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**NATIONAL REPORT SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 15(A)
OF THE ANNEX TO HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTION 5/1**

Morocco*

* The present document was not edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

Introduction

1. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, the Kingdom of Morocco hereby submits its first report under the universal periodic review mechanism.
2. The Kingdom of Morocco takes this opportunity to reiterate its pledges to ensure greater recognition and protection of human rights, thereby enhancing the promotion of human rights within the country, and undertakes to continue and intensify its frank and constructive dialogue at the international level, inter alia with the United Nations human rights bodies.
3. Morocco, which is a party to the great majority of international human rights treaties, particularly the seven core instruments, does its best to ensure that its national periodic reports on implementation of its obligations are submitted on a regular basis. Close attention has always been paid to the conclusions and recommendations of the treaty monitoring bodies in order to ensure highly effective follow-up.
4. The Kingdom of Morocco, being aware of the importance and universal scope of human rights, has accorded them very high priority. It has embarked on an irreversible course of action aimed at consolidating the rule of law, democracy, good governance and sustainable human development, while fully respecting the Kingdom's fundamental principles and its territorial integrity and safeguarding the security of all Moroccan citizens. This undertaking was formally endorsed in the 1992 constitutional reform, reaffirmed on several occasions by His Majesty King Mohammed VI and reiterated in government statements. As early as 1990, practical action was taken on various fronts to set up institutions and machinery for the protection and promotion of human rights, while gradually updating the legislation in force and introducing appropriate policies.
5. Acting on its conviction that the development of a human rights culture is a basic prerequisite for the promotion and protection of human rights, the Kingdom of Morocco took specific steps to lay the foundations for such a culture by establishing a normative and institutional framework designed to make human rights a spontaneous and deliberate frame of reference for individual and collective behaviour, and by launching relevant public policies aimed at fostering a human rights culture at all levels of society.
6. At the same time, the development of a dynamic and active network of voluntary associations, which enjoy a considerable measure of autonomy, are committed to the consolidation of human rights and show great maturity, has helped to invigorate the process of protection and promotion of human rights. These associations, of which there are several thousand, have become an indispensable discussion partner and a reliable associate of the public authorities. The scope of their activities has been expanding concurrently with the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law in Morocco.
7. While engaged in a major effort to move this process forward, the Kingdom of Morocco launched an initiative aimed at assessing the policies pursued and the action taken to consolidate its achievements in the area of human rights. To undertake this assessment, it established the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER) and prepared the report on 50 years of human development since the recovery of independence.
8. The work carried out by the Commission and the findings of the fiftieth anniversary report served as the basis for an appraisal of, respectively, civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights. The two projects, which may be characterized as both original and courageous, present a critical analysis and assessment of the policies pursued to date, and seek to identify the

shortcomings to be remedied and the solutions to be adopted in order to ensure that Morocco enjoys the best human development that its resources permit. Action to implement the recommendations of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission and the National Human Development Initiative (INDH) is based on full-scale strategies aimed at remedying any flaws in the public policies adopted to date and moving closer to the goal of building a modern and democratic society.

9. This concrete and irreversible commitment on the part of Morocco to the consolidation of the rule of law and human rights gave rise to the “Moroccan initiative for negotiating an autonomy statute for the Sahara region”. The initiative, which was taken with a view to promoting a peaceful, equitable and lasting settlement of the Sahara dispute, while preserving the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of the Kingdom, is based on universally recognized international human rights norms and standards as enshrined in the Moroccan Constitution. This settlement framework will create the conditions necessary for the return, reunion and reconciliation of all native inhabitants of the Sahara and will release the energy needed to enhance the stability and joint prosperity of the States of the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU).

I. METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS FOLLOWED FOR PREPARATION OF THE REPORT

10. The Kingdom of Morocco has adopted a consistent methodology based on a consultative and participatory approach, in conformity with the relevant United Nations guidelines, for the preparation of its national reports in general and the present report in particular. For this report, for example, the Government set up an inter-ministerial committee, coordinated by the Ministry of Justice, which is responsible for human rights, and with focal points in the different ministries.

11. The process of consultation was set in motion on 16 October 2007 at a briefing meeting on the universal periodic review mechanism. Since that date, four meetings have been held with ministerial departments, public agencies and institutions, and the Consultative Council on Human Rights with a view to gathering and supplementing the information needed to draw up the report; four meetings were also held with some 20 NGOs active in the area of human rights, in particular the rights of women, the rights of the child, prisoners’ rights, human rights education and the rights of migrants.

12. During the meetings, all stakeholders played an active part in the process of developing the content of the report through criticism, comments and recommendations. The NGOs, for instance, stressed the need to set up a standing consultation and dialogue mechanism; the idea was welcomed by the Ministry of Justice, and ways and means of putting it into practice are currently being by all the other stakeholders. At the end of the process, the content of this report was shared with the different participants before being finalized by an inter-ministerial drafting committee.

II. NORMATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK IN MOROCCO

13. The process of establishing a normative human rights framework has been under way since the 1990s. The pace of reform gathered speed with the enactment of new laws, the harmonization of national legislation with the international instruments to which Morocco is a party, the creation of governmental structures and national institutions for human rights monitoring and implementation, and the steadily increasing recognition of the role of civil society, which is now treated as a fully fledged partner.

14. To back up the State's action in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms, a strong stimulus has been given to the work of non-governmental actors through the establishment of a number of active and committed foundations capable of boosting the State's action through grassroots activities: the Mohammed V Solidarity Foundation, the Mohammed VI Foundation for the promotion of social work in the area of education and training, the Mohammed VI Foundation for the reintegration of prisoners and the Hassan II Foundation for Moroccans resident abroad.

A. Constitutional provisions

15. The Kingdom of Morocco subscribes to human rights principles as universally recognized, and the preamble to its Constitution states that: "*The Kingdom of Morocco, conscious of the need to place its actions in the context of the international bodies of which it is an active and dynamic member, subscribes to the principles, rights and obligations stemming from the charters of those bodies and reaffirms its commitment to human rights as universally recognized.*"

16. The Kingdom's Constitution guarantees a range of rights, including the equality of all Moroccans before the law (art. 5); freedom of worship (art. 6); equality between men and women in the exercise of civil, political and trade union freedoms and rights (arts. 8 and 9); the right to education and work (arts. 12 and 13); the right to property and free enterprise without any discrimination (art. 15); and freedom of movement, freedom of opinion, freedom of all forms of expression and freedom of association (art. 9).

