses, the discussions had been marked by openness and freedom, and resulted in good decisions regarding the pardon of imprisoned youth on cases linked to protesting, as well as other relative decisions to the social and economic rights for youth.

Nevertheless, the youth in Egypt are still suffering economically, according to the official data published by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, 26.7% of the youth between 18-29 are unemployed.

Three years after the Constitution's adoption, and six years after its dissolution, the local elections ensuring significant representation for youth has not been conducted yet, while other issue linked to the lack of youth capacity to access projects finance opportunities and sponsorships for their economic initiatives due to the poor political, economic and financial policies adopted in this regards.

• Advancing Women Rights

The Egyptian government received 39 recommendations linked to the advancement of women rights, 35 out of them were accepted, 3 were partially accepted and 1 was noted.

The Egyptian constitution guaranteed women's rights and their equality with men in Art. 11 guaranteeing the achievement of equality between women and men in all civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. While Art. 180 ensured adequate representation for women in local councils.

During the reporting period, the National Council for Women launched a media campaign to support Egyptian women entitled "Eltaa Elmarboota Ser Koutek", in participation with the United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Development Program, UN Women and the Swedish government.

The efforts aiming at empowering women did not fruit yet, according to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, the contribution rates in economic activity indicates significant variation between males and females, where the males contribution rate is estimated by 70.5% versus 22.5% for females, while males employment rate reached 63.9% versus 17% for females.

On the political level, women obtained 6 seats in 5 committees out of 25 specific committee in the Egyptian parliament, representing 6% of the bureau members. Women representation in political, executive and judicial positions is very limited, where no women occupy the governor position, and 4 female ministers out of 34 ministers are in office, as well as the very poor rates for women in leadership and supervision positions in the government institutions, reaching 18.8% for the appointed women in senior management positions, and 28.8% for general manager positions.

• **Combating Torture**

11 recommendations were presented to the Egyptian state linked to combating torture, all of them were accepted by the Egyptian government, Art. 52 of the constitution stipulated that "Torture in all forms and types is a crime that is not subject to prescription".

Despite the fact that torture practices prevailing before the 2011 revolution are not currently practiced in a systematic large scale, several incidents were exposed and are mostly under investigation led by the murder of Talaat Shabib in Luxor and Magdy Makeen in Cairo, lawyer Kareem Hamdy in Matarya police station, and Sayed Alkhazouly in Rasheed police station at Behira because of torture.

The fundamental loophole in the law represents in the lack of amendment of Art.s 126 and 129 of the Egyptian Penal Code, and the lack of identification of the crime of torture in consistency with the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ratified by Egypt.

• **Fighting Corruption**

7 recommendations were presented to the Egyptian state relative to the fight against corruption, all of them were accepted, the Egyptian constitution in Art. 218 stated that "The State shall fight corruption, and the competent control agencies and organizations shall be identified by Law.

Competent control agencies and organizations shall coordinate their activities in combating corruption, enhancing the values of integrity and transparency in order to ensure the sound performance of public functions and preserve public funds, and shall develop and follow up execution of a national strategy to combat corruption in collaboration with other competent agencies and organizations, as regulated by Law."

Despite the powerful political discourse on the fights against corruption, and the significant efforts made by the Egyptian Administrative Control Authority in the seizure of corruption incidents and brining the perpetrators to trial, the institutional and legislative structures do not guarantee adequate protection from corruption, along with providing numerous defects allowing impunity for corruption offenders. For instance, the institutional environment lacks for an independent national commission to combat corruption as stipulated in the United Nations Convention against Corruption, when the legislative environment lacks for a legislation protecting informants and witnesses, a law for the freedom of information, in addition to the serious shortcomings in the Penal Code and Illegal Earning Law allows the pardon of bribery offenders and mediators and aggression on public money offenders.

• **Joining International Conventions for Human Rights and Withdrawal of Reservations**

10 recommendations were presented to the Egyptian government to join the international conventions and withdraw the reservations, 6 of them were accepted, and 4 were noted, the Egyptian constitution in Art. 93 stated that "The State shall be bound by the international human rights agreements, covenants and conventions ratified by Egypt, and which shall have the force of law after publication in accordance with the prescribed conditions."

