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Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review*

Bhutan

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Introduction

1. The Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, established in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 5/1, held its thirty-third session from 6 to 17 May 2019. The review of Bhutan was held at the 6th meeting, on 8 May 2019. The delegation of Bhutan was headed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tandi Dorji. At its 10th meeting, held on 10 May 2019, the Working Group adopted the report on Bhutan.
2. On 15 January 2019, the Human Rights Council selected the following group of rapporteurs (troika) to facilitate the review of Bhutan: Argentina, Austria and Bahrain.
3. In accordance with paragraph 15 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 and paragraph 5 of the annex to Council resolution 16/21, the following documents were issued for the review of Bhutan:
 - (a) A national report submitted/written presentation made in accordance with paragraph 15 (a) (A/HRC/WG.6/33/BTN/1);
 - (b) A compilation prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in accordance with paragraph 15 (b) (A/HRC/WG.6/33/BTN/2);
 - (c) A summary prepared by OHCHR in accordance with paragraph 15 (c) (A/HRC/WG.6/33/BTN/3).
4. A list of questions prepared in advance by Belgium, Germany, Portugal, on behalf of the Group of Friends on national implementation, reporting and follow-up, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was transmitted to Bhutan through the troika. These questions are available on the website of the universal periodic review.

I. Summary of the proceedings of the review process

A. Presentation by the State under review

5. The head of the delegation commended the work of the Human Rights Council and the universal periodic review in promoting and protecting human rights around the world. Since Bhutan was not a party to many international human rights instruments due to various constraints, it attached great importance to the universal periodic review process as a means to assess the human rights situation in the country.
6. In 2018, Bhutan had completed its first decade as a democratic constitutional monarchy. This had also coincided with the third general elections, and the decade witnessed the election to office of three different political parties. The political system in Bhutan had evolved from a monastic system to the Royal Court of the Kings to a democratic constitutional monarchy. This political transformation was a unique example that had put people at the centre of all public policies and actions. Democracy was taking firm roots in Bhutan, and the nation's overall goal was to secure the happiness and well-being of its people.
7. The implementation of the first Five Year Plan in 1961 had allowed Bhutan to embrace modernization, following centuries of isolation from the rest of the world. The inclusion of Bhutan in the category of the least developed countries in 1971 had ensured wider access to external resources to finance its development plans. Bilateral and multilateral financial and technical resources had enabled it to achieve rapid socioeconomic transformation. Based on the philosophy of gross national happiness, successive development plans had enabled Bhutan to progress without compromising its environment, culture and traditions. Following the adoption of the relevant General Assembly resolution in 2018, Bhutan was set to graduate from the least developed countries category in December 2023, which was a significant achievement.

8. Twenty-one fundamental rights and freedoms had been incorporated into the Constitution of Bhutan. As regards the legal framework, the Government had conducted a national review of legislation to harmonize conflicting laws. Additionally, nine relevant laws had been enacted by Parliament with a view to defining further the rights and responsibilities of people.

9. Furthermore, the national protocol for policy formulation required gender, environment, climate change and poverty considerations to be mainstreamed into national policies.

10. The Government had made notable efforts to create the necessary judicial infrastructure and had enhanced the human resources capacity of the judiciary so that the delivery of justice was more efficient. While Bhutan recognized that more needed to be done, it remained committed to improving efficiency in the delivery of justice.

11. The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had recognized the progress achieved in the country since its previous visit in 1996. Bhutan had already considered and in some cases implemented its recommendations.

12. The National Education Policy had been put in place to serve as a road map to achieve universal access to free and equitable education. In addition, the establishment of school infrastructure had improved access to education for children from rural areas, while the early childhood care and development centres had made education more inclusive. The Government had been working to maintain the relevance and quality of education by updating the curriculum, and introducing the central schools system and professional development programmes for teachers. The primary school enrolment rate stood at 98.8 per cent, while adults, mostly women, who had missed the opportunity to pursue formal schooling, were provided with access to non-formal education programmes.

13. Sustained provision of free health services had been a policy preceding the Constitution of Bhutan. In that regard, the Bhutan Health Trust Fund had been established to fund the purchase of essential medicines and vaccines. An integrated three-tier health system was addressing the needs of people. Although the doctor-patient ratio had seen a steady improvement, there was still a shortage of doctors. In order to fill the gap in other categories of health workers, the Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan had been established, and nursing programmes had been introduced. The Government would be investing resources to establish specialty care facilities closer to the people.

14. To address the issue of poverty, Bhutan had adopted a two-pronged approach, reflected in the broad-based programmes in areas such as education, health, social infrastructure and agriculture, as well as in targeted poverty reduction initiatives. Overall, significant progress had been achieved in reducing poverty.

15. The Government was putting in place policy measures and interventions to deal with unemployment and trafficking in persons.

16. Regarding the rights of women, gender parity in education at the basic level, and at the higher, secondary level, had been more or less achieved. Women's turnout as voters in elections had been marked by considerable progress; however the representation of women in public institutions had remained low, and the Government was determined to change that situation. The gender disparity was an issue which was related to access to opportunities in the past, rather than to gender discrimination.

17. Bhutan was a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. In addition, policy initiatives, such as for extended maternity leave, and for the establishment of early childhood care and development centres, and of nurseries in workplaces, had been put in place.

18. Concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, a National Policy for Persons with Disabilities had been drafted based on a needs assessment survey, which was aligned with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A national interest analysis concerning ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had been submitted to the Government.

19. In addition, the Government identified minority and vulnerable groups on the basis of their socioeconomic needs rather than their ethnicity, since the latter could be divisive for a small country.

20. The Government had been providing increasing space to civil society organizations, resulting in increased registration of such organizations. Civil society organizations were playing an active and constructive role in advancing a human rights-based approach in Bhutan, and had provided valuable input in the preparations for the third cycle of the universal periodic review.

21. Bhutan would continue to cooperate with the international human rights mechanisms in order to further improve the human rights situation in the country. Bhutan was discussing with United Nations agencies the possibility of developing a web-based system to increase the efficiency of monitoring and reporting for the United Nations human rights mechanisms.

22. While the commitments of Bhutan to global agreements on the environment and climate change would remain steadfast, it expressed concern that global actions were inadequate to prevent further global temperature rises.

23. A scarcity of resources, and a lack of institutions or weak institutions, limited the capacity of Bhutan to meet its national and international obligations, despite remaining committed to do so. Therefore, the Government was seeking the support and understanding of the international community.

B. Interactive dialogue and responses by the State under review

24. During the interactive dialogue, 94 delegations made statements. Recommendations made during the dialogue are to be found in section II of the present report.

25. The Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomed the National Education Policy and the Bhutan Education Blueprint (2014–2024).

26. Latvia noted the visit of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to Bhutan.

27. Malaysia welcomed efforts to improve the health sector, particularly for adolescents and women, and to ensure gender parity in the education sector.

