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Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant

Concluding observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Sri Lanka

1. The Committee considered the combined second to fourth periodic reports of Sri Lanka on the implementation of the Covenant (E/C.12/LKA/2-4) at its 40th, 41st and 42nd meetings, held on 8 and 9 November 2010 (E/C.12/2010/SR. 40, 41 and 42), and adopted, at its 55th meetings, held on 19 November 2010, the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the open and constructive dialogue with the delegation of the State party. However, it expresses concern that the State party's report, which was submitted with a 15-year delay, contained limited information, disaggregated data or relevant statistics on the practical implementation of Covenant rights in the State party. The Committee regrets that the State party did not provide responses to half of the Committee's list of issues. The Committee calls upon the State party to ensure full compliance of its next periodic report with the Committee's reporting guidelines so as to enable a full assessment of the degree of implementation of Covenant rights in the State party. The Committee recommends that the State party consult civil society organizations during the preparatory process of its next periodic report.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the ratification of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, namely on the involvement of children in armed conflict in 2000 and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2006 and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2002. It also welcomes the ratification of ILO Conventions Nos. 111 (1998) concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and

Occupation, 138 (2000) concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, and 182 (2001) concerning the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

4. The Committee notes with appreciation the positive developments related to the implementation of the Covenant, such as the adoption of:

- (a) The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act No. 34 of 3 October 2005;
- (b) The Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children (Amendment) Act No. 8 of 2003 which increases the minimum age of employment from 12 to 14 years; and
- (c) The National Policy on Disability in 2003.

5. The Committee commends the State party for its significant progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially in the field of health and education and notes with appreciation that the State party is on track to achieve the targets for most of the indicators by 2015.

C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

6. The Committee is concerned that the Covenant has not been given full effect in the domestic legal order and that although some of its provisions are justiciable before the supreme court, they are rarely invoked which reveals a limited knowledge of the Covenant in the State party. The Committee also expresses serious concern that the legally binding nature of international human rights treaties and more specifically of ILO Conventions to which the State party is party has been questioned by the Supreme Court on numerous occasions.

The Committee calls upon the State party to ensure that the Covenant enjoys full legal effects in the domestic legal order and prevails over domestic legislation in case of conflict. It also urges the State party to bring its domestic legislation in conformity with the rights contained in the Covenant. The Committee calls upon the State party to improve human rights training programmes in such a way as to ensure better knowledge, awareness and application of the Covenant and other international human rights instruments, in particular among the judiciary, law enforcement officials and other actors responsible for the implementation of the Covenant.

7. The Committee is concerned that, although partially lifted, the continuation of the state of emergency is hampering the full realization of the economic, social and cultural rights.

The Committee urges the State party to consider repealing all remaining emergency regulations which jeopardize the realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

8. The Committee expresses concern about the lack of independence of the National Human Rights Commission which was downgraded to B status, notably for this reason, by the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC) in December 2007. The Committee also notes with concern that posts on the National Human Rights Commission remain vacant and that the National Human Rights Commission is effectively in abeyance.

The Committee urges the State party to ensure that the National Commission on Human Rights meets the requirements of independence and autonomy set out in the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles, General Assembly resolution 48/134).

9. The Committee is concerned that the judiciary and important oversight bodies lack independence to effectively carry out their role in the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee is also concerned about the 18th amendment of the Constitution passed on 8 September 2010 which further reduces the independence of the judiciary and other oversight bodies as it provides for direct appointments by the president of, inter alia, chairpersons and members of the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption, members of the Judicial Service Commission and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman).

The Committee calls upon the State party to take all the necessary measures to ensure the independence and integrity of the judiciary and oversight bodies. It also recommends that the State party consider reviewing the provisions of the 18th amendment of the Constitution related to the appointment procedure of chairpersons and members of oversight bodies.

10. The Committee expresses serious concern about widespread threats, attacks, defamation campaigns and various forms of stigmatization against human rights defenders in the State party as well as about illegitimate restrictions of their activities.