17. The Constitution also reaffirms the independence of the judiciary and lays down a set of fundamental principles such as multiparty democracy. Under the 1996 constitutional reform, the parliament's prerogatives were increased, parliamentary commissions of inquiry can be established, and a Constitutional Council has been set up to review the constitutionality of laws and monitor the regularity of parliamentary elections and referendums.

B. Legislation pertaining to the promotion and protection of human rights

18. The constitutional principles referred to above are enshrined in Moroccan legislation, which has made considerable progress in recent years towards codification of the country's resolve to promote human rights.

19. New legislation has been enacted and existing laws amended, for example to ensure equality between men and women and to safeguard the rights of the child (the law on legal foster care (*kafala*) for abandoned children, 2002; the Family Code, 2004; the Labour Code, 2003; the Civil Status Act, 2002; the Moroccan Nationality Code, 2007); to protect civil and individual liberties and to guarantee a fair trial (the Code of Criminal Procedure, 2003; the Organic Law on Parliamentary Immunity, 2004; the law abolishing the Special Court of Justice, 2004); to enhance protection of the physical and mental integrity of the person (amendment of the Criminal Code to include the crime of torture, 2006; amendment of the Criminal Code to make domestic violence and sexual harassment liable to prosecution, 2003).

20. The new legislation also covered areas such as the improvement of conditions of detention (reform of prison legislation, 1999); the fight against new categories of crime (amendments to the Criminal Code to combat terrorism, organized crime, 2005, and money laundering, 2007); and expansion of the scope of civil liberties (reform of the Civil Liberties Code, the law on political parties, 2006). Other legislation currently being drafted includes a reform of the Press Code and a bill aimed at countering violence against women.

C. International human rights instruments ratified or signed

21. Morocco is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two optional protocols, and the Hague and Geneva conventions on international humanitarian law.

22. Morocco signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 2000. It also signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in February 2007 and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March 2007. In addition, it has ratified 48 international labour conventions, including 7 of the International Labour Organization's core conventions.

D. Jurisprudence

23. In applying the provisions of international conventions, Moroccan courts have confirmed the primacy of international human rights law over domestic law in a number of judicial decisions. This trend is likely to become more pronounced under the impact of the new focus of the training course for judges, which has been expanded to include human rights modules and to reflect the content of international treaties.

24. Thus, the Supreme Court has endorsed the primacy of international norms in several decisions such as Judgement No. 426 of 22 March 2003, in which the Court applied article 11 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (prohibition of imprisonment in connection with a contractual obligation). Furthermore, in its judgement of 1 October 1976, it endorsed a decision by the Rabat Appeal Court, citing the convention of 2 October 1956 between Morocco and France and its additional protocol of 20 May 1965, to the effect that lack of knowledge of the Arabic language is not an impediment to registration in one of Morocco's bar rolls. Similarly, the Court ruled (Judgement No. 754 of 19 May 1999) that the United Nations Convention on the Carriage of Goods by Sea signed in Hamburg on 31 March 1978, to which Morocco acceded on 17 July 1978, has been applicable since 1 November 1992 and legally binding at the national level since that date.

25. In its Judgement No. 1413 of 23 May 2007, the Casablanca Appeal Court cited the above-mentioned Supreme Court judgement in support of its ruling, noting "*that the international convention constitutes a special norm that has primacy over domestic law - specifically, in the instant case, the Personal Status Code and the Family Code, which have the status of a general norm - in accordance with the principle of the primacy of such conventions, which was reaffirmed by the Supreme Court in its Judgement No. 754 of 19 May 1999*".

26. The Rabat Administrative Court, citing article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, held that the right to education was not only a constitutional right but also a universally recognized right. Similarly, the Meknès Court cited the Covenant provisions regarding respect for the freedom of movement of persons. These judgements were endorsed by the Supreme Court.

27. It should further be noted that several statutes and regulations explicitly recognize the primacy of international norms over internal law, for example the new Code of Criminal Procedure, the law regulating the practice of the legal profession and the Nationality Code.

E. Institutional human rights machinery

28. The Kingdom of Morocco has put in place an extensive institutional framework for the recognition, protection and promotion of human rights. The institutions concerned perform judicial or advisory functions or engage in mediation.

29. The judicial institutions comprise: the Constitutional Council, which has been given the mandate of reviewing the constitutionality of laws and ensuring that they respect the fundamental rights recognized by the Constitution; and the judicial bodies, which form part of a system based on the principles of independence, two-tier proceedings and equal access to justice. An ongoing reform process is designed to enhance the independence and efficiency of the justice system and to ensure its modernization.

30. The advisory, arbitration and mediation institutions operate in a variety of areas relating to general or specific aspects of human rights. They comprise the following institutions:

31. The Consultative Council on Human Rights (CCDH), established in 1990 and reorganized in 2001 on the basis of the Paris Principles relating to the status and functioning of national human rights institutions. The Consultative Council issues advisory opinions on the protection and promotion of fundamental rights and freedoms, produces an annual report on the situation of human rights in Morocco, and makes recommendations on the harmonization of national laws, the desirability of acceding to international instruments and the handling of cases of human rights violations. The Council is also a very active member of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, which it has chaired since early 2005 for two consecutive terms.

32. The Consultative Council, which has five regional offices throughout the Kingdom, has played an important role in galvanizing the process of promotion of human rights, inter alia by making recommendations that have served as the basis for structural reforms, such as the review of the Code of Criminal Procedure, of prison legislation and of public policies aimed at consolidating rights and freedoms. The Council, which was the source of the initiative to set up the Equity and Reconciliation Commission and its predecessor, the Independent Arbitration Commission, has been tasked with following up the Commission's recommendations.

33. The Diwane Al-Madalim (Office of the Ombudsman), established in 2001, is an institution that serves as a mediator between individual citizens and the public authorities with the aim of promoting respect for the rules governing the primacy of the law and equity. It plays a conciliatory role between private individuals and the administration and promotes out-of-court settlements of administrative disputes by examining the complaints and grievances of persons who claim to have been harmed by administrative decisions or acts. In recent years, the institution has handled 23,120 cases, over 801 of which concerned the issuance of personal documents, such as papers relating to freedom of movement, and interventions with the public authorities for the enforcement of more than 560 court judgements.

