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## **National Report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 (a) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1\***

### **United Arab Emirates**

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## I. Introduction

1. The second national report of the United Arab Emirates was considered by the Human Rights Council on 28 January 2013 and the outcome of the universal periodic review on the United Arab Emirates was adopted on 7 June of the same year. The United Arab Emirates accepted 100 recommendations of the Council in full, partially accepted 7 recommendations, took note of 54 recommendations and rejected a number of recommendations on grounds that they were incompatible with the country's value system and legislation. The United Arab Emirates also made a number of voluntary pledges in the context of its candidature for re-election to the Human Rights Council in 2015.

2. The State considers its second report to be an adjunct to the plan of action that it initiated following the adoption of the first report and is determined to move forward with its efforts to add to the outstanding achievements that it has scored in promoting and protecting human rights and to contribute to and engage positively in international activities in this domain.

3. In keeping with the State's commitment to acting on the outcome of the universal periodic review of its second report and with Human Rights Council resolution 19/17, this report outlines the State's efforts to follow up on the review and draws attention to the measures that the State has consistently taken to promote and protect human rights.

## II. Methodology for following up on the review and process for preparing the report

### A. Methodology for follow-up on the review

4. Since the adoption of the second report, the Government has striven to follow up on the outcome of the review. To that end, it has strengthened the standing committee established by Cabinet Decision No. 51/4/2 of 21 March 2010 with a view to following up on the universal periodic review report. The committee, whose membership is drawn from a number of governmental and local authorities and from civil society institutions, monitors the implementation of Human Rights Council recommendations and conducts its work in accordance with a national plan adopted with a view to monitoring the fulfilment of the Government's commitments in connection with the universal periodic review process.

### B. Report preparation and consultation process

5. The committee took a series of steps to prepare the report in the framework of a consultative process. It organized a series of periodic meetings, as well as several workshops and meetings with a wide range of civil society organizations and governmental bodies to discuss their proposals as to the best means to follow up on the outcome of the review and on the preparation of the third report.<sup>1</sup>

6. In preparing the report, the committee took into consideration the guidance note drafted in 2016 by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 16/21, which called for the third cycle of the review to focus on the implementation of accepted recommendations and on developments relating to the human rights situation in the State.

<sup>1</sup> عقد آخر لقاء تشاوري مع المجتمع المدني بشأن تقرير دولة الامارات الثالث للاستعراض الدوري الشامل بتاريخ 2017/10/12.

### **III. Developments in the normative and institutional framework for the promotion and protection of human rights**

#### **A. National legislation and regulations**

- Federal Contagious Diseases Act No. 14 of 2014;
- Federal Decree-Law No. 2 of 2015 on combating discrimination and hatred;
- Federal Act No. 1 of 2015 amending certain provisions of the Federal Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 51 of 2006;
- Federal Rights of the Child Act No. 3 of 2016 (the “Wadeema” Act);
- Federal Decree Law No. 7 of 2016 amending certain provisions of the Criminal Code (Federal Judiciary Act No. 3 of 1987);
- Federal Decree Law No. 11 of 2016 amending certain provisions of the Federal Judiciary Act No. 3 of 1987;
- Federal Decree Law No. 12 of 2016 amending certain provisions of the Federal Supreme Court Act No. 10 of 1973;
- Federal Decree Law No. 8 of 2016 on accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography;
- Federal Act No. 21 of 2016 amending certain provisions of the General Authority for Pensions and Social Security Act No. 6 of 1999;
- Federal Decree Law No. 15 of 2016 establishing the Emirates Schools Establishment;
- Federal Decree Law No. 16 of 2016 establishing the Emirates Institute for Healthcare Services;
- Federal Act No. 17 of 2016 establishing centres for mediation and conciliation in civil and commercial disputes;
- Federal Act No. 5 of 2017 on the remote use of communications technology in criminal proceedings;
- Federal Act No. 15 of 2017 on domestic service.

#### **B. Draft legislation and regulations**

- Draft federal act on domestic violence;
- Draft federal act on juvenile delinquents;
- Draft act on the establishment of the independent national human rights commission.

#### **C. Developments with regard to governmental bodies and official human rights institutions**

##### **Federal National Council**

The Human Rights Committee, which was established in March 2013 as a standing committee of the Federal National Council, considers relevant bilateral, regional and international conventions relating to human rights, and also raises awareness of human rights and facilitates the dissemination of a human rights culture through its engagement with relