

Delegation from the Arab Republic of Egypt
Position Paper for the Human Rights Council

The agenda topics before the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (HRC) are: I. Equitable Access to Safe Drinking Water as a Human Right, II. Human Rights of Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Adolescents and III. The Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. As the equal enjoyment of human rights is one of the core principles of the UN, the Arab Republic of Egypt is deeply committed to their assurance and thus hopes to increase international cooperation and find extensive solutions to the challenges mentioned above.

I. Equitable Access to Safe Drinking Water as a Human Right

2.2 billion people around the world do not have safely managed drinking water services, 4.2 billion people do not have safely managed sanitation services, and 3 billion lack basic handwashing facilities. The Arab Republic of Egypt highlights the importance of the SDG target 6.1 by 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all. In 2010, we welcomed the UN General Assembly Resolution 64/296, *The human right to water and sanitation*, acknowledging that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realisation of all human rights. Egypt notes that women and girls are affected the most by the lack of water. Women spend up to five hours walking an average of three and a half miles every day to collect water. To prevent discrimination and to address the needs of vulnerable or marginalized groups, especially concerning unequitable access to safe drinking water, the Arab Republic of Egypt ratified in 1981 the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) and in 1990 the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC). Further, we appreciate the close work regarding the establishment of National Water Policy and strategy between the water ministers within the African Union (AU) such as the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN). We are very proud to announce that Egypt is an active member of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) which is an intergovernmental partnership, providing a forum for consultation and coordination among the Basin States. Numerous water experts from all participating countries are now working together to find regional solutions that will benefit all Member States. At the sub-basin level, NBI is coordinating investments in regionally coordinated infrastructure and watershed management projects with total value of around USD 1.4 billion. Despite progress on international to national level, Egypt notes with deep concerns that millions of people including children die every year from diseases associated with inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene. Therefore, now more than ever is the time for policymakers and practitioners within the Member States to embrace the concept of water safety planning. In 2004 Egypt developed its National Water Resources Plan (NWRP) "Water for the Future", which includes a section on Gender issues: "Equal opportunities for men and women with regard to involvement in discussion and decision-making on water use and resources issues, dissemination of information and communication, active participation in decision making bodies dealing with water resources and irrigation management." Emphasizing to give particular attention to women and children the Arab Republic of Egypt encourages every Member State to implement such a section into their policy as we believe that the human right to water is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity.

II. Human Rights of Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Adolescents

„The States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.“ (*Article 19*, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child). Yet, millions of children worldwide from all socio-economic backgrounds, across all ages, religions and cultures suffer violence, exploitation and abuse every day. Especially unaccompanied Migrant Children and Adolescents are at risk of abuse, trafficking and exploitation if they travel alone and through irregular migration pathways. The Arab Republic of Egypt welcomes the establishment of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950 to ensure that children and youth are protected from harm and that their rights are upheld. The UNHCR and the League of Arab States are launching the "Arab Strategy for the Protection of Children in Asylum Context in the Arab Region", attended by representations of country members, regional and international organizations concerned with childhood risks as well as experts and specialists in

childhood issues. The strategy aims at establishing the basis of a safe environment for refugee children, that meets their needs through determining the best interests of the child and their access to educational opportunities. Egypt was one of the six initiator countries to call for convening the World Summit for Children in 1990 and was also among the first twenty countries to ratify the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) in 1990, showing its firm commitment to the promotion of childhood and motherhood. In support of the Human Right Council Resolution 36/5 (2017), *Unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents and human rights*, the Arab Republic of Egypt emphasizes the need and importance of social workers who can serve as a vital component to ensure that the child is protected from violence, exploitation and abuse. Therefore, we suggest the establishment of a programme under the administration of the UNHCR focusing on deploying social workers for example in refugee camps, orphanages or other institutions to provide child protection from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation through psychosocial support and targeted initiatives. This programme could be financed through the UN Refugee Fund Executive Committee of the UNHCR. With their expertise in acculturation issues, cross-cultural competence, and knowledge of child development, the role of social workers in this context is to speak out for the human rights of each child and ensure that his or her needs are being voiced. While accounting for the unique rights of children, social workers can utilize child welfare best practice principles to advocate for more humane detention standards and the provision of legal representation for every unaccompanied minor who is detained by immigration authorities. The Arab Republic of Egypt believes that social workers are able to extract the child's story and empower them because they are particularly attuned to people's stories, with special emphasis on relationships, circumstances, stories, tragedies and losses.

III. The Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

The Arab Republic of Egypt is concerned by reports regarding serious human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory such as the destruction of houses, infrastructure, illegal searches, and denial of education and the degradation and alienation of their water supply, the exploitation of natural resources and the defacing of environment; agricultural land, minerals, mud, stone and oil. In support of the Human Right Council Resolution 40/73 (2019), *Human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, with a focus on access to water and environmental degradation*, we are determined to ensure Palestinians a life in dignity with access to basic services, including healthcare, food and especially the right to water. The Arab Republic of Egypt emphasizes that all efforts to protect human rights should be grounded in respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We are convinced that promoting a peaceful dialogue between the parties concerned is crucial to improve the human right situation. International symposiums should be hosted more regularly, predominantly by local religious and political leaders, but also by UN entities such as the UNHCR and independent actors such as NGOs. Therefore, we welcome the efforts of the Human Rights Council (HRC) and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (IICI) to promote dialogue among the parties. In support of the Commission on Human Rights resolution 1993/2, *Question of the violation of human rights in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine*, Egypt emphasizes the role of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories. The task of the Special Rapporteur is to assess the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, report publicly about it, and work with governments, civil society and others to foster international cooperation. The Special Rapporteur undertakes regular visits or missions to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and reports annually to the Human Rights Council. Bearing this in mind, we highlight the importance of ensuring the entry to the Palestinian Territory for the UN Special Rapporteur, so Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations, and government and United Nations representatives can work efficiently. The Arab Republic of Egypt reminds every Member States to cooperate fully with the Human Right Council and its mechanisms and to respect human rights since it is one of the core principles of the UN. We would like to focus on an international emergency response programme providing cash vouchers for essential supplies like food and water, emotional support for traumatised women and children, and practical opportunities for women to earn money. Industrialized countries can contribute by making appropriate financial allocations from their national budgets towards the emergency programme. Egypt calls upon all parties to ensure that future demonstrations remain peaceful and to abstain from actions that could endanger the rights of civilians to ensure the equal enjoyment of human rights within a peaceful and inclusive society.