34. The Equity and Reconciliation Commission is a truth commission with expanded prerogatives that was mandated, from 2004 to 2006, to complete the work of the Independent Arbitration Commission in respect of compensation for injuries suffered by victims of enforced disappearance

and arbitrary detention (1996-1999). It examined serious violations of human rights committed during the period that followed the recovery of independence with a view to establishing the truth, awarding damages for the harm suffered in accordance with the rules of equity and compensating the victims of violations.

35. The Equity and Reconciliation Commission, which constituted a vital step in Morocco's transition to democracy, undertook research in consultation with the public authorities, victims, their families or representatives, and the NGOs concerned. The Commission sought to uncover the truth by means of investigations, witness statements, public hearings with victims and in camera hearings with witnesses and former officials, searches of official archives and collection of data from all available sources.

36. Using these means, the Commission succeeded in: establishing the nature, seriousness and context of the violations, applying principles and norms of international human rights law and integrating a gender perspective; shedding light on cases of enforced disappearance and advocating procedures for settlement or closure in cases of disappeared persons whose death was proved; assisting in clarifying certain historical events that resulted in human rights violations; and determining the responsibility of State agencies and, in individual cases, non-State actors for the violations investigated.

37. With regard to compensation, the Commission investigated and ruled on the claims received from victims of violations or their successors in title; it also made recommendations regarding medical and psychological rehabilitation, social reintegration, and ways of addressing legal, administrative and professional problems. Noting that some regions and communities claimed to have collectively suffered the consequences of the violations, either directly or indirectly, the Commission gave high priority to community compensation, which constitutes a major new departure in the international process of transitional justice.

38. The Commission prepared a final report presenting the findings and conclusions of its investigations and analyses concerning the violations and the context in which they occurred, as well as recommendations for reforms aimed at keeping the memory of these events alive, ensuring that the violations of the past will not recur, healing the wounds they inflicted, and restoring and boosting confidence in the country's institutions and respect for the rule of law and human rights. It advocated the adoption of and support for socio-economic and cultural development programmes on behalf of a number of towns and regions, and recommended the conversion of buildings that were formerly used as illegal detention centres.

39. As the Consultative Council on Human Rights has been entrusted with the task of follow-up, the governmental authorities, spurred by the Prime Minister, are taking a special interest in implementation. This comprises the individual compensation component, work on which has almost been completed; collective reparations, which are currently being made with the support of international bodies; compilation of relevant archives and preservation of memory, a subject on which legislation has just been enacted; social reintegration, which is currently being implemented and which calls for the establishment of objective criteria; and medical coverage, which is now provided.

40. The High Authority for Audio-Visual Communication (HACA) was established in 2003 to assist in protecting the rights and freedoms recognized in the Constitution, in particular the right to information, which is indispensable for the free communication of thoughts and opinions.

41. This is achieved through an independent press, audio-visual media that can be established and express themselves freely, and a public radio and television service that is capable of ensuring pluralism by reflecting diversity of opinion, while respecting the basic cultural values and laws of the Kingdom, such as those relating to the protection of young people and respect for personal honour and dignity.

42. The Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM), which has been tasked since October 2001 with safeguarding and promoting all forms of expression of the Amazigh language and culture, assists in implementing the policies adopted with a view to introducing Amazigh into the education system and guaranteeing Amazigh influence socially, culturally and in the media at the national, regional and local levels.

43. Since its establishment a few years ago, the Institute has helped to enhance the status of the Amazigh language and culture by introducing the Tifinagh script and permitting its use for writings in Amazigh, by facilitating the inclusion of Amazigh in the educational curriculum and by promoting broadcasts in the Amazigh language in the audio-visual media.

44. The Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs (CORCAS), established in 2006, is required to render advisory opinions on general or specific issues relating to the defence of Morocco's territorial integrity and national unity and to the integrated human, economic and social development of the Southern Provinces, and may suggest actions aimed at promoting the provinces' cultural, linguistic and artistic (Hassani) heritage.

45. The Council is authorized to propose any action aimed at promoting human rights principles and rules in the Southern Provinces and any form of participation, in coordination with the competent authorities, in the meetings of international institutions and bodies dealing with the question of the Kingdom's territorial integrity or the development of its Southern Provinces.

46. The National Commission on International Humanitarian Law, which is in the process of being established, is an advisory body tasked, inter alia, with disseminating the principles of international humanitarian law and coordinating activities relating thereto. Pending promulgation of the legislation governing the Commission, a number of major events are being held to promote training in and awareness of international humanitarian law principles, and to step up cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in that connection.

47. The mandate of the Council of the Moroccan Community Abroad (CCME), established on 21 December 2007, is to defend the rights of Moroccans living abroad. It aims to be a proactive force, concerning itself with all issues and public policies that affect Moroccans living abroad. Its membership reflects geographical and gender considerations and religious diversity.

48. In addition to the above-mentioned bodies, action to promote human rights is also taken by institutions dealing with specific categories of rights, such as the National Observatory on the Rights of the Child, the Moroccan Centre for Information, Documentation and Research on Women, the National Observatory to Eliminate Violence against Women and the Human Rights Documentation, Training and Information Centre.

III. PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE GROUND

49. The reform process is a key political choice reflecting the resolve of the Kingdom of Morocco to ensure a smooth transition to democracy, to succeed in modernizing the country, and to create conditions conducive to sustainable development in step with globalization and in keeping with the

requirements of good governance. As part of this project to consolidate the rule of law and develop a cohesive and integrated vision of society, action has been taken on several fronts with a view to safeguarding human dignity and ensuring respect for universal and indivisible human rights.

A. Harmonization of domestic legislation with international instruments

50. In line with its enduring concern to harmonize its legislation with the provisions of the international conventions to which it is a party, the Kingdom of Morocco has promulgated a number of laws embodying the principles set out in the instruments concerned.