The reporting period did not witness any steps towards the ratification of optional protocols for some international conventions joined by Egypt, where Egypt reservations on some of the conventions articles are the same as before its submission to the UPR in November 2014, while some laws are violating the international commitments and constitutional articles such as the articles criminalizing torture in the Penal Code, Syndicates Laws, Civil Work Organization Law and Protests Law.

• **Enhancing Human Rights Respect Practices Relative to Law Enforcement Authorities**

10 recommendations were presented to the Egyptian state regarding the promotion of human rights respect by law enforcement authorities, all of them were accepted by the government, the constitution in Art. 206 stipulates "The police force is a statutory civil body that is dedicated to the service of the People and its loyalty shall be to the People. It shall ensure safety and security of the citizens, preserve public order and morality. It shall comply with the duties set out in the Constitution and the law, and shall respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. The State shall guarantee that the staff of the Police force perform their duties, and the relevant guarantees shall be regulated by Law.", and Art. 51 states that "Dignity is the right of every human being and may not be violated. The State shall respect and protect human dignity."

During the reporting period, Law No. 64/2016 was issued on the amendment of some of the provisions of the Police Authority Act, obligating police officers to adhere to the law provisions, led by the respect of the constitution, law, human rights while using the authority and power along with committing to the procedural integrity, transparency, and legitimacy, to protect rights and freedoms, preserving human dignity and respecting democratic values according to the constitution and law, guaranteeing constitutional, legal rights and human rights standards in dealing with the defendants and suspects in crimes. On January 18, 2017, General Magdi Abdel Ghaffar, the Minister of the Interior, announced the creation of a standing committee to adjust security performance in the framework of human rights, to develop strategies and action plans in all fields relevant to the ministry in accordance with the Egyptian constitution and laws as well as obligations under international treaties.

It may be early to judge the feasibility of these amendments, but the practices that have been explained previously regarding torture in which police officers are accused as well as cases of violence with demonstrators contradicts with the essential of these legislative changes and require the committee to adopt a clear vision and measures to curb these practices and ensure that they do not recur.

• **Strengthening National Institutions in the Fields of Democracy and Human Rights**

Two recommendations were presented to the Egyptian government in this regard and both were accepted.

The Egyptian Constitution in Art. 214 stipulates that "the law shall specify the independent national councils, including the National Council for Human Rights, the National Council for Women, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, and the National Council for the Persons with Disabilities. The law shall state the composition, mandates, and guarantees for the independence and neutrality of their respective members. Each council shall have the right to report to the competent authorities any violations pertaining to their fields of work".

During the period covered by the report, the reality shows the slowness of the procedures to amend the National Council for Human Rights law to ensure the Council's independency of the executive authority.

Similarly for the establishment of the National Electoral Commission and the publication of the law governing its work.

• **Ensuring the Right of Access to Sanitation and Drinking Water Services**

The Egyptian government has received a recommendation on the right of access to sanitation and drinking water that has been accepted by the government.

The Egyptian Constitution does not include explicit articles on the right of citizens to access sanitation and drinking water, but this right is implicitly guaranteed in Art. 18 on the right to health care, and in Art. 78 on the right to housing and the confrontation of slum problems.

During the period covered by this report, efforts have been made to expand sewerage coverage and the first law to regulate the sanitation and drinking water sector in Egypt is being discussed. On the other hand, 50% of Egyptian citizens still do not have sanitation services and more than 80% of rural areas do not have a sewage system and there are frequent complaints about the quality of drinking water and its pollution.

• **Cooperation with International Mechanisms for the Protection of Human Rights**

The Egyptian government received 15 recommendations related to cooperation with international mechanisms to protect human rights. The Government accepted 7 recommendations, partially accepted a recommendation and took note of the remaining 7 recommendations.

During the period covered by the present report, Egypt has submitted reports to some human rights treaty bodies, but cooperation with special rapporteurs is not at the required level. Indeed, the request of the Rapporteur on Torture to visit Egypt did not receive the approval of the Egyptian government. In addition, no action has yet been taken on the establishment of a headquarters for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Egypt.

On the institutional level, the lack of a permanent body responsible for communicating with international human rights mechanisms is still an issue. The Coalition called for the establishment of a permanent national committee with the task of monitoring all recommendations and preparing all reports for international mechanisms for the protection of human rights. But until now there is only a non-permanent committee concerned with the universal periodic review which is not keen to inform the population of the results of its work and periodic meetings, and there is no clear mechanism for connecting this committee with civil society actors.

