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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC,
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

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

Addendum
SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC *

[22 March 1999]

* The second periodic report concerning rights covered by articles 1 to 15 (E/1990/6/Add.1) was considered by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at its sixth session (see E/C.12/1991/SR.7, 9 and 11) in 1991.

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253. The Ministry of Higher Education offers higher education to anyone whose academic qualifications entitle him to attend an intermediate college or university in keeping with the principle of the democratic nature of education which has been advocated by President Hafez al-Assad. The Ministry also ensures the dissemination of information on all aspects of scientific progress by supplying, at nominal prices, university textbooks that contain up-to-date accurate scientific information. Further information on the research conducted by the members of university teaching staffs is disseminated through the publication of their scientific periodicals. Damascus University publishes nine scholarly scientific magazines, while the Tishrin and Baath Universities publish two magazines each. For its part, the Ministry of Higher Education has so far published three scholarly scientific magazines: the Basil al-Assad Engineering Sciences Magazine, the Basil al-Assad Agricultural Engineering Sciences Magazine and the Basil al-Assad Linguistic and Literary Sciences Magazine. The Ministry has also published 18 volumes containing summaries of doctoral theses on the basis of which their authors were awarded doctorates and appointed as members of university teaching staffs. The Ministry has published an index containing the titles of the research papers for which the universities awarded master's degrees and doctorates from 1990 to 1995 and is currently updating this index for the years 1996 and 1997. Summaries of these research papers are being entered into the computer in order to constitute a database accessible to other researchers.

254. In accordance with article 12 of the Universities Regulatory Act of 1975, the aim of the Syrian universities is to promote progress in science, technology, art and intellectual fields, achieve Arab goals, disseminate and develop Arab civilization, enrich human culture, expand

the horizons of human knowledge and contribute to socio-economic development.

255. Scientific and technical progress is never used for purposes that are incompatible with the enjoyment of any human rights, including every individual's right to life, health, liberty of person and privacy. On the contrary, full support and encouragement is given to every materially and mentally creative innovator through the organization of annual specialized exhibitions for this purpose.

256. The Ministry of Higher Education awards an annual prize (the Basil al- Assad Scientific Research Prize) for the best research paper written by a member of a university's teaching staff. This prize comprises a financial reward, a certificate of merit and a gold medal. The Ministry's Higher Council for the Sciences also awards an annual prize for the best research paper submitted as part of the activities organized during Science Week, which is held every year at one of Syria's four universities.

257. Legislative Decree No. 47 of 1946, as amended by Act No. 28 of 1980, regulates and protects commercial and industrial property and specifies the procedures and regulations for the issue of patents, protection of intellectual property rights and copyright. Steps are currently being taken to promulgate a Copyright Act incorporating all the provisions needed to protect and safeguard intellectual property rights.

258. The Syrian Arab Constitution promulgated in Decree No. 208 of 1973 guarantees the right to education. Article 37 of the Act stipulates that: "The right to education is guaranteed by the State. Education shall be free at all levels and compulsory at the primary level. The State shall endeavour to extend its compulsory nature to other levels and shall supervise and direct education in such a way as to make it consistent with the needs of society and production." Accordingly, in the Syrian Arab Republic all levels and types of education (including higher education) are available to all citizens.

259. With regard to respect for, and protection of, freedom of scientific research and creative activity, enjoyment of this freedom is guaranteed by the manner in which all the Ministries and scientific and professional institutions and federations encourage the organization of scientific symposia, conferences and workshops at which all the participating scientists freely exchange expertise and experiences without any hindrance or restrictions.

260. The higher education system in the Syrian Arab Republic attaches great importance to scientific and cultural relations, within the context of Arab, regional and international cooperation, in keeping with the laws and regulations governing this system, such as the Universities Regulatory Act of 1975, the Scientific Missions Act of 1970 and the decisions taken by the Higher Education Council. The Ministry of Higher Education has concluded a large number of cultural and scientific cooperation agreements with universities and higher educational institutions in the Arab World and in friendly foreign States. These include cultural agreements and joint scientific activities with universities in Lebanon, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Arab Republic of Egypt. Fifteen such cultural agreements have

been concluded, in addition to 51 agreements under which Syrian universities have been twinned with sister Arab institutions. The Syrian universities are also collaborating with the Federation of Arab Universities, the Federation of Arab Scientific Research Councils, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development and the Arab Centre for Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD).

261. Syria enjoys numerous forms of cultural and scientific cooperation with various foreign States under the terms of 38 cultural agreements, each of which is implemented through a programme that is renewed every three years. The Syrian universities have also been twinned, through agreements, with 148 foreign universities and bilateral agreements, memoranda of understanding and exchange visit protocols have been signed to further strengthen this scientific cooperation.

262. The Syrian Arab Republic participates in the activities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) for the development of educational and scientific syllabuses in foreign countries. It is also cooperating in the scientific activities organized by the Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), the International Centre for Theoretical Physics at Trieste (Italy), the COMSATS Commission and the Science and Technology Centre of the Non-Aligned Countries.