51. They include, in particular: the new Code of Criminal Procedure (2003), which consolidates the guarantees of a fair trial, reaffirms the presumption of innocence, establishes two-tier proceedings in criminal matters and first-instance investigations, and introduces improvements in juvenile justice; Act 79.03, which abolished the Special Court of Justice that handled cases involving corruption, and transferred its jurisdiction to the ordinary courts in order to guarantee a fair trial; amendments to the Criminal Code (from 2003 to 2007), including the provisions dealing with torture, sexual harassment, domestic violence, trafficking, child pornography and prostitution, organized crime, corruption, terrorism and money-laundering; the new Family Code (2004), which codifies rights and duties on the basis of the principle of equality between men and women, guarantees the rights of the child and provides for the maintenance of family cohesion; the new Labour Code (2003), which reaffirms gender equality in terms of working conditions, introduces provisions to protect women and children at work, and establishes the principle of trade union freedom and better protection for women in employment; prison legislation, which was reformed in 1999 with a view to making conditions of detention more humane and developing educational and training programmes that facilitate social reintegration; the new law on political parties (2006) and amendments to the Civil Liberties Code and the Press Code, which seek to modernize and reconfigure the political landscape and expand the scope of civil liberties; strengthening of the judiciary through the introduction of administrative appeal courts (2006) in order to improve access to justice and better guarantee the rights of the public vis-à-vis the administration; adoption of a new Communal Charter (2002) to promote local democracy, better organize relations between the State and local authorities, and improve public administration at the local level; and abolition (2006) of imprisonment in connection with contractual obligations.

52. Furthermore, discussions are proceeding on a reform of the Press Code to introduce new provisions concerning procedures for the protection of private rights and human dignity in accordance with article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and concerning custodial penalties in some cases.

B. Implementation of Morocco's voluntary commitments

53. An Inter-Ministerial Commission on Civil Liberties and Human Rights, established in 1998 and chaired by the Prime Minister, set about completing the process of accession by the Kingdom of Morocco to the human rights instruments.

54. The Commission's work resulted in recognition of the competence of the Committee authorized to receive and consider communications from individuals under article 14 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and that of the Committee against Torture to receive and consider communications from individual victims of human rights violations (article 22 of the Convention), and withdrawal of the reservation concerning the competence of the Committee against Torture to conduct inquiries under article 20 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or

Punishment, and of the reservation to article 14 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning choice of religion, which was replaced with an interpretative declaration. A note to that effect was submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 19 October 2006.

55. With regard to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Kingdom of Morocco has taken steps to withdraw some reservations, for example to article 9, paragraph 2, and article 16, paragraphs 1 (h) and 2, to amend the wording of the second part of the declaration on article 2, to withdraw the declaration on article 15, paragraph 4, and, lastly, to replace its reservations to other subparagraphs of article 16, paragraph 1, with interpretative declarations.

56. In addition, the Kingdom of Morocco is in the process of acceding to the first Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

57. Morocco maintains close relations with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, which is mandated to clarify all cases of enforced or involuntary disappearance. It should be noted in this connection that 80 per cent of the cases have been clarified. The Working Group has published a number of reports acknowledging the Government's efforts in this regard. Moreover, in its last report, to the seventh session of the Human Rights Council, the Working Group expressed "*its appreciation over the large number of cases clarified by the Government of Morocco*", adding that "*[t]he efforts made by the Government should be an example to other countries*".

58. In the context of its cooperation with the special procedures, the Kingdom of Morocco received visits, in 2000 and 2003 respectively, from the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants. Furthermore, in his statement to the Human Rights Council at its fourth session, following his visit to Morocco in 2006 at the invitation of the Government, the Special Rapporteur on the right to education expressed satisfaction with the cooperation that the Moroccan authorities had demonstrated and with the extremely constructive institutional and legislative measures that had been taken to achieve the right to education in particular and to protect human rights in general.

59. Morocco also responds systematically and in substantive terms to all communications from the special procedures reporting allegations of human rights violations.

60. It should further be noted that Morocco has always endeavoured, as far as possible, to submit its periodic reports regularly to the various treaty monitoring bodies, sending high-level delegations to participate in the review process, and to implement the treaty bodies' recommendations and observations. Delays may, however, occur owing to the large number of periodic reports to be submitted within relatively tight deadlines.

61. The Kingdom of Morocco has submitted the following periodic reports during the past five years: its second periodic report on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (reviewed in May 2003); its fifth periodic report on implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (reviewed in October 2004); its initial report on implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (reviewed in January 2006); its third periodic report on implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (reviewed

in May 2006), and its combined third and fourth periodic reports on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which were submitted in July 2006 and reviewed on 24 January 2008.

62. Furthermore, Morocco is currently preparing its combined seventeenth and eighteenth periodic reports on implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, its fourth periodic report on implementation of the Convention against Torture, its initial report on implementation of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, its initial report on implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and, lastly, its second national communication on implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be submitted in 2008. All these reports will shortly be submitted to the relevant United Nations bodies.

63. The Kingdom of Morocco has actively contributed to the work of the Human Rights Council, adopting an approach based on cooperation, consultation and dialogue aimed at promoting, protecting and ensuring respect for human rights. It has also endeavoured to participate at the very highest level in the Council's deliberations, to play an active part in the negotiations on Council decisions and resolutions, and to co-sponsor initiatives providing practical support for the consolidation of the international human rights framework.

64. It should be noted that Morocco was an active player during its one-year Council mandate, which expired on 18 June 2007. It was appointed to the offices of Vice-President of the Council and Facilitator of the working group to develop the modalities of the universal periodic review mechanism and guidelines for its implementation. Morocco was closely involved, during its mandate and after its expiry, in developing and establishing these modalities and organized a training seminar on the universal periodic review mechanism.

65. In addition, Morocco launched an initiative during the high-level segment of the fourth session of the Council aimed at the adoption of a United Nations declaration on human rights education and training. The initiative took the form of a draft resolution, submitted jointly with Switzerland, which the Council adopted by consensus at its sixth session.

66. The Kingdom of Morocco, which contributes, to the extent that its resources permit, to the budget of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), seeks to maintain and increase its support for the Office in the implementation of its mandate. Accordingly, it reaffirms its unqualified commitment to ongoing cooperation with the different international and regional bodies and organizations working in the field of human rights, and to the strengthening of national bodies engaged in spreading a human rights culture, such as the Human Rights Documentation, Training and Information Centre, which was established in Morocco with the assistance of OHCHR.

67. In general, the Kingdom of Morocco continues to share its experience, for example with regard to compensation for human rights violations, with the members of the international community, to learn from successful experiences in this regard and to promote frank, constructive and responsible dialogue and ongoing consultations with civil society at the national and international levels.

68. The Kingdom of Morocco has taken action to promote international humanitarian law by setting up the national committee referred to above and by stepping up its cooperation with international bodies involved in promoting such law, such as the Office of the United Nations

High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with which a headquarters agreement has been signed. In the same context, Morocco is currently exploring ways and means of updating a legal mechanism relating to the right of asylum.