• **Combating Human Trafficking and Illegal Immigration**

The Egyptian government has accepted all 12 recommendations related to combating human trafficking and illegal immigration.

Art. 89 of the Egyptian Constitution prohibits all forms of slavery, enslavement, oppression and forced exploitation of human beings, sex trade and other forms of trafficking in human beings and Art. 60 prohibits trafficking in human organs.

During the reporting period, Act No. 82 of 2016 was adopted to combat "illegal immigration and smuggling of migrants" to impose tougher penalties on all those who have contributed and participated in the operation of illegal immigration and to impose prison sentences for any person who has created or managed a place for housing illegal migrants or who has grouped or transported them or facilitated or offered them any services. Under the law, a national committee was set up in the Council of Ministers called the "National coordination committee for the prevention and control of illegal immigration and human trafficking". The Committee is responsible for coordinating national and international plans and programs to prevent and combat illegal immigration, provide services for illegal immigrants and protect

witnesses in the context of international obligations arising from bilateral or multilateral international agreements applicable in the Arab Republic of Egypt.

However, the phenomenon of illegal immigration was significant during the period covered by the report; Egypt is an important stop for smuggling gangs of illegal immigrants. Old fishing boats leave the ports of Damietta or Alexandria, transporting migrants to Italy or Greece and thousands of young people have paid their lives during these voyages, the most important incident is the drowning in September 2016 of an illegal immigration ship off the coast of Rashid that killed 200 people.

According to the International Organization for Migration data, Egyptian migrants arriving in Italy increased between January and May 2016; the number reached 1815 illegal migrants, including 1147 "unaccompanied" children (78%), which ranks Egypt as the tenth place in the exporting countries of illegal migrants to Italy and the number of illegal immigrants from Egypt who arrived in Greece amounted to 1000 people in 2015.

During the same period covered by the report, cases related to human organ trafficking were revealed; the Administrative Control Authority seized in December 2016, the largest international network of trafficking in human organs that includes Egyptians and Arabs. And according to the Administrative Control Authority's statement, members of the network have taken advantage of the needs of ordinary citizens and have seduced them with small sums of money in exchange of their organs and trafficking them.

• **Strengthening Human Rights Education Programs**

Egypt received 11 recommendations in the context of the promotion of human rights education. The Egyptian government accepted 10 and noted one.

Art. 24 of the Egyptian Constitution states that "Universities shall teach human rights".

Until the date of the preparation of this report, there has been no announcement of a human rights education curriculum at the various levels of education and there have been no national plans adopting an institutional and permanent nature related to human rights education.

• **Promoting the Right to Social Security**

Egypt received 3 recommendations related to the right to social security that were accepted by the Egyptian government.

The Egyptian Constitution stipulates in Art. 8 that "Society is based on social solidarity. The State shall achieve social justice and provide the means to achieve social interdependence, in order to ensure a decent life for all citizens, as regulated by Law".

During the period covered by the report, several positive amendments were made to the Social Security Act which enabled the Council of Ministers to introduce different types of security pensions for the beneficiaries. On the basis of this legal amendment, the Council of Ministers promulgated Decree No. 540 for the year 2015, on "Solidarity and Dignity" program, in order to provide conditional financial support to families and individuals. This program is one of the most important achievements in the field of social security despite the low value of the pension. In the solidarity program, families worthy of support receive a sum of 325 pounds and the students get an additional 60 to 100 pounds depending on their level of education. The dignity program is an individual program that applies to individuals over the age of 65 and persons with disabilities who are unable to work; the individual receives an amount of 350 pounds. It is permissible to combine the two programs for certain individuals according to the provisions of the law. It is also important to note that this program targets the poorest families who need this financial support.

On the other hand, the beneficiaries of aid and security pensions are significantly lower than the beneficiaries actually eligible among the poor or low-income groups, where it is estimated that nearly

one third of Egyptian families lives below the poverty line and the value of security pensions is very low compared to the severe inflation observed in the Egyptian market in recent months.

- **Respect for Religious Tolerance and Cultural Diversity**

Egypt has received 11 recommendations on respecting and promoting initiatives of dialogue and religious tolerance all have been accepted by the Egyptian government.