The Committee urges the State party to take the necessary action in accordance with the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 9 December 1998 to end the ongoing harassment and persecution of human rights defenders and ensure that those responsible for the threats and attacks are duly prosecuted and punished. The Committee calls upon the State party to engage in a constant dialogue with civil society actors, including those carrying out human rights advocacy campaigns and human rights defenders to formulate and implement strategies for the protection and promotion of economic, social and cultural rights throughout the country, including the current formulation of a national plan of action for human rights. It also urges the State party to speed up the process of adoption of a Right to Information Act.

11. The Committee is concerned that the conversion of the Veddahs' traditional land into a national park has led to their socio-economic marginalization and impoverishment, Veddahs having been prohibited access to their traditional hunting grounds and honey sites. The Committee is also concerned that Veddahs are highly stigmatized in the State party, in particular Veddah children who are the victim of ostracism in the school system and often employed in hazardous occupations. (art. 1, para. 2)

The Committee urges the State party to ensure that the Veddahs can return to and remain undisturbed on the lands from which they were evicted, in particular in the Maduru Oya reserve, to establish a state authority for the representation of Veddahs which should be consulted and should give consent prior to the implementation of any project or public policy affecting their lives. The Committee also recommends that the State party consider ratifying ILO Convention No. 169 (1989) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.

12. The Committee expresses concern about the high levels of corruption which undermines the realization of economic, social and cultural rights for all and the fact that the State party has not yet taken firm and effective measures to combat corruption and impunity associated with it. (art. 2, para.1)

The Committee calls upon the State party to take all necessary measures to combat corruption and impunity associated with it. In this regard, it encourages the State party to train the police and other law enforcement officers, as well as prosecutors and judges in the strict application of anti-

corruption laws, to require the public authorities, in law and in practice, to operate in a transparent manner, and to ensure that prosecution cases are brought to justice. The Committee encourages the State party to seek the cooperation of international organizations with special expertise in the field of combating corruption and requests the State party to provide detailed information in its next periodic report about progress made in combating corruption and impunity.

13. The Committee is concerned about the harsh working and living conditions of plantation workers and their families, a high proportion of them living in extreme poverty. It also expresses concern that Citizenship Act No.18 of 1948 which deprived Tamils of Indian origin of citizenship has still not been abrogated and that thousands of Tamils of Indian origin are still awaiting to be granted citizenship on the basis of the 2003 Grant of Citizenship to Persons of Indian Origin Act, and as stateless persons do not enjoy their economic, social and cultural rights. (art.2, para.2)

The Committee calls upon the State party to provide the necessary resources for the implementation of the National Plan of Action for the Social Development of the Plantation Community adopted in 2006 and to provide comprehensive information in its next periodic report on the concrete measures taken to ensure that plantation workers and their families as well as Tamils of Indian origin are no longer subject to discrimination and live in decent conditions. The Committee calls upon the State party to repeal Citizenship Act No.18 of 1948 and to speed up the process of issuing identity documents for Tamils of Indian origin in accordance with the 2003 Grant of Citizenship to Persons of Indian Origin Act.

14. The Committee is concerned that in spite of the recent establishment of quotas for the employment of persons with disabilities, they remain discriminated against in their access to employment and highly stigmatized in the society. The Committee is also concerned that the 2003 National Policy on Disability has not yet been implemented and that families of disabled persons have so far only received limited support from the State party and therefore continue to resort to institutionalization of their children with disabilities, often for long periods. The Committee also expresses concern that a large proportion of children with disabilities, most of them girls, remains deprived of any type of education opportunities. (art.2, para.2)

The Committee calls upon the State party to take concrete steps to implement its 2003 National Policy on Disability and to strengthen its efforts to promote inclusion of persons with disabilities into the labour market, including by strengthening the system of job quotas for persons with disabilities. The Committee also calls upon the State party to gather accurate disaggregated statistical data on children with disabilities and ensure that all these children, particularly girls, have access to education. The Committee encourages the State party to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

15. The Committee is concerned that in spite of repeated recommendations made by treaty bodies since 1998, the State party has still not repealed statutory and personal laws that discriminate against women and girls, such as the 1935 Land Development Ordinance and the provisions of the Muslim Personal Law allowing early marriage of girls as young as 12 years old, and has taken limited steps to address the persistence of stereotypes, attitudes and patriarchal traditions on family and societal roles of men and women. The Committee notes with serious concern that the State party relies on the communities themselves to amend their personal status laws and that the Women's Bill does not protect women and girls from all communities from early and forced marriage. (art. 3)