69. The Kingdom of Morocco cooperates closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), implementing a large number of joint projects and initiatives aimed at promoting international humanitarian law. In view of the growth of diverse ICRC activities in our country in recent years, the International Committee has requested permission to open an office in Morocco with a view to signing a headquarters agreement.

C. Main action to implement civil and political rights

70. Equality between men and women is one of the main concerns of the public authorities and civil society actors. The promulgation of the Family Code was accompanied by measures to establish family justice divisions in courts of first instance and a monitoring unit at the Ministry of Justice, to appoint specialized judges and to introduce an optional specialized training course in family law at the Legal Service Training Institute.

71. To ensure consistent interpretation of the provisions of the Family Code and to publicize its content, the Government has prepared a practical guide to its enforcement and organizes an annual seminar to assess its application. On the basis of an NGO initiative and with the support of bodies engaged in international cooperation, audio-visual dissemination materials have been produced. In addition, a simplified illustrated version of the Family Code has been produced and disseminated in Arabic and French.

72. In partnership with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Government has drawn up a plan of action to build capacity and provide support for the family justice divisions, and to explore ways and means of establishing mechanisms such as a family solidarity fund for divorced women and their children, and mediation structures.

73. The Government is also engaged in implementing a medium-term programme elaborated as part of the national strategy for gender equity and equality through the integration of a gender perspective in development policies and programmes. The aim is to institutionalize gender equality in the communication sector and to devise a communication strategy aimed at improving women's image through the media.

74. The programme seeks to enhance communication professionals' awareness of the gender perspective, to enable women to participate in decision-making and rise to positions of responsibility on the same terms as men and to promote a non-stereotyped image of women in the media. This move is a response to the Prime Minister's circular of 8 March 2007 inviting ministries to ensure gender mainstreaming in development policies and programmes.

75. Various measures have been taken to improve women's access to decision-making posts and political office, in keeping with their constitutional rights; a national list of candidates reserved for women has been drawn up in order to increase women's parliamentary representation; women are being encouraged to go into business, and the situation of rural women is being improved by their inclusion in the planning and implementation of rural development programmes.

76. Furthermore, in a letter outlining the framework for the Finance Act, the Prime Minister recommended the integration of a gender perspective in results-based management. This constitutes a decisive step towards the effective implementation of gender-sensitive budgeting. The purpose of

this programme, which has now reached its second stage having been launched in 2002, is to ensure fairness and to improve the effectiveness and coherence of public policies. A further aim is to take account of the dissimilar concerns and interests of women and men when formulating, implementing and assessing public policies. The Finance Act has been accompanied by an annual gender report since 2005.

77. Morocco's efforts to promote women's rights have led to its selection by the United Nations as one of five pilot countries to carry out the Gender and Millennium Development Goals Project. In this connection, it must be emphasized that Morocco has written its first genderized report on the Millennium Development Goals.

78. Among the various schemes and awareness-raising campaigns run by the Government and NGOs to prevent violence against women the following measures deserve special mention: the devising of a national strategy and operational plan for the elimination of violence against women; the setting up and expansion of counselling and legal aid centres throughout the country; the provision of a toll-free number for women and girls who are victims of violence; the convening of the 1st Mediterranean Forum on Violence against Women, in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and international cooperation agencies; the designation of a gender focal point at the Criminal Investigation Directorate; and the setting up within the Directorate of a special unit, headed by a police superintendent, to combat domestic violence.

79. The Kingdom of Morocco, a country with a very young population, attaches great importance to children and allocates substantial resources to the youth sector. The promotion and protection of the rights of the child commands the attention of the public authorities and civil society, whose efforts are backed by wide-scale international cooperation with the United Nations system and other actors. Since domestic legislation embodies the provisions of the international conventions on children's rights to which the Kingdom has acceded, it offers an appropriate framework for action in this field.

80. As it explained during the presentation of its initial report on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (11 January 2006), Morocco takes steps to prevent child abuse and the various forms of exploitation to which children may be subjected. The media campaign on this subject prompted the first real public debate on the very sensitive topic of sexual exploitation.

81. Indicators relating to children's rights have been improved by various actions undertaken in the youth sector as part of the preparations for a national strategy on children capable of offering a comprehensive, integrated response, remedying the imbalances between urban and rural areas, satisfying specific local needs and promoting local development. Morocco has drafted a national action plan entitled "A Morocco fit for its children, 2006-2015", in accordance with the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on children.

82. The Government is determined to pursue judicial reforms aimed at improving the courts' efficiency and moral integrity and at preserving the dignity and honour of judges and court officials. It is equally determined to continue the modernization of judicial structures and to provide them with human and financial resources for streamlining their workings and enhancing their performance. In the field of prison reforms, the upgrading of buildings, improved conditions and the preservation of inmates' dignity, combined with the expansion of educational and vocational training programmes, are easing prisoners' return to society.

83. Since Morocco is alive to the terrorist threat, it is striving to adopt counter-terrorism instruments that guarantee respect for suspects' rights while at the same time enabling the authorities to ward off all threats and to keep track of persons and groups who might jeopardize the Kingdom's security and stability. Thus, a counter-terrorism law has been adopted and supplemented by action plans to deal with this global scourge, including by introducing an early warning system to which everyone - citizens, private enterprises and the public sector - is being asked to contribute.

84. Morocco is currently drafting legislation on the status of refugees and on combating illegal emigration and immigration. It has passed Act No. 02-03 on aliens' entry to and stay in its territory, which brings in provisions consonant with the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. It was the first country to ratify this instrument on 21 June 1993.

85. With a view to guaranteeing press freedom and completing the overall reform of the media landscape, the authorities have endeavoured to modernize and professionalize the sector through the elaboration of a compact, signed in March 2005 between the Government and the Moroccan Federation of Newspaper Editors, on improving press standards; the introduction of public subsidies; and the drafting of a collective agreement between the Moroccan Federation of Newspaper Editors and the Moroccan National Press Union for the benefit of Moroccan journalists. Morocco is debating the revision of the Press Code and the status of professional journalists with a view to strengthening freedom of opinion and expression.

86. In order to boost moral integrity in public life, Morocco has enacted a new law on political parties as a natural corollary to the recent Electoral Code, bolstered the institutional framework for fighting corruption and strengthened the promotion of integrity and ethics at the national level.

87. In this context, the Government has enacted a law making it compulsory to state the reasons for administrative decisions, in order to reduce the margin of uncertainty in dealings between citizens and the authorities and to inform citizens how to avail themselves of their rights.