28. Maldives commended Bhutan on efforts to strengthen the rule of law and good governance, and policies for environmental conservation and sustainable development.

29. Mauritius welcomed the National Law Review Task Force, and measures on the rule of law and good governance, women's and children's rights, and poverty.

30. Mexico acknowledged the constitutional prohibition of the death penalty, improvements regarding access to drinking water and sanitation, and the reduction in mothers' and children's mortality rates.

31. Montenegro welcomed the National Plan of Action for Child Well-being and Protection, and progress in combating domestic violence. It was concerned at trafficking in women and girls, and violence against children.

32. Myanmar congratulated Bhutan on its commitment to promote human rights, particularly of women and children.

33. Nepal encouraged the addressing of discrimination against minorities. It asked about the repatriation of a number of Bhutanese refugees living in Nepal.

34. The Netherlands welcomed progress regarding women's political participation. It urged Bhutan to change gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes.

35. Nicaragua made recommendations.

36. Nigeria welcomed efforts to combat corruption, alleviate poverty, and promote women's and children's rights.

37. Oman noted some development initiatives in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
38. Pakistan commended Bhutan for efforts to eliminate poverty, particularly in rural areas, and for programmes on education, health, agriculture, the rule of law, good governance and anti-corruption.
39. Peru highlighted efforts to implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.
40. The Philippines recognized efforts in the areas of poverty reduction, youth employment, climate adaptation and disaster management.
41. Portugal saluted Bhutan on the strengthening of the National Commission for Women and Children.
42. Qatar commended Bhutan for progress regarding access to health care and quality education, poverty alleviation, good governance, anti-corruption, and women's and children's rights.
43. The Russian Federation referred to a complicated human rights situation in Bhutan but commended it for actions regarding extreme poverty, development, and access to health care and education.
44. Saudi Arabia noted efforts to fight illiteracy and ensure access to education for all.
45. Senegal expressed appreciation to Bhutan for its innovative mechanisms for financing the health sector, and for its commitment to focusing more on the rights of women and children.
46. Serbia commended Bhutan for accelerating the promotion of human rights through policy and legislative measures, and the implementation of those measures at the grass-roots level through targeted plans.
47. Seychelles noted positively the enhancement by Bhutan of its legislative human rights framework, poverty reduction, and the country's accession to the United Nations Convention against Corruption.
48. Sierra Leone applauded the efforts by Bhutan to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education for particularly vulnerable and economically disadvantaged students.
49. Singapore noted the poverty reduction in Bhutan, through broad-based and targeted programmes, and commended the country for efforts to enhance access to education through the central schools system.
50. Slovenia welcomed the recent inclusion of gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment among the National Key Result Areas, and the endorsement of gender-responsive planning.
51. Spain congratulated Bhutan on the progress made in consolidating an institutional democratic system within the framework of a Constitution to protect fundamental rights and freedoms.
52. Sri Lanka commended Bhutan for actions to strengthen the legislative and judicial branches of the State, and for the ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.
53. The State of Palestine commended Bhutan for the steps taken to improve education through the establishment of central schools, particularly for children from rural communities.
54. Switzerland welcomed the progress made, particularly in political rights, including the three democratic elections which had contributed to a better representation of women.

55. Tajikistan noted the measures taken to accelerate the promotion of human rights through policy and legislative measures, and the implementation of those measures at the grass-roots level.
56. Thailand acknowledged the gross national happiness philosophy of Bhutan, and commended it for its commitment to providing free health services, reducing poverty and advancing the rights of persons with disabilities.
57. Timor-Leste appreciated the important steps taken for environmental protection and the establishment of the green bench to protect children's rights.
58. Tunisia commended Bhutan for actions to strengthen the institutional and legislative framework, and for the adoption of a plan to graduate from the category of least developed countries.
59. Turkey welcomed the efforts undertaken to reduce poverty, raise literacy rates and life expectancy, and increase the number of schools and childcare centres. It also welcomed the steps taken by the Government to control corruption.
60. Turkmenistan commended Bhutan for developing the National Education Policy and the Bhutan Education Blueprint (2014–2024).
61. Regarding the issues of child marriage and exploitation of children, the Constitution of Bhutan and the Penal Code ensured the necessary protection of children against all forms of discrimination and exploitation. The Penal Code criminalized the rape of a child. In addition, the Child Care and Protection Act 2011 specified children as being all persons below 18 years of age.
62. The Ministry of Health's Adolescent Health Programme and education on adolescent sexual and reproductive health contained additional measures preventing child marriage.
63. A study on violence against children had allowed the gathering of more information regarding the prevalence of physical, sexual and emotional violence, their drivers, and access to services.
64. In regard to child labour, the Labour and Employment Act prohibited the employment of children under 13. It also specified 16 categories of risky occupations for children aged between 13 and 17.
65. A handbook for labour inspectors had been elaborated to assist labour inspectors in effectively addressing the issue of child labour. Additionally, the Government had been working towards empowering law enforcement agencies to effectively monitor and inspect private and domestic settings.
66. The Government had launched several projects to protect the rights of children, particularly the online Central Management Information System which served as a repository of disaggregated data on women and children in difficult circumstances, and the Children in Conflict with the Law initiative to ensure proper coordination and case management.
67. Furthermore, instruments such as the National Plan of Action for Child Well-being and Protection and the National Child Policy had been developed to prevent and respond to violence and abuse of children.
68. The Government had created sensitization and media advocacy programmes on adolescent issues and matters pertaining to violence, and would continue to work in that area.
69. Concerning the rights of women, Bhutan continued to carry out advocacy and awareness-raising programmes on the rights of and services available for entertainment centre (*drayang*) workers. A survey to better understand the situation of *drayang* employees was being conducted. In addition, the Ministry of Economic Affairs was revising and would be implementing the Rules Governing Places of Entertainment.
70. A number of initiatives had been taken to prevent domestic violence, including the development of the Domestic Violence Prevention Rules and Regulations in 2015, and the

2017 standard operating procedure on case management for women and children in difficult circumstances.

71. Moreover, the Government had been working closely with civil society organizations to prevent domestic violence and help victims. The 24/7 toll-free Woman and Child Helpline had been launched in October 2018. The report on a recently concluded study on violence against women and girls would also serve as a basis for the development of the National Plan of Action for Gender Equality.

72. Furthermore, the Government was working very closely with several civil society organizations to increase women's political participation and representation. Bhutan had registered an increase in women's representation in the Parliament and at the local government level.

73. As for matters related to education, corporal punishment in schools had been banned, and training on counselling and neuroscience for teachers would be conducted in 2019.

74. Furthermore, the gross enrolment ratio in secondary education had increased to 89.3 per cent in 2018. By prioritizing access to education, the Government had expanded free basic education from class X to class XII and was providing free boarding facilities, meals, textbooks and stationery.