The Committee reminds the State party that the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights is an immediate obligation of the States parties which cannot be conditioned to willingness of concerned communities to amend their laws. The Committee therefore calls upon the State party to take immediate action to repeal all statutory laws that discriminate against women and to amend the Muslim Personal Law and to put it in conformity with its national legislation with the view to outlaw early marriage. The Committee also encourages the State party to vigorously promote equality between women and men at all levels of society, including through targeted educational programmes and mass media campaigns against stereotypes which prevent women from enjoying their economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee draws the attention of the State party to its general comment No. 16 (2005) on the equal right of men and women.

16. The Committee notes with concern that despite the decrease in unemployment in recent years, the female unemployment rate has remained twice as high as that of males for the past decades and that almost half of the 15-29 age group, especially educated youths, remain unemployed. The Committee is also seriously concerned that about 300 000 women are at risk of losing their employment as a result of the withdrawal by the European Union (EU) of the GSP preferential trading scheme due to significant shortcomings in respect of Sri Lanka's implementation of three United Nations human rights conventions, which are a relevant condition for receiving benefits under the scheme. (art.6)

The Committee recommends that the State party adopt a national action plan for the promotion of stable employment opportunities for women and younger Sri Lankans containing numerical targets and a time frame for its implementation and establish a national mechanism to monitor the implementation of the plan of action. The Committee also encourages the State party to monitor closely the situation of the women at risk of losing their employment due to the withdrawal of the GSP so as to enable them to enjoy their economic, social and cultural rights.

17. The Committee expresses concern that several statutory provisions and emergency regulations of the State party allow for the recourse to compulsory labour, in particular the Compulsory Public Service Act, No. 70 of 1961, under which compulsory public service of up to five years may be imposed on graduates, has still not been repealed. (art. 6)

The Committee welcomes the State party's assertion during the interactive dialogue that measures are being taken to repeal Compulsory Public Service Act No. 70.

18. The Committee expresses concern about the low and declining representation of women in decision-making and public positions and their concentration in only a few sectors of the economy and in low-skilled and low-paid jobs. The Committee is also concerned that the prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination in employment and occupation and the principle of equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value have still not been reflected in national legislation. (arts. 7 and 3)

The Committee also calls upon the State party to ensure that its legislation prohibits direct and indirect discrimination in employment and occupation and reflects the principle of equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value and is enforced with adequate mechanisms. The Committee encourages the State party to adopt temporary special measures to increase the number of women in decision-making and public positions and to effectively combat women's discrimination in the workplace.

19. The Committee is concerned that workers in sectors not covered by wage boards are not entitled to any minimum wage. The Committee is also concerned that tea plantation workers are denied a monthly salary and receive extremely low daily wages. (art.7)

The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that minimum wages enable all workers and their families to enjoy an adequate standard of living and that these are regularly adjusted to the cost of living. The Committee further strongly recommends that the State party take urgent measures to ensure that plantation workers are provided with a decent monthly salary.

20. The Committee expresses serious concern that sexual harassment is particularly widespread in tea plantations and in export processing zones (EPZs). (art. 7)

The Committee calls upon the State party to include provisions prohibiting and preventing sexual harassment in its national labour law and to provide its labour inspectorate with the necessary human, technical and financial resources to deal with cases of sexual harassment in an efficient manner.

21. The Committee expresses deep concern that Sri Lankan women have often no other choice but to migrate to find employment and that one million of them work abroad as domestic workers, often in slavery-like conditions. The Committee is also concerned that the State party has not studied the impact of such massive labour migration on Sri Lankan families, nor provided women with alternative employment opportunities. (arts. 7, 9 and 10)

The Committee reiterates its recommendation (E/C.12/1/Add.24 para. 27) to the State party to conduct a comprehensive assessment of women labour migration. It urges the State party to give priority to the development of employment opportunities for women within the State party, including through the introduction of innovative micro-credit schemes. The Committee also urges the State party to strengthen its efforts to adequately inform women prior to their departure, and strengthen the role of Labour Attaches in Sri Lankan missions abroad in protecting the rights of migrant workers in host countries. The Committee also encourages the State party to take all necessary measures to ensure that families, in particular children of migrant workers residing in the State party are able to fully enjoy all their economic, social and cultural rights.