88. Similarly, in May 2005, the Government adopted a plan of action to combat corruption after a comprehensive, participative consultation of all the sectors concerned and of socio-economic operators. This plan comprises a wide range of practical measures that can be carried out in the short and medium term.

89. For example, in May 2007, the Government ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption and it is quickly establishing mechanisms to implement recent legislation on the declaration of assets. One of these mechanisms is the Central Anti-Corruption Authority, a national body made up of representatives of the administrative authorities, civil society associations and trade unions.

90. These measures will be accompanied by a gradual building up of procedures to guarantee transparency, honesty and competitiveness when signing and awarding State contracts and outsourcing public services and to prevent graft, money-laundering and their attendant evils.

D. Main action to implement economic, social and cultural rights

91. In the sphere of promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights, the National Human Development Initiative, launched by His Majesty King Mohammed VI on 18 May 2005, is designed to make up for the delay in achieving human development goals noted in the Report on 50 Years of Human Development.

92. The Initiative centres on: access to basic social facilities and services; promotion of activities generating stable income; measures to reduce unemployment, especially among young university graduates; and assistance to the most vulnerable persons. Some large-scale projects give priority to people who are severely disadvantaged by harsh living conditions, poverty and marginalization.
93. The Government has allocated an overall budget of 10 billion dirhams (900 million euros) to the Initiative for the period 2006-2010. Of this amount, 60 per cent was financed from the general State budget, 20 per cent from the local authorities' budget and 20 per cent by donations under the heading of international cooperation. The aim is to redress human development deficits through the Initiative's participation in the implementation of programmes to eradicate rural poverty, to combat social exclusion in towns and to end precarity.
94. In order to reduce unemployment, great efforts have been made to find work for young people and to guarantee a decent life for all Moroccans. In particular, three programmes have been set up (Idmaj, Taahil and Moukawalati) to provide backing for business creation, training for job seekers and training plus placement. The Government has also established a Higher Council and regional councils for the promotion of employment, and it is seeking a growth rate of 6 per cent, instead of the 5 per cent recorded over the last five years, so as to bring the unemployment rate down to 7 per cent by 2012.
95. In order to ease young graduates' transition to working life, the Government has taken a series of steps to encourage employment in the private sector, to create incentives for the founding of new businesses and to facilitate access to the civil service. Although the latter solution is limited by the civil service's inability to absorb huge numbers of graduates, the Government intends to give many of the 16,000 new jobs budgeted for in the Finance Act for 2008 to young graduates.
96. There has been a marked rise in the number of children attending school, from 5,551,023 in 2005-2006 to 6,902,565 in 2007. In order to curb school dropout rates, especially among girls and children with special needs, social support and coaching are given to poor children (canteens, boarding arrangements, scholarships, transport, coaching or remedial teaching), especially in rural and peri-urban areas. Nevertheless, this sector is contending with substantial shortcomings, seriously constraining human development.
97. The number of students in higher education reached 290,000 in 2007-2008 compared with 272,578 in 2006-2007, a 6-per-cent increase.
98. Various programmes run by many different partners have meant that the number of children receiving non-formal education rose to 190,941 in 2007, 58 per cent of whom were girls.
99. A fall in illiteracy from 43 per cent in 2004 to 38.4 per cent in 2006 has been recorded in the population aged 10 years or over. In 2006-2007, some 155,709 persons attended literacy courses.
100. The Government has set several targets, the most significant of which are: a reduction in school dropout rates; an expansion of child protection units, which coordinate all the providers of legal and psychological assistance to child victims of abuse, violence and exploitation; a 60 per cent drop in child labour; the elimination of domestic labour by little girls; and the combating of all forms of child exploitation. To this end, Morocco is taking on and extending pilot programmes on the elimination of child labour and the integration of former child workers in formal and/or non-formal education.

101. Programmes to stamp out child labour are supported by the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)-Morocco of the International Labour Office and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). A bill on domestic labour aimed at ending child labour and the economic exploitation of children was drafted by the Ministry of Employment in 2006 and has been submitted to the General Secretariat of the Government.

102. Efforts are being made to promote the rights of disabled persons with a view to facilitating and securing their integration in the economy and society.

103. Not only has a legal framework been established (Act 05-81 of 6 May 1982 on the social protection of the blind and partially sighted, Act 07-92 of 10 September 1993 on the social protection of disabled persons and Act 10-03 of 12 May 2003 on accessibility), but several advances have been achieved in the fields of preventive care and technical support, education, social participation, training and vocational integration by reserving a quota of 7 per cent of jobs on the payroll of central and local government and the public sector for the above-mentioned categories.

104. Despite these efforts, Morocco is experiencing difficulty in implementing and ensuring the viability of programmes for persons with disabilities owing to a lack of funds, infrastructure and human resources.

105. The National Charter on Education and Training of 1999 constitutes the Government's reference framework and policy basis for fostering a human rights culture. It makes human rights education one of the fundamental pillars of educational reform, stating that "*the educational and training system strives to give substance to the principles of the equality of citizens, the equality of the opportunities they are offered and the right of all girls and boys, whether in urban or rural areas, to education, in accordance with the Moroccan Constitution*".

106. In 2001, curricula were reformed on the basis of the Charter to include human rights values and their universal principles in their reference framework. Following the introduction of a more liberal approach to the drafting of school textbooks, a teacher's guide was issued specifying that the pupil's copy of the textbook should respect the principles of equity, equality and non-violence, as well as the principles and rights recognized in the international human rights instruments ratified by the Kingdom of Morocco.

107. A Central Commission on Human Rights and Citizenship (CCDHC) has been set up to guide, coordinate, evaluate and follow up on plans of action in the area of human rights and citizenship education.

108. A values observatory has come into being to promote the values and principles of human rights in strategic planning, curricula, and school programmes and textbooks. These mechanisms have been strengthened by the founding of human rights clubs in schools and the establishment of committees to revise the content of textbooks in the light of human rights principles.

109. The higher education and scientific research sector helps to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms through training and research units in faculties, social science research groups covering this subject and chairs of human rights in general and of sectoral and thematic rights in particular, which have been endowed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

110. Since 1990, special attention has been paid to the promotion of a human rights culture in the training programmes of law enforcement officials, especially the judiciary, the police and the Royal Gendarmerie. This training encompasses a culture of transparency, integrity and responsibility in the performance of duties. On 19 May 2006, as part of measures to implement the recommendations of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission concerning the promotion of a human rights culture, the Government signed a partnership agreement with the Consultative Council on Human Rights on human rights training in accordance with international standards for officials reporting to the Ministry of the Interior, namely the police, law enforcement personnel, and the auxiliary and civil defence forces.