75. In addition, with the establishment of new colleges, access to tertiary education had improved, with the gross enrolment ratio up to 24.2 per cent. The Government continuously strove to provide access to life-long learning opportunities through non-formal education, which had resulted in an increase in the adult literacy rate.

76. To ensure the attendance and retention of girls in schools, the Government provided free sanitary napkins as well as separate water and sanitation facilities. Furthermore, sexual and reproductive health education had been introduced into the school curriculum, and advocacy programmes were being carried out in secondary schools to raise awareness about teenage pregnancy, mental illness, and substance abuse.

77. The Government was encouraging girls to take science subjects in higher secondary school, through counselling and advocacy programmes.

78. Ukraine commended Bhutan for democratic reforms, particularly the establishment of strong institutional and legislative frameworks on gender equality, rights of children and persons with disabilities.

79. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland welcomed the resettlement of the country's Nepali-speaking community, but expressed concern over gender discrimination and freedom of expression.

80. The United States of America welcomed the achievements of Bhutan in democratization, but expressed concern that current legislation could pose undue restrictions on freedom of expression, association and belief.

81. Uruguay commended Bhutan for efforts to promote gender equality and to prevent domestic violence against women and children. It also welcomed the enactment of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act and the establishment of the National Commission for Women and Children.

82. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela commended Bhutan for better access to education, especially for children in rural areas, with boarding schools, free school uniforms and school meals, and free health-care services.

83. Viet Nam commended Bhutan for achievements in poverty reduction, gender equality, reduction of inequality, access to quality education and health-care services, and reducing climate change vulnerabilities.

84. Afghanistan commended Bhutan for policy and institutional initiatives to improve the enjoyment of the right to quality and inclusive education, and for the promotion of women's and children's rights.

85. Algeria welcomed legal reforms to reduce inequality, in particular through the implementation of a National Education Policy (2014–2024) to ensure universal access to free and equal education.
86. Argentina congratulated Bhutan for the establishment of the education plan (2014–2024), which was aimed at guaranteeing access to education.
87. Armenia welcomed the 2018 National Policy for Persons with Disabilities and noted the ongoing steps to prevent and combat trafficking in persons.
88. Australia welcomed the successful holding of national elections in 2018, and commended Bhutan for progress in the areas of disability and gender, including the achievement of gender parity in primary education.
89. Austria commended Bhutan for the 2016 amendment of the Jabmi Act of 2003, which would encourage further improvement towards equal access to the legal aid system.
90. Bahrain commended Bhutan for the measures taken in 2018 for the protection of women and girls, which built upon efforts to achieve gender equality and combat trafficking in persons.
91. Bangladesh acknowledged the significant strides made in the areas of poverty alleviation, education, health, and the environment and climate change, and in achieving gender parity in education.
92. Belgium acknowledged the progress made since the previous universal periodic review of Bhutan.
93. Benin noted with satisfaction regulatory measures for the establishment of a family and children’s court, as well as guidelines and monitoring tools for non-formal education.
94. The Plurinational State of Bolivia highlighted the country’s philosophy of development based on gross national happiness, which served as a guiding light for promoting the rule of law and for the protection and promotion of human rights.
95. Brazil commended Bhutan for the democratic elections held in 2018, as well as for the mainstreaming of the Sustainable Development Goals within its policies.
96. Brunei Darussalam commended Bhutan for the various efforts made to ensure universal access to free and equitable education.
97. Burkina Faso noted with interest the 2018 adoption of a law on information, communications and the media, and a 2015 regulation on the prevention of domestic violence.
98. Cambodia commended Bhutan for achievements in the areas of public health services, poverty reduction, economic development, improvement of living standards, and sociocultural rights.
99. Canada welcomed the steps taken to address women’s empowerment, including enforcement of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act, and applauded efforts to keep girls in school, which included the provision of sanitary pads.
100. Chile welcomed the progress in education and access to health care for all, and the commitment to gender equality, and encouraged Bhutan to ensure better political participation of women.
101. China noted that Bhutan had carried out and implemented the twelfth Five Year Plan, positively promoted social and economic development, vigorously developed education and health care, combated domestic violence, and protected the rights of women and girls. China commended the important achievements of Bhutan in eradicating poverty.
102. Côte d’Ivoire praised Bhutan for the measures to reinforce the legislative and institutional framework, and encouraged it to continue its work to protect and promote human rights.

103. Croatia acknowledged the steps to strengthen the National Commission for Women and Children, but regretted the instances of early marriage, and forced labour and sexual exploitation among women and children.

104. Cuba praised Bhutan for achievements in reducing poverty, extending access to health care and education, and improving the quality of services, and noted the importance attached to happiness in public policy.

105. Cyprus commended Bhutan for the adoption of the National Action Plan for Child Protection and the strengthening of the National Commission for Women and Children.

106. Bhutan remained committed to cooperating in a constructive spirit with the international human rights mechanisms, particularly with treaty bodies and special procedures and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

107. Due to resource constraints, Bhutan experienced difficulties in facilitating frequent visits of mandate holders. However, the Government was cooperating with the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had visited Bhutan.

108. Regarding press freedom, the ranking of Bhutan in the World Press Freedom Index had improved by 14 places and stood at 80th in 2019, which made Bhutan the highest-ranked country in South Asia.

109. The 2018 amendments to the Information, Communications and Media Act of Bhutan had ensured greater independence of the Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority. Additionally, the Government had been providing capacity-building support to media houses, including the Journalist Association of Bhutan, through training and the provision of financial grants and equipment.

110. The Government was working to ensure that all information related to public policies, decisions and plans was shared with the public.

111. As for the recommendation to amend the Constitution, Bhutan stated that a drafting committee of 39 members had analysed a number of constitutions to elaborate a document, which would be promoting and protecting the interests of people in the best possible way.

112. Moreover, the King of Bhutan and the Fourth King of Bhutan had travelled around the country to consult with every household. Therefore, the Constitution enjoyed broad support from the people. If any amendment was necessary, the Constitution contained provisions for this to be done in a democratic way.

113. Concerning the provision of legal aid, a Legal Aid Guideline had been submitted for the consideration of the Government. Moreover, the National Law Review Task Force had noted that it was timely to establish a public defender's office in the interests of indigent people. In order to raise awareness about laws, the justice sector had been carrying out programmes to disseminate the relevant information.

114. In line with the twelfth Five Year Plan, the Government had prioritized the issue of access to justice for women through capacity-building for judges, and had established a specialized court for women and children.

115. A number of guidelines had been elaborated, such as the Child Prosecution Guideline and the Child Court Procedures, to avoid any exposure of children to the mainstream legal processes and to facilitate their reintegration.