22. The Committee is concerned about the restrictions on trade unions activities, the widespread harassment of trade unionists and the low protection against anti-union discrimination in the State party, especially in export processing zones (EPZs). In particular, the Committee is concerned that the Public Security Ordinance of 1947 and the Essential Public Services Act of 1979 impose restrictions on the right to strike enforceable with sanctions involving compulsory. The Committee is also concerned that legal recognition is only granted to unions representing over 40 per cent of workers at any given workplace and that the Emergency Regulation No. 01 2006 amendment gives such a broad definition of essential services, that restrictions of trade union rights may be imposed on almost any sector of the economy. The Committee is further concerned that trade unions are strongly discouraged in EPZs through suspension, demotion, dismissal of unionists, warning of new workers not to join unions, prohibition of trade unionists to enter EPZs and creation of employees' councils funded by and functioning under the aegis of the employer. (art. 8)

The Committee calls upon the State party to:

- (a) Ensure that no sanctions involving compulsory labour be imposed for disciplinary offences or participation in peaceful strikes in services other than essential services defined in the strict sense of the term and to amend its legislation accordingly;**

- (b) **Remove legal obstacles to trade unions' rights notably by providing a clear definition and limiting the scope of "essential services" to services where interruption would endanger the life, personal safety or health of the whole or part of the population and by reviewing the 40 per cent requirement for legal recognition in accordance with ILO recommendations;**
- (c) **Increase penalties applicable to anti-union discrimination, allow trade unions to bring anti-union discrimination claims directly before the courts and ensure that anti-union actions are duly investigated and examined by courts within a short period of time;**
- (d) **Take urgent measures to ensure the freedom to form and join trade unions, to prevent interference in the management and operation of trade unions in EPZs and to allow labour inspectors to make unannounced visits.**

23. The Committee is concerned that in spite of the existence of a large number of social assistance schemes in the State party, the social security system remains highly fragmented and does not adequately cover all workers. The Committee is also concerned that disadvantaged and marginalized groups, notably families in the plantation sector and older persons, remain excluded or under-covered by the Samurdhi poverty alleviation programme due to shortcomings in its management and coordination, corruption and fraud. (art. 9)

The Committee urges the State party to take all the necessary measures to ensure that poverty alleviation and social assistance programmes are managed in an adequate and transparent manner and targeted at the most disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, including families in the plantation sector and older persons. The Committee encourages the State party to continue its collaboration with the ILO to expand social security coverage, including through the establishment of the social protection floor.

24. The Committee expresses deep concern that in spite of the high incidence of domestic violence against women and children in the State party, the provisions of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act No.3 of 2005 remain insufficiently known, notably by the police, and that protection orders are seldom issued and perpetrators rarely prosecuted. The Committee also notes with concern the absence of temporary shelter for women and children victims of domestic violence and the considerable delays to obtain court decisions in this matter.

The Committee urges the State party to take active measures to combat domestic violence and to enforce the 2005 Prevention of Domestic Violence Act No.3 including through public awareness and education campaigns and recruitment of additional female police officers within the Bureaus for the Protection of Children and Women (BPCW). The Committee also encourages the State party to ensure that crisis centres and shelters where victims of domestic violence can find safe lodging and counselling are available and accessible throughout the country.

25. The Committee expresses serious concern that cultural sensitivities are used as a justification by the State party not to criminalize marital rape in all circumstances. (art. 10)

The Committee urges the State party to take immediate steps to criminalize marital rape in all circumstances.

26. The Committee is deeply concerned that no effective measures have been taken by the State party to enforce child labour laws as previously recommended by the Committee (E/C.12/1/Add.24, para. 26) and that almost one million children continue to be exploited economically in agriculture or as domestics, the latter being often subjected to various forms of violence. (art.10, para.3)

The Committee urges the State party to adopt effective measures to combat child labour.