111. In an endeavour to preserve and promote the Amazigh language and culture, the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture has actively contributed to the initiative to have the Tifinagh alphabet adopted for writing the Amazigh language and to the publication of textbooks and teaching guides for the inclusion of this language in the curriculum of some 300 primary schools in Morocco, prior to its introduction throughout the educational system. There are also plans to launch a public television channel in this language in the near future, in addition to the programmes now broadcast on radio and television. Although these are substantial achievements, they do, however, fall short of ambitions in this sphere.

112. The Moroccan audio-visual and telecommunication sectors have seen major advances, especially since their liberalization. For example, independent regulatory mechanisms have been set up, namely the National Telecommunication Regulatory Agency (ANRT) and the High Authority for Audio-Visual Communication. Their decisions have improved compliance with the rules governing this sphere, supervision of operators' activities and protection of users' rights.

113. Access to decent housing is one of Morocco's priorities. The Government has devised an integrated development strategy comprising the reform of the legislative and institutional framework, the adoption of measures to increase and diversify supply, and the establishment of mechanisms to buttress demand and, in particular, to assist low-income groups. The Government is ensuring that social housing is built at a faster pace of 150,000 units per year in order to make up for the shortage in both towns and the countryside, which is suffering from the effects of drought.

114. The Government is likewise committed to a regional approach and to giving added impetus to the campaign to end insalubrious housing conditions through the "Cities without shantytowns" and "Rehabilitation of derelict housing" programmes, which rest on a consensual policy between central and local government and collaboration with the target population.

115. For example, in order to give a fresh stimulus to housing and urban growth in the Kingdom's Southern Provinces, the Government has been endeavouring for several years to raise the necessary funds for the successful completion of a programme to develop plots for 70,000 homes.

116. Great efforts have been made to supply rural areas with electricity and drinking water. In 2006, the electrification rate touched 92 per cent, whereas it was no more than 55 per cent in 2002 and 18 per cent in 1996. The integral programme to supply drinking water began in 1995. It reached 77 per cent of rural inhabitants in 2006 and 87 per cent in 2007, compared with only 14 per cent at the start of the programme.

117. The impact of these programmes on the rural population's economic and social development is clearly reflected in fewer people needing to fetch water from a well, a chore which fell mainly to girls, the lower rate of water-borne diseases, the increase in girls' school attendance, less flight from the land and better living conditions in general.

118. Morocco's main achievements with regard to the right to health are vaccine independence, eradication of poliomyelitis, wider vaccination coverage of children and a reduction in child mortality. In addition, many efforts have been made to improve reproductive health indicators, to introduce universal compulsory health insurance and to step up the national programme to combat HIV/AIDS.

119. But the main health concerns are still: the high maternal mortality rate of 227 per 100,000 live births; the low ratio of doctors to inhabitants despite a recent rise; imbalances between urban and rural areas and between different regions; and the small health budget.

120. Financial and human resources are being mobilized in order to overcome these shortcomings and improve the quality of medical services. To this end, a health map will be drawn in an attempt to reduce regional disparities, to take account of the specific features and needs of each region and to streamline organization and coordination.

121. Since regions are local government units, town and country planning within them forms part of an integrated strategy that is the responsibility of the northern, eastern and southern regional development agencies. They coordinate the action of the administrative authorities with the parties concerned, with special heed being paid to measures to reduce poverty and precarity.

122. The strategy employed by these agencies is based on listening to the concerns of the local population and it involves public and semi-public operators, locally elected representatives, representatives of civil society and various economic actors. A distinction is drawn between two levels of action that vary according to specific regional features: the promotion of participation and consultation when defining local development strategies, and the forging of the relevant partnerships between the public and private sectors.

123. For example, the Five-Year Development Programme for the Southern Provinces (2004-2008), for which a total of 7.2 billion dirhams has been earmarked, concerns the implementation of 226 projects in the fields of housing, urban development, fisheries, water, the environment and infrastructure.

124. Improving citizens' purchasing power is another of the authorities' main priorities because it has a direct impact on the population's living standard. Hence the Government is determined to preserve this purchasing power and to cushion the impact of price rises on the world market and those due to climate change by adopting an action plan comprising measures designed to improve average income, especially that of underprivileged groups, as well as monitoring and preventive mechanisms.

125. Moreover, Morocco is one of the 16 African countries to benefit from the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), following an agreement signed in 2007. It was selected on the basis of such criteria as good governance, the fight against corruption, the promotion of human rights and commitment to legal principles ensuring an environment conducive to development. This five-year programme covering some 600,000 families will finance specific projects of direct benefit to the target population.

IV. ACHIEVEMENTS, BEST PRACTICES, CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

A. Achievements and best practices

126. This report lists Morocco's main achievements with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights. The most salient advances, which also constitute good practices, are:

The Equity and Reconciliation Commission

127. The work of the Commission, which is unique in the Arab and Muslim world, concerned the sphere of transitional justice. It succeeded in establishing the nature, seriousness and context of human rights violations. It shed light on cases of enforced disappearance and advocated procedures for settlement or closure in cases of disappeared persons whose death was proved. It assisted in clarifying certain historical events that resulted in human rights violations and determining the responsibility of State agencies and, in individual cases, non-State actors for the violations investigated.

128. Its work culminated in the publication of a final report that has helped to establish the truth, to work out individual and community compensation for harm suffered, to rehabilitate and reintegrate victims and their survivors, to keep the memory of these events alive and to introduce rules ensuring that violations of this kind will never recur and that there is confidence in the rule of law.

129. The Commission's recommendations mainly concern: the strengthening of constitutional guarantees of human rights; the ratification of all international human rights instruments; the adoption and implementation of an integrated national strategy against impunity; reform of the security sector, the judiciary, legislation and criminal policy; and the setting up of a mechanism to monitor compliance with these recommendations, a task entrusted to the Consultative Council on Human Rights.

The Report on 50 Years of Human Development

130. This is a retrospective assessment of the human development process in Morocco since the country recovered its independence and an exploration of the prospects for the future. A scientific commission wrote this report, which has prompted a wide debate on future public policies in the light of lessons learned from the past and of successes to date.