116. Regarding the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups, Bhutan had been putting the well-being of people at the centre of its development plans and policies.

117. The Government had initiated a number of programmes to improve living conditions and social welfare through the provision of housing, water supply and monthly allowances. The draft National Pension and Provident Fund Policy was aimed at expanding pension coverage through additional, more affordable schemes.

118. As for the rights of persons with disabilities, the draft national policy contained measures to improve access to education and to remove physical and financial barriers.

Additionally, the Government supported the establishment of civil society organizations such as the Royal Society for Senior Citizens and Ability Bhutan Society.

119. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea welcomed the policies to ensure free education and health care and the progress in poverty reduction and child protection.

120. The Democratic Republic of the Congo commended Bhutan for adopting the implementing regulations on the Child Protection Act, the Child Adoption Act and the Domestic Violence Prevention Act.

121. Denmark stated that by ratifying the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Bhutan would send a message that torture could not be tolerated.

122. Djibouti appreciated efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, to implement the Five Year Plan and to strengthen the legal and institutional framework.

123. Egypt congratulated Bhutan on its progress in the areas of poverty reduction, free education, the protection of economic and social rights, and the health sector.

124. Equatorial Guinea acknowledged the steps taken by Bhutan to protect the rights of women and children, as well as the right to education.

125. Eritrea welcomed the newly introduced measures in the domains of development, education, and the rights of children and women.

126. Estonia commended Bhutan for combining, as a unique development model, the implementation of the Five Year Plan, the Sustainable Development Goals and the pursuit of gross national happiness.

127. Ethiopia commended Bhutan for reducing income poverty and multidimensional poverty, including through the allocation of a significant portion of the total budget to social sectors.

128. Fiji welcomed the reporting by Bhutan on its initiatives for climate change and disaster management, and encouraged the country to continue to build its resilience.

129. France congratulated Bhutan on its efforts to consolidate the democratic process and improve the human rights situation, and encouraged it to continue.

130. Gabon welcomed the establishment by Bhutan of an independent national human rights commission, and its efforts to protect women and children, to promote gender equality and to combat trafficking in persons.

131. Georgia welcomed the legislative changes to better protect human rights in various fields, and the ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

132. Germany welcomed the commitment of Bhutan to democracy, the parliamentary elections in 2018, and its progress in preventing violence against women and children.

133. Ghana commended Bhutan for its Five Year Plan which enabled it to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and particularly for the progress in the areas of quality education, combating domestic violence, and poverty alleviation.

134. Honduras congratulated Bhutan on the progress it had made, especially in terms of the promotion of human rights through policies and legislation implemented at the local level.

135. Hungary valued the greater emphasis on women's and children's issues in the Five Year Plan, and commended Bhutan for reforms in health and education.

136. Iceland welcomed the national plan of action to promote gender equality and plans for environmental conservation.

137. India commended Bhutan for its gross national happiness concept, the holding of the 2018 elections, and the steps taken to mainstream gender, inequality, poverty and environmental issues in all policies.

138. Indonesia applauded the efforts of Bhutan to reduce inequalities in rural areas, and to conduct training for law enforcement agents and legal awareness programmes for local leaders.

139. The Islamic Republic of Iran praised Bhutan for the steps to implement the Five Year Plans, and to adopt and amend the act on narcotic drugs.

140. Iraq welcomed the holding of elections, the launch of the Five Year Plan and all plans promoting the rights of women and children.

141. Ireland acknowledged the adoption of the Five Year Plan and expressed concern about the vulnerability of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons to discrimination and harassment.

142. Israel commended Bhutan for the smooth holding of the 2018 elections, and the efforts to achieve gender equality and to draft the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities.

143. Italy welcomed the efforts to strengthen the National Commission for Women and Children, and to promote access to quality health and education, particularly in rural areas.

144. Japan appreciated the emphasis on narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas in education and employment through the task force on employment creation.

145. Jordan praised Bhutan for numerous programmes, particularly to enhance the right to health, and for legislative amendments to strengthen human rights.

146. Kazakhstan welcomed the anti-corruption policy, and the steps to preserve the environment, to enhance access to education and health care and to strengthen the judiciary.

147. Kuwait praised Bhutan for the efforts to protect human rights, including the legislative measures and strategies to reduce poverty.

148. Kyrgyzstan commended Bhutan for the steps to reduce poverty and to develop national policies to eliminate illiteracy and address the gender gap.

149. Regarding accession to core human rights treaties, Bhutan remained mindful of its resource and capacity constraints and the need to build the necessary legal and political institutions. Therefore, accession would be considered, based on national needs and priorities, following a thorough consultation process.

150. Nevertheless, the Government had put in place the rules of procedure on treaty-making as a basis for accession to and/or ratification of international instruments. Bhutan had confirmed its commitment to gradually joining the remaining human rights treaties. In this regard, Bhutan noted that the national interest analysis concerning ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had been submitted to the Government.

151. As for the matter of citizenship, there were clear procedures laid down for the acquisition of citizenship, irrespective of ethnicity, gender or religion. More than 10,000 applicants had been granted citizenship since the enactment of the Constitution in 2008.

152. Regarding freedom of religion, Bhutan stated that change of faith should come through internal evolution rather than through external inducement. All religious groups were free to practice without any requirement to register with the Commission for Religious Organizations.

153. In collaboration with, and with the support of, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Bhutan had been training officials, including its law enforcement agencies, to deal with the issue of trafficking in persons. A draft standard operating procedure on that matter was ready, and would be submitted to the Government.

154. Regarding the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, Bhutan stated that no instance of prosecution had been registered. The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community was freely represented through Rainbow Bhutan. The Government had been providing support to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons living with HIV/AIDS, without any discrimination.

155. The head of the delegation reaffirmed the unwavering commitment of Bhutan to human rights. Although the Government had been working actively to put in place laws and policies in conformity with international human rights standards, Bhutan was facing serious challenges such as a lack of financial, human and technical capacity. He emphasized that the country had not yet met one remaining criterion for graduation from the least developed countries category, which was compounded by the growing impact of climate change and natural hazards. Therefore, Bhutan would still need the support of the international community to address those challenges.

156. The head of the delegation concluded by thanking Member States for their active engagement and valuable recommendations.