27. The Committee is deeply concerned that thousands of children remain sexually abused and exploited including in child sex tourism. The Committee notes with grave concern that perpetrators of child sexual exploitation and abuse, including child traffickers are rarely prosecuted, while child victims may still be excluded from protection of the law and placed on remand for conducting prostitution. (art.10, para.3)

The Committee calls upon the State party to amend its legislation against child sexual exploitation and ensure that it covers all children and does not criminalize child prostitutes. The Committee also urges the State party to implement the 2006 national Plan of Action against Child Sex Tourism and to report on the results achieved in its next periodic report to the Committee. The Committee further requests the State party to take more active measures to bring perpetrators of child sexual exploitation to justice. The Committee calls upon the State party to take immediate measures to establish shelters and trained professionals to meet the recovery and rehabilitation needs of children victims of sexual abuse and exploitation.

28. The Committee expresses deep concern about allegations according to which during the last months of the armed conflict in 2009, civilians were deliberately deprived of food, medical care and humanitarian assistance which constitute violations of article 11 of the Covenant as well as of the international humanitarian prohibition of starvation and may amount to a war crime. (art.11)

In light of its general comment No.12 (1999) on the right to adequate food, the Committee draws the attention of the State party to the fact that the prevention of access to humanitarian food aid in internal conflicts constitutes a violation of article 11 of the Covenant as well as a grave violation of international humanitarian law. The Committee encourages the State party to fully cooperate with the United Nations Secretary-General's panel on accountability.

29. The Committee is concerned that in spite of progress made by the State party to resettle internally displaced persons (IDPs) and to rebuild damaged infrastructure in conflict-affected areas, thousands of IDPs are still prevented from returning due to the establishment of High Security Zones (HSZs) on their homelands. The Committee is also concerned about the conditions of resettlement of internally displaced persons who often lack basic shelter, access to sanitation and water and livelihood opportunities, a situation aggravated by the regular restrictions placed on United Nations agencies, international organizations and international and national NGOs to access internally displaced persons requiring urgent assistance. (arts. 11 and 12)

The Committee urges the State party to speed up the closing of HSZs as indicated during the interactive dialogue, to restore housing land and/or property of which IDPs have been arbitrarily or unlawfully deprived and to establish adequate mechanisms at local levels to resolve land and property disputes and to provide compensation to land owners for the occupation of their land. The Committee draws the attention of the State party to its obligation to respect and protect the work of United Nations agencies, human rights advocates and other members of civil society who assist internally displaced persons in the realization of their economic, social and cultural rights and to refrain from imposing further restrictions on access to IDPs, especially those who are living in food insecurity. The Committee requests the State party to provide detailed information on the situation of internally displaced persons in its next periodic report.

30. The Committee notes with concern the persistence of significant disparities in levels of economic development between the Western region and the rest of the country that affect the equal enjoyment by all of economic, social and cultural rights such as employment, welfare benefits, health and social services. The Committee is also concerned that while poverty has decreased in urban areas, it has grown by over 40 per cent in the estate sector. (arts. 11 and 12)

The Committee recommends that the State party take all necessary remedial measures to address the regional disparities that affect the equal enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and to ensure that its poverty reduction strategies specifically address, through targeted measures, the needs of the most disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, especially in the estate sector. The Committee encourages the State party to further develop indicators and benchmarks, disaggregated by sex, age, urban/rural population and social and ethnic group, for monitoring progress achieved in combating poverty, and that it report on such progress in its next periodic report. In this regard, the State party is referred to the Committee's statement on "Poverty and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights"(E/C.12/2001/10).

31. The Committee is concerned about the acute housing shortage in the State party and the large number of homeless persons. The Committee is also concerned that slum dwellers are vulnerable to forced evictions. (art.11)

The Committee recommends that the State party address the acute housing shortage by adopting a national strategy and a plan of action on adequate housing; drastically increase its national housing budget to an appropriate level commensurate with the extent of the problem and to ensure that plans to construct new social housing units are fully implemented, especially those intended for disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, including those living in slums. The Committee also urges the State party to ensure that persons who are forcibly evicted are provided with adequate compensation or alternative accommodation in accordance with a legal framework that complies with the guidelines adopted by the Committee in its general comment No. 7 (1997) on forced evictions. The Committee further requests the State party to provide in its next periodic report detailed information on the incidence of forced evictions and on the extent of homelessness in the State party, as well as the measures taken to address these problems.