The Egyptian Constitution includes multiple articles that reinforce the notion of citizenship and equality between citizens irrespective of their religion, but it does not contain specific articles to anchor the role of the State in integrating the values of dialogue and religious tolerance and support for related initiatives. The official political discourse highlighted these issues on several occasions.

During the period covered by the report, the appeal was raised more than once on several occasions claiming renewal and reform of religious discourse, particularly in light of the exploitation of extremist groups of erroneous understanding of most religious texts that causes practices of impious and verbal and physical violence. But in reality no serious steps have been taken to reform religious discourse during the period covered by the report and the State has not taken serious initiatives to manage a positive and constructive dialogue between members of different religions and has not taken concrete steps to promote religious tolerance.

- **Promoting Corporate Social Responsibility**

Egypt has received 4 recommendations for the promotion of corporate social responsibility that have been accepted.

Art. 36 of the Egyptian Constitution stipulates that "The State shall motivate the private sector to undertake its social responsibility in serving the economy and society".

Nevertheless, the period covered by the report has not seen the issuance of legislation or decisions that will motivate companies to implement a social responsibility approach, but many companies that devote a reasonable budget to social responsibility activities have reduced their budgets due to the difficult economic conditions prevailing in Egypt.

- **Guaranteeing the Right to Economic Development**

Egypt received 11 recommendations in this regard, all of which were accepted by the Government.

Art. 236 of the Egyptian Constitution stipulates that the State must ensure "setting and implementing a plan for the comprehensive economic and urban development of border and underprivileged areas, including Upper Egypt, Sinai, Matrouh, and Nubia". And Art. 238 states that the objectives of the tax system are focused on economic development.

- **Improving the Working Environment of NGOs**

Egypt received 20 recommendations on the issue of improving the working environment of non-governmental organizations, out of which 12 recommendations were accepted, 6 were partially accepted and one was noted.

The Egyptian Constitution provides in Art. 75 that "All citizens shall have the right to form non-governmental associations and foundations on democratic basis, which shall acquire legal personality upon notification. Such associations and foundations shall have the right to practice their activities freely, and administrative agencies may not interfere in their affairs or dissolve them, or dissolve their boards of directors or boards of trustees save by a court judgment. The establishment or continuation of non-governmental associations and foundations, whose statutes or activities are secretive or

conducted in secret or which are of military or quasi-military nature is prohibited as regulated by Law".

The period covered by the report has not witnessed the completion of the adoption of a new law on civil work to replace restrictive law No. 84 of 2002, which restricts the rights of civil society organizations and contradicts the essence of the constitutional text and the recommendations of the UPR. Despite the fact that the Parliament started the passing of a defective law on civil work in December 2016, pressures from NGOs prompted the President to ask the Parliament to reconsider the law in accordance with the constitutional authority that granted it power of veto. The fate of this new law remains unknown.

The same period saw a severe shrinking of the right of organizations to receive funds for the implementation of its development interventions.

• **Ensuring the Right to Health and Education**

Egypt received 5 recommendations related to the right to health and education, all of which were accepted.

There are a number of articles in the Egyptian Constitution that emphasize the need to preserve the right to education and health, in particular Art. 18 states that "Every citizen has the right to health and to comprehensive health care which complies with quality standards. The State shall allocate a percentage of government spending to health equivalent to at least 3% of Gross National Product (GNP), which shall gradually increase to comply with international standards and the State shall establish a comprehensive health insurance system covering all diseases for all Egyptians". Art. 19 states that "The State shall allocate a percentage of government spending to education equivalent to at least 4% of the Gross National Product (GNP)". Moreover, Art. 20 obliges the State to "encourage and develop technical and technological education as well as vocational training" and finally Art. 21 states commits the state to allocate a percentage of government spending to university education equivalent to at least 2% of the Gross National Product (GNP).

Nevertheless, education in Egypt still suffers from poor quality; the situation of schools is poor, the overcrowding rate is very high and technical education does not meet the real needs of the labor market as well as the professional and financial situation of teachers which is very poor.

Regarding health, the government has not yet enacted a law on health insurance for citizens and despite the government's great success in eliminating the hepatitis C virus, the endemic morbidity rate and cancers is extremely high. State government services provided through hospitals are characterized by a sharp decline in quality, and there is a shortage of medicines as a result of the financial procedures that led to the devaluation of the Egyptian pound.