II. Conclusions and/or recommendations

157. **The recommendations formulated during the interactive dialogue/listed below have been examined by Bhutan and enjoy the support of Bhutan:**

157.1 **Take appropriate steps towards ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Thailand); Continue progress towards ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Australia); Accelerate efforts to accede to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Bahrain);**

157.2 **Strengthen the legal status and visibility of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by establishing a clear timetable for the harmonization of laws (Honduras);**

157.3 **Continue working with the mechanisms of the Human Rights Council (Kuwait);**

157.4 **Keep on mobilizing resources and seek necessary international assistance to enhance its capacity to promote and protect human rights (Nigeria);**

157.5 **Strengthen international cooperation in the field of human rights (Malaysia);**

157.6 **Continue to enhance capacity-building through partnership with United Nations agencies, including OHCHR and other development partners, with a view to fulfilling the country's international human rights obligations (Ghana);**

157.7 **Step up cooperation with international organizations to build the capacities of national institutions and comply with the requirements of international treaties (Iraq);**

157.8 **Seek the support of the international community in Bhutan's human rights programmes (Kuwait);**

157.9 **Take further steps to improve national legislation regarding the respect of citizens' rights and freedoms (Russian Federation);**

157.10 **Strengthen the National Committee for the Welfare of Women and Children, so that it provides programmes and activities that have a gender perspective and are adapted to children (Plurinational State of Bolivia);**

157.11 **Uphold further all human rights for citizens of the country as guaranteed by the Constitution of Bhutan (Tajikistan);**

157.12 **Consolidate human rights policies within the framework of a comprehensive national strategy (Ukraine);**

157.13 **Despite the challenges, consistently take steps to strengthen human rights, including through aligning laws and policies with international human**

rights instruments and incorporating the best practices of other countries (Tajikistan);

157.14 Develop a National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons, through wide consultation with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders (Seychelles);

157.15 Adopt a National Action Plan together with the National Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Persons (Armenia);

157.16 Further provide human rights education and training for law enforcement agencies, students and other stakeholders, taking into account the World Programme for Human Rights Education (Thailand);

157.17 Continue training for law enforcement on trafficking in persons (Jordan);

157.18 Further promote genuine participation of civil society organizations, including in the area of awareness-raising, advocacy and monitoring, in the field of human rights (Austria);

157.19 Take concrete measures in order to tackle stigma and discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members (Portugal);

157.20 Continue to work with all relevant stakeholders and the international community to support these efforts to combat inequality through technical cooperation and the sharing of best practices in combating inequality (Singapore);

157.21 Continue to implement interventions to reduce income disparity and inequalities (Maldives);

157.22 Step up efforts to fully implement the laws and regulations that apply to equality between men and women (Côte d'Ivoire);

157.23 Elaborate targeted interventions alongside the existing good practices to reduce the widening income disparity and other forms of inequalities (Hungary);

157.24 Take steps to ensure non-discrimination of members of the LGBT community (Israel);

157.25 Further promote sustainable economic and social development to provide a solid basis for people to better enjoy all human rights (China);

157.26 Continue efforts in reducing inequality and promoting inclusive development (Myanmar);

157.27 Further strengthen efforts to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas (Japan);

157.28 Continue work for the protection of the environment and the biological corridors (Oman);

157.29 Continue to implement policies and measures to strengthen its environmental conservation efforts (Pakistan);

157.30 Continue undertaking inclusive consultations on disaster management and contingency planning to ensure that the needs of women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups are duly considered (Philippines);

157.31 Expand the actions of preparation for natural disasters, emergency situations and adaptation to climate change, with an emphasis on the protection of children, women, and people with disabilities (Cuba);

157.32 Intensify efforts for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, eradicating corporal punishment both at school and at home (Chile);

- 157.33 Take appropriate measures to ensure that the rights of the child are respected, including by prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment (Italy);
- 157.34 Further intensify efforts to address root causes of trafficking in persons, especially women and children (Philippines);
- 157.35 Step up efforts in conducting capacity-building activities for duty bearers in the areas of combating trafficking in persons and violence against women and children (Philippines);
- 157.36 Explicitly define and criminalize the sale of children and develop other mechanisms to address child trafficking (Portugal);
- 157.37 Intensify efforts aimed at bilateral, regional and international cooperation to prevent trafficking in persons (Qatar);
- 157.38 Tighten the normative framework that prohibits human trafficking and sexual exploitation, but also the awareness and sensitization of the population in this regard (Spain);
- 157.39 Intensify efforts to prevent trafficking, through bilateral, regional and international cooperation (Timor-Leste);
- 157.40 Strengthen legislation and public policies to eradicate trafficking in persons, in particular of girls and boys (Mexico);
- 157.41 Redouble efforts to address the root causes of trafficking in women and girls, and ensure rehabilitation and social reintegration of victims (Côte d'Ivoire);
- 157.42 Continue its efforts aimed at preventing and combating trafficking in persons (Democratic Republic of the Congo);
- 157.43 Continue to combat trafficking in women and children by ensuring the rehabilitation and social reintegration of victims (Gabon);
- 157.44 Continue the efforts to prevent and combat trafficking in persons (Georgia);
- 157.45 Continue its engagement to ensure the rehabilitation and social integration of victims of trafficking, including by providing them with access to shelters, and legal and medical assistance (Hungary);
- 157.46 Intensify efforts to protect and promote freedom of religion or belief and the rights of persons belonging to religious minorities (Italy);
- 157.47 Prevent the misuse of defamation laws to unduly constrain freedom of expression both online and offline (United States of America);
- 157.48 Do not relent in its poverty alleviation efforts and the fight against corruption (Nigeria);
- 157.49 Continue to be committed to eradicating poverty, particularly in rural areas, and intensifying infrastructure constructions in rural areas and increasing the income of peasants (China);
- 157.50 Continue efforts to provide government services on the Internet (Jordan);
- 157.51 Continue its reforms in health and education to enhance access to quality services for all (Pakistan);
- 157.52 Accelerate efforts towards effective solutions for the provision of basic services in the rural areas such as health, education and potable water (Bahrain);
- 157.53 Continue reform measures in health and education for higher-quality services (Myanmar);