32. The Committee is concerned about the acute overcrowding and the inhuman detention conditions which prevail in many of the State party's prisons. The Committee is also concerned that children are not regularly separated from adults. (arts. 10, para.3; 11 and 12)

The Committee calls upon the State party to take urgent active measures to combat prison overcrowding, in particular by focusing on alternatives to custodial measures. The Committee also recommends that the State party remove children from adult detention facilities.

33. The Committee expresses concern that malnutrition affects nearly one-third of children and one quarter of women and that the nutrition status of internally displaced persons, especially children, remains an issue of serious concern. (arts. 11 and 12)

The Committee urges the State party to adopt the necessary measures to protect the right to adequate food, including through the setting up of a public food distribution system for the most disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups. It also encourages the State party to formulate and implement an Integrated Nutrition Programme throughout the State party.

34. The Committee is deeply concerned that 10 per cent of maternal mortality is reported as the direct result of clandestine abortions. The Committee also notes with concern the lack of basic sexual and reproductive health services, the limited information available on safe contraceptive methods in the State party and the insufficient and educational programmes about sexual and reproductive health, especially in the curricula of the Sri Lankan education system. (art. 12)

The Committee urges the State party to amend abortion laws and to consider providing for exceptions to the prohibition on abortion in cases of therapeutic abortion or pregnancies resulting from rape or incest to help women not to have to resort to illegal abortions that expose them to a high risk of morbidity and mortality. The Committee also urges the State party to establish basic sexual and reproductive health services throughout the State party, to set up comprehensive educational programmes on sexual and reproductive health, including public awareness-raising campaigns about safe contraceptive methods programmes and inclusion of appropriate information on sexual and reproductive health in the curricula of the Sri Lankan education system.

35. The Committee is concerned that mental health services remain insufficient to cope with widespread post-conflict mental disorders. The Committee is also concerned that the 2007 draft Mental Health Act has still not been adopted. (art.12)

The Committee recommends that the State party adopt the draft Mental Health Act of 2007 and to formulate strategies to strengthen available psycho-social assistance, especially for children and recruit more mental health workers and other specialized professionals to address post-conflict mental disorders.

36. The Committee commends the achievements of the State party in primary school enrolment and gender parity. However, The Committee notes with concern that public investment in education is at a relatively low level in spite of the needs of rebuilding school infrastructure in conflict-affected areas, reducing persistent disparities in accessing education between the State party's provinces and providing schools with water, sanitation and electricity. The Committee is also concerned about the high school dropout (one in five children) before completion of the compulsory nine-year cycle due mainly to the existence of school fees despite the constitutional guarantee of free education and the low quality of education. The Committee also regrets that insufficient efforts have been made to include human rights and peace education in the school curricula. (arts.13 and 14)

The Committee recommends that the State party significantly increase the funding of the public education system and to ensure the effective abolition of school fees. The Committee also calls upon the State party to take active measures to reintegrate children in conflict-affected areas into education through rehabilitation of school facilities, to reduce disparities among provinces and districts in access to and full enjoyment of the right to education and to ensure that schools are adequately equipped with water, sanitation and electricity facilities. The Committee further calls upon the State party to improve the quality of education by ensuring that teachers are well-trained and fully qualified and to ensure that human rights and peace education is fully included in school curricula.

37. The Committee encourages the State party to consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Covenant.

38. The Committee requests the State party to disseminate the present concluding observations widely among all levels of society, in particular among State officials, the judiciary and civil society organizations, to translate and publicize them as far as possible, and to inform the Committee on the steps taken to implement them in its

next periodic report. It also encourages the State party to continue engaging national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society in the process of discussion at the national level prior to the submission of its next periodic report.

39. The Committee encourages the State party to consider signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The Committee also encourages the State party to proceed with the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol as indicated in its written responses to the Committee.

40. The Committee requests the State party to submit its fifth periodic report, prepared in accordance with the revised reporting guidelines of the Committee (E/C.12/2008/2), by 30 June 2013.