131. The report focuses on "human potential" as both the motor and the purpose of development. Five main areas are analysed: evolution of the human potential of the country from the people's perspective; liberation of the human potential of the country as a State; valuing of human potential from life and intelligence perspectives; mobilization of human potential as a driving force of wealth creation; and physical potential as a source and a framework for human development.

132. After examining developments, shortcomings and achievements in these areas, the report briefly describes the situation in Morocco in 2005 and draws attention to trends that might have an impact on the country's future and to some "knotty issues". It then offers two contrasting views of the country by 2025, depending on its ability, or inability, to consolidate the transition already under way and to successfully initiate further reforms. All of these hypotheses form the basis for drafting an Agenda 2025, which will be the product of a wide debate among all political, economic and social actors.

The National Human Development Initiative

133. The above-mentioned Initiative may be regarded as a good practice that should be shared. It was launched in May 2005 to enable Morocco to make up lost time in achieving the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations and which the Kingdom fully supports. It constitutes a means of meeting the expectations of large fringes of the population and whole areas of the national territory where difficult living conditions, sometimes accompanied by poverty and marginalization, are rife.

134. The Initiative forms part of a coherent overall plan calling for the full-scale mobilization of a complementary combination of political, social, economic, educational, cultural and ecological resources.

135. The Initiative is therefore characterized by active citizenship. It adopts a novel approach and methods of action allying ambition, realism and efficacy, which result in practical, well defined and integrated programmes. It tackles the social deficit afflicting poor urban districts and the poorest rural communes by widening access to basic social services and facilities, by promoting activities generating a stable income and employment, and by assisting highly vulnerable persons or persons with special needs.

B. Challenges and constraints

136. Challenges and constraints are many and various. It is necessary to launch and pursue a series of public policies to be implemented by the institutions set up for this purpose, while at the same time providing the most suitable legislative and structural framework. The espousal of human rights by citizens and those responsible for ensuring their respect and promotion is, however, a long-term undertaking. It would therefore be wise to underline that in Morocco, as in the developing countries, economic constraints are severely hampering the country's action in the field of human rights, despite the considerable efforts being made to remove these obstacles.

137. These difficulties explain the main shortcomings recorded by our country in the spheres of education, health, employment and child labour. Economic deficiencies exacerbated by drought are becoming systemic.

138. This situation, in which new forms of precarity and vulnerability are emerging, such as illegal migration or street children, is increasingly complex.

V. PRIORITIES, INITIATIVES AND COMMITMENTS UNDERTAKEN BY MOROCCO TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS AND TO IMPROVE THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION

139. Morocco, which has made the promotion and protection of human rights an irreversible choice, is continuing its reforms of institutions and laws to bring its domestic legislation into line with international human rights instruments.

140. In addition to the initiatives and commitments mentioned in this report, Morocco has set itself the priority of constantly improving the economic, social and cultural position of all citizens, thereby permitting the effective enjoyment of their rights.

141. As it continues its battle against poverty, exclusion and illiteracy, this country reiterates its deeper commitment to promote human rights education and to make it a culture shared by all. In this connection, the Department of Education is taking steps, in partnership with several sectors, to harmonize its human rights education strategy with the action plan known as the citizens' platform for the promotion of human rights and the recommendations of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission.

142. In order to put these rights into practice, the Government is joining national and international actors in a partnership to guarantee education for all and high-quality teaching, to ensure that children do not drop out of school, to secure equal opportunities and sexual equality, to remedy shortcomings in rural areas and among vulnerable groups, and to make sure that children with special needs have access to schools.

143. In its General Policy Statement, the present Government set itself a number of medium-term priorities to be achieved by 2012. They concern: the strengthening of programmes to address marginalization and social precarity through the setting up of a network of local services and facilities; the establishment of 800 local social centres; a reduction in school dropout rates; the expansion of child protection units; a 60-per-cent drop in child labour; a complete end to the employment of little girls as domestic workers; measures to reduce illiteracy; the battle against corruption; the fight against terrorism; an improvement of conditions of detention in prisons; an improvement in the situation of disabled persons and their integration; the monitoring of the implementation of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations; stronger protection and promotion of human rights; the strengthening and consolidation of individual and collective freedoms; and measures to stop illegal migration.

VI. MOROCCO'S EXPECTATIONS IN TERMS OF CAPACITY-BUILDING AND REQUESTS, IF ANY, FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Capacity-building in the human rights sphere

144. Since Morocco is aware that good governance and consolidation of the rule of law are not possible unless citizens actively support and participate in the democratic process, it would like to receive technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in certain specific areas in order to strengthen its national human rights capacity.

145. If the country is to initiate projects to promote and protect human rights, it will require the international community's help with institutional capacity-building, the formulation and implementation of training programmes for law enforcement officials and technical assistance for NGOs active in the human rights and development sphere.

146. The National Human Development Initiative is breaking with the traditional approach to poverty reduction and introduces a course of action to foster human development that is perfectly consonant with the Millennium Development Goals. Morocco would therefore like to receive more support from OHCHR in order to encourage microprojects as mechanisms allowing disadvantaged groups of the population to avail themselves of their rights, and it would also like to have the backing of other international institutions and donor countries in order to finance the major schemes launched under this Initiative.

147. The development of this type of scheme at the local and regional levels reflects the Kingdom's determination to lift disadvantaged groups out of poverty by creating and financing small-scale projects generating jobs and regular income. Technical assistance with monitoring is also greatly desired.

Drafting of reports for submission to the treaty monitoring bodies

148. With a view to setting up a permanent body for drafting national periodic reports for submission to the treaty monitoring bodies, Morocco would like OHCHR to help with the organization in Morocco of a meeting on good practices in national systems for report drafting. This meeting would provide an opportunity to advise a team of instructors about the standards and techniques of report writing and about the format of reports, which will probably have to be presented with growing frequency in the next few years.

Drawing up of a national action plan on human rights

149. In accordance with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, Morocco has begun to devise an action plan and national strategy on human rights, in partnership with the Consultative Council on Human Rights and the European Commission.

150. The main purpose of this project is to strengthen the democratic transition process, entrench the rule of law, anchor the principles of human rights, democracy and justice more firmly and consolidate normative mechanisms guaranteeing respect for human rights. The technical assistance of OHCHR is likewise desired in this sphere.

Access to justice, and human rights training

151. Morocco would like to receive support in drafting and disseminating written information on how to gain access to justice, which would be suitable for the general public, and in planning radio and television programmes on this specific topic.

152. Human rights training through courses and thematic workshops for judges and law enforcement officials would be welcome.