- 157.54 Continue to promote its social policies in order to increase the quality of life of its people (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela);
- 157.55 Take further measures to sustain and reinforce progress made in poverty alleviation and inequalities reduction (Viet Nam);
- 157.56 Continue with the implementation of the twelfth Five Year Plan, which includes the eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequality (Plurinational State of Bolivia);
- 157.57 Continue the positive efforts in the reduction of poverty and inequality (Cuba);
- 157.58 Continue to promote economic and social development, with the aim of eradicating poverty and improving the standard of living of the population, especially in rural areas (Djibouti);
- 157.59 Pursue efforts to combat poverty and to improve living conditions, particularly of persons in vulnerable situations, in particular when it comes to providing health care and ensuring education and decent housing for all (Egypt);
- 157.60 Develop a strategy for sustainable development focused on reducing the gap between rural and urban poverty (Ethiopia);
- 157.61 Implement its key objective of poverty eradication and reducing inequality in its Five Year Plans (India);
- 157.62 Further strengthen efforts in the area of poverty reduction and in prevention of youth unemployment (Kazakhstan);
- 157.63 Strengthen the efforts to address the social and cultural challenges of vulnerable groups, mainly women farmers (Ethiopia);
- 157.64 Move towards full implementation of the Gender Equality Policy, including through the use of smart agricultural methods and technologies, to improve the situation of women farmers (Israel);
- 157.65 Strengthen its efforts in providing access to adequate sanitation facilities in rural areas and access to an adequate standard of living for economically disadvantaged families (State of Palestine);
- 157.66 Continue strengthening free access to health-care services for all people of Bhutan (Nicaragua);
- 157.67 Further strengthen the public health-care system in Bhutan, including by enhancing physical infrastructure and the allocation of resources to health-care facilities benefiting rural communities (Sri Lanka);
- 157.68 Continue allocating resources for the health-care sector to improve health-care services (Malaysia);
- 157.69 Continue to consolidate their successful health programmes through universal, free and quality medical care (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela);
- 157.70 Pursue actions and initiatives with a view to the promotion of basic health services and access to education for all (Benin);
- 157.71 Continue to raise public awareness on health services for vulnerable groups, particularly those who are living in rural areas (Cambodia);
- 157.72 Enhance children's enrolment in schools (Jordan);
- 157.73 Increase school attendance of boys, girls and adolescents, including those with a disability, and reduce the illiteracy rate of girls and women (Mexico);
- 157.74 Fully implement the national e-Health strategy and action plan and share good experiences in this regard (Democratic People's Republic of Korea);

- 157.75 Continue its efforts to improve the state of health of the population, particularly for women and children (Islamic Republic of Iran);
- 157.76 Continue to improve the quality and access to education for all children, especially children from rural communities (Lao People's Democratic Republic);
- 157.77 Keep up efforts to provide quality education to boys and girls through its government education programme, in order to ensure their proper development (Nicaragua);
- 157.78 Increase efforts to promote access to education by expanding access to primary school and general education (Oman);
- 157.79 Continue efforts to bridge the gender gap in higher education (Oman);
- 157.80 Take concrete measures to improve literacy equally amongst boys and girls (Portugal);
- 157.81 Continue efforts to reduce illiteracy in the country and ensure access to education for all segments of society (Saudi Arabia);
- 157.82 Continue further interventions targeting the right to education, including through non-formal education and access to technical and vocational training facilities (Sri Lanka);
- 157.83 Take all appropriate steps to encourage and facilitate women's participation in tertiary education, including in STEM (Sri Lanka);
- 157.84 Continue its efforts to improve the quality of and access to education, and increase efforts to ensure accessibility to education for children with disabilities (State of Palestine);
- 157.85 Strengthen efforts to increase enrolment of female students in tertiary education (Malaysia);
- 157.86 Continue ensuring universal access to free and equitable education to guarantee every child the right to free basic education (Turkmenistan);
- 157.87 Continue efforts to ensure access to quality education and health-care services (Viet Nam);
- 157.88 Strengthen measures to guarantee access of girls and women to all levels of education, including tertiary education (Argentina);
- 157.89 Continue efforts in ensuring free and equitable education for all (Brunei Darussalam);
- 157.90 Strengthen actions for access to and quality of education at all levels, as well as inclusive education for children with disabilities and literacy programmes (Cuba);
- 157.91 Continue to develop strategies to improve the quality of and access to education (Cyprus);
- 157.92 Take further measures to encourage higher attendance and retention of girls in schools (Democratic People's Republic of Korea);
- 157.93 Continue implementation of reforms for improving quality of education (India);
- 157.94 Strengthen its efforts to promote access to education for all (Islamic Republic of Iran);
- 157.95 Strengthen the Government's efforts to improve the quality of and access to education, particularly for children from rural communities (Kyrgyzstan);

- 157.96 Take the requisite steps to address the existing gaps that affect particularly women's rights (Sierra Leone);
- 157.97 Increase its efforts to ensure the promotion and protection of women's rights, in particular the right to access to justice (Timor-Leste);
- 157.98 Continue its efforts to ensure that women have access to justice across the country, including establishing well-resourced and accessible specialized courts for women and children (Afghanistan);
- 157.99 Continue its work to support the protection and promotion of the rights of women, children, girls and adolescents (Nicaragua);
- 157.100 Consider organizing capacity-building and professional activities for women so that they can access the formal economy (Peru);
- 157.101 Provide more employment opportunities for women and promote their entry into the formal economy by building their capacity through the provision of vocational and technical training (Qatar);
- 157.102 Continue efforts to increase the representation of women in the labour force and improve literacy and numeracy rates for women (Australia);
- 157.103 Improve the situation of women and girls in Bhutanese society, in particular their social protection, access to basic health services, and decent menstrual hygiene (France);
- 157.104 Enhance the provision of vocational and technical trainings for women to enable their greater participation in the formal economy, including through bilateral and regional cooperation (Indonesia);
- 157.105 Further promote women's empowerment, building upon the significant progress in recent years (Japan);
- 157.106 Continue its efforts to implement the national policies and programmes aimed at further promoting gender equality as well as the rights of women and children (Lao People's Democratic Republic);
- 157.107 Continue its efforts for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls (Pakistan);
- 157.108 Revise the 1980 marriage law and increase the age of marriage for women to 18 years of age in line with Sustainable Development Goal 5.3 (Switzerland);
- 157.109 Continue efforts in combating discrimination against women (Tunisia);
- 157.110 Strengthen education programmes to counter the negative effects of discriminatory stereotypes on women, especially in rural areas (Algeria);
- 157.111 Combat discrimination against women and girls (Cambodia);
- 157.112 Continue to promote gender equality and narrow the gender gap through enhancing participation of women and girls in political, economic and social activities (Cambodia);
- 157.113 Take all measures to counter the negative impact of discriminatory stereotypes of women (Iceland);
- 157.114 Intensify efforts to adopt a national policy for gender equality (Iraq);
- 157.115 Prepare a national action plan to prevent all forms of violence against women and allocate sufficient resources for its application (Spain);
- 157.116 Continue efforts to combat violence against women and domestic violence (Tunisia);
- 157.117 Continue efforts in combating violence against women and girls (Brunei Darussalam);

- 157.118 Address violence against women and girls, including the perception that domestic abuse is normal, by raising awareness of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act and by providing additional services to victims (Canada);
- 157.119 To expedite the formulation of a policy to prevent violence against women and harmful traditional practices as indicated in the national report (Eritrea);
- 157.120 Continue the efforts with regard to the protection of women's rights and strengthening of combating violence against women and children (Georgia);
- 157.121 Continue to adopt measures to combat violence against women and children, including by implementing and closely monitoring the impact of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act (Germany);
- 157.122 Enhance the combat against gender-based violence, taking into account the results of the Violence against Women and Girls Study Report by the United Nations Development Programme (Austria);
- 157.123 Consider taking measures to better protect women and children from domestic violence, in particular to envisage a reform of national legislation with a view to better protecting children and women from domestic violence (Russian Federation);
- 157.124 Continue awareness-raising actions with a view to educating communities on questions of domestic violence (Burkina Faso);
- 157.125 Pursue effective measures to increase women's participation in political and public life (Djibouti);
- 157.126 Improve women's representation in decision-making positions and management positions (Egypt);
- 157.127 Continue its efforts to improve women's participation in political and public life and strengthen their representation in decision-making bodies (Gabon);
- 157.128 Continue ongoing measures for addressing the gender gap in the areas of leadership and decision-making (India);
- 157.129 Consider taking measures to ensure the full and equal participation of women in elected and appointed bodies, including a gender parity system (Kyrgyzstan);
- 157.130 Make every effort to implement the Communication for Development strategy to uphold child rights by families (Turkmenistan);
- 157.131 Eradicate child and early forced marriage by providing incentives to girls and their families to remain in school and by addressing rural poverty (Canada);
- 157.132 Combat early marriage and sexual exploitation of children by raising public awareness (France);
- 157.133 Strengthen the efforts to prevent and combat child, early and forced marriage, including by raising the minimum legal age of marriage for girls (Italy);
- 157.134 Adopt concrete measures aimed at preventing child trafficking, including by addressing root causes for children's vulnerability in this regard (Slovenia);
- 157.135 Step up measures to ensure that children are not exploited in any form, and that the rights of the child are protected and promoted (Maldives);
- 157.136 Strengthen campaigns and programmes on the prevention of child marriage and awareness-raising on its consequences (Argentina);

157.137 Take measures to explicitly define and criminalize the sale of children, and the offering, delivering or accepting, by whatever means, of a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation, transfer of organs for profit or engagement in forced labour (Brazil);

157.138 Intensify efforts to fight against child marriage, as well as early and forced marriage, particularly in rural areas (Burkina Faso);

157.139 Take further steps to fully abolish underage marriage (Eritrea);

157.140 Adopt a national policy for social and educational inclusion of children with disabilities (Qatar);

157.141 Consider the adoption of the legislative and political framework for disability, aimed primarily at providing adequate educational services to persons with special needs, children with a higher risk of disability, and with mental disorders (Serbia);

157.142 Consider adopting a policy framework to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, in order to guarantee their social and educational inclusion (Brazil);

157.143 Expedite the development of an action plan for the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (Israel);

157.144 Promulgate desired laws with a view to addressing the needs of the aged (Sierra Leone);

157.145 Intensify efforts to improve the living conditions of the elderly and persons with disabilities (Cyprus);

157.146 Continue expanding rural access to quality education and enhancing the job prospects of its youth, including through technical and vocational education training as envisaged in the Bhutan Education Blueprint (Singapore);

157.147 Spend more efforts and take measures for job creation and address the youth unemployment issue (Turkey);

157.148 Continue its efforts to address the issue of youth unemployment, including through the creation of productive and gainful employment (Bangladesh);

157.149 Take further measures to decrease the high rate of youth unemployment (Hungary).

158. The following recommendations will be examined by Bhutan, which will provide responses in due time, but no later than the forty-second session of the Human Rights Council:

158.1 Continue to build a legal framework for the protection of human rights, by ensuring better implementation of the texts signed and ratifying the main international conventions (France);

158.2 Intensify the process of ratification of core international human rights instruments (Ukraine);

158.3 Take steps towards ratifying the remaining core international human rights treaties, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Austria);

158.4 Consider ratifying core human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party (Côte d'Ivoire);

158.5 Encourage accession to the core international human rights treaties (Iraq); Consider acceding to the international human rights treaties to which it is not yet a party (Kyrgyzstan); Consider ratifying other core human rights

instruments, to which it has not yet become a party, including through collaboration with other States Parties in the region (Indonesia);

158.6 Consider ratifying all the core human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Italy);

158.7 Consider ratifying the core international human rights instruments, among which the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Kazakhstan);

158.8 Ratify relevant international human rights instruments, most notably the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Estonia); Ratify all the fundamental human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party, including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, among others (Honduras); Ratify all core international human rights instruments, most notably the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Ireland);

158.9 Ratify the core international human rights treaties, most notably the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Germany);

158.10 Take the necessary steps to consider ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Mauritius);

158.11 Ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Belgium) (Montenegro) (Nepal) (Timor-Leste) (Switzerland) (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland); Accede to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Mexico);

158.12 Ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and both its Optional Protocols, as previously recommended (Portugal);

158.13 Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (Spain); Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Sierra Leone);

158.14 Consider ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Uruguay); Take the necessary steps to consider ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Mauritius);

158.15 Ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Belgium) (Nepal) (Spain) (Switzerland) (Timor-Leste) (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland); Accede to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Mexico);

158.16 Ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and its Optional Protocol, as previously recommended (Portugal);

158.17 Consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Uruguay);

158.18 Intensify efforts to ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Fiji); Step up efforts to ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Ghana); Intensify efforts to ratify the

Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Chile emphasizes that the Convention against Torture Initiative can provide cooperation and support to Bhutan if it so wishes to advance in this regard (Chile);

158.19 Ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Belgium) (Denmark) (Montenegro) (Switzerland) (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland);

158.20 Ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its Optional Protocol, as previously recommended (Portugal);

158.21 Ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Senegal);

158.22 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Denmark);

158.23 Sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (Croatia);

158.24 Consider acceding to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Philippines);

158.25 Ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Senegal);

158.26 Consider ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Uruguay);

158.27 Ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Armenia) (Belgium) (Sierra Leone);

158.28 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Spain);

158.29 Ratify the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Armenia);

158.30 Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and fully align legislation with all obligations under the Rome Statute, including incorporating the Rome Statute definition of crimes and general principles, as well as adopting provisions enabling cooperation with the Court (Latvia);

158.31 Ratify the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions (Switzerland);

158.32 Consider acceding to the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) (Philippines);

158.33 Consider the ratification of the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (Afghanistan);

158.34 Expedite the establishment of an organ with its terms of reference to coordinate all activities related to the full implementation of its ratified human rights treaties (Sierra Leone); Consider establishing an entity with the mandate of coordinating all activities related to the implementation of human rights treaties to which it is a party (Ghana);

158.35 Consider the extension of a standing invitation to all special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council (Latvia); Consider issuing a standing invitation to the special procedures mechanism (Seychelles);

158.36 Respond constructively to pending requests for country visits by the Human Rights Council special procedures and consider extending a standing

invitation to all of them (Ukraine); Accept visit requests from United Nations special procedure mandate holders (France);

158.37 Review the Penal Code, the Child Care and Protection Act, the Child Adoption Act and the Domestic Violence Prevention Act in order to prohibit all forms of corporal punishment in all settings (Mexico);

158.38 Decriminalize same-sex sexual conduct between consenting adults (Belgium); Decriminalize same-sex sexual conduct among consenting adults (France);

158.39 Revoke the provision on sodomy in sections 213 and 214 of the Penal Code, which criminalizes same-sex conduct (Netherlands); Repeal sections 213 and 214, which prohibit homosexual acts, from its Penal Code (Switzerland); Decriminalize same-sex sexual conduct between consenting adults by amending sections 213 and 214 of the Penal Code (Canada); Revoke section 213 of the Penal Code (Cyprus); Decriminalize consensual same-sex conduct by revoking or amending sections 213 and 214 of the Penal Code (Germany); Decriminalize consensual same-sex acts by either revoking or amending sections 213 and 214 of the Penal Code (Iceland); Decriminalize consensual same-sex conduct by repealing or amending sections 213 and 214 of the Penal Code of Bhutan (Ireland);

158.40 Repeal legislation that criminalizes same-sex sexual conduct, and institute the recognition of non-discrimination based on sexual orientation, identity or expression of gender or sexual characteristics (Spain);

158.41 Introduce reforms to the Criminal Code to decriminalize consensual same-sex relations as an essential step for the acceptance of sexual diversity in the country (Uruguay);

158.42 Amend provisions of the Penal Code that are discriminatory, and that penalize relations between persons of the same sex (Argentina);

158.43 Continue to implement legislative reforms to decriminalize consensual same-sex sexual conduct (Australia);

158.44 Repeal criminal provisions that sanction consensual sexual relations between adults of the same sex, and combat discrimination against people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity (Chile);

158.45 Decriminalize abortion and take measures to ensure that all women have access to legal abortion and high-quality post-abortion services (Iceland);

158.46 Consider establishing a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles (Tunisia); Consider establishing an independent national human rights institution (Nepal);

158.47 Take steps to set up a national human rights institution compliant with the Paris Principles (Ukraine);

158.48 Establish an independent national human rights institution with a wide-ranging mandate and in line with the Paris Principles (Seychelles);

158.49 Establish a national human rights institution in compliance with the Paris Principles (Australia); Establish a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles (Indonesia);

158.50 Continue measures to eradicate discrimination against children of Nepalese ethnic origin, particularly with regard to their access to education and citizenship (Peru);

158.51 Amend anti-discrimination laws to include discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (Iceland);

- 158.52 Enable greater inclusion and participation of women, children, persons with disabilities, and indigenous and other marginalized communities in devising holistic strategies towards managing climate change and its impact on livelihoods (Fiji);
- 158.53 Pursue legislative reform efforts to completely prohibit corporal punishment in all contexts, particularly in the home and at school (Algeria);
- 158.54 Invest more efforts to ensure the unequivocal prohibition of corporal punishment against children in all settings by law, including at home and in schools (Croatia);
- 158.55 Prohibit corporal punishment of children in all settings, including the home and schools, and take all measures to enforce this prohibition in practice (Iceland);
- 158.56 Enact legislation to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment of all children in all settings (Austria);
- 158.57 Develop a new national action plan for combating trafficking in persons, which includes the ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland);
- 158.58 Review the registration system for religious organizations to ensure that registration is not a prerequisite for exercising the right to freedom of religion or belief (Netherlands);
- 158.59 Amend the Law on Religious Organizations to protect the free practice of religion and the ability of religious organizations to obtain legal status (United States of America);
- 158.60 Ensure respect for the rights of individuals belonging to religious communities and ensure their inclusion by facilitating the registration of minority religious groups (Canada);
- 158.61 Ensure freedom of religion and belief and actively combat discrimination against religious minorities (Estonia);
- 158.62 Strengthen measures to combat school dropout, especially of pregnant girls, girls from rural areas and girls belonging to communities discriminated against on grounds of their language, caste, race, religion and any other status (Peru);
- 158.63 Enable women to transmit Bhutanese nationality to their children under the same conditions as men (France);
- 158.64 Take all necessary measures to end the practice of child marriage and define child marriage as an offence in the Criminal Code (Belgium);
- 158.65 Ensure that children of Nepalese origin are aware of their rights under the law, and that these rights are explained in an accessible manner, including in schools and in official documents (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland);
- 158.66 Identify and correct practices that discriminate against children based on their ethnic origin, in particular in their access to education and health services (Austria);
- 158.67 Take all necessary measures to enable Bhutanese refugees who wish to return to do so in a safe manner and in conditions respecting their rights (Switzerland);
- 158.68 Resume discussions with the Government of Nepal on the status of individuals in Nepal who assert claims to Bhutanese citizenship or residency (United States of America);

158.69 **Take the measures necessary to guarantee effective procedures to determine the nationality of refugee children based on the right to a nationality, in particular Nepalese boys, girls and adolescents (Argentina);**

158.70 **Give favourable consideration to the return of Nepali-Bhutanese refugees from Nepal, particularly those with urgent humanitarian needs (Australia);**

158.71 **Continue efforts, together with Nepal, to find a lasting solution to the situation of refugees formerly resident in Bhutan and currently living in Nepal (Germany).**

159. **All conclusions and/or recommendations contained in the present report reflect the position of the submitting State(s) and/or the State under review. They should not be construed as endorsed by the Working Group as a whole.**

Annex

Composition of the delegation

The delegation of Bhutan was headed by H.E. Lyonpo (Dr) Tandi Dorji, Foreign Minister, and composed of the following members:

- Mr. Sonam Tshong, Foreign Secretary;
 - H.E. Mr. Kinga Singye, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Bhutan, Geneva;
 - Mr. Tenzin Rondel Wangchuk, Director, Department of Multilateral Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
 - Mr. Tashi Penjor, Director, Department of Law and Order, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs;
 - Mr. Ugyen Dorji, Chief, Social and Humanitarian Division, Department of Multilateral Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
 - Mrs. Tshering Lhadn, Minister Counsellor (Political), Permanent Mission of Bhutan, Geneva;
 - Mr. Sangay Phuntsho, Minister Counsellor (Economic), Permanent Mission of Bhutan, Geneva;
 - Mr. Phuntsho Wangyal, Chief, Gross National Happiness Commission;
 - Mr. Namgay Dorji, Deputy Chief Attorney, Office of the Attorney General;
 - Mr. Ugyen T. Dukpa, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Bhutan, Geneva;
 - Mr. Chainga, Deputy Chief Planning Officer, Ministry of Education;
 - Mr. Galey Tenzin, Senior Programme Officer, National Commission for Women and Children;
 - Mr. Rigtsal Dorji, Second Secretary (political), Permanent Mission of Bhutan, Geneva;
 - Mr. Dorji Wangchuk, Executive Director, Ability Society of Bhutan;
 - Ms. Kinley Zam, Assistant Desk Officer, Multilateral Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
 - Mr. Dorji Wangchuk, Executive Director, Ability Society of Bhutan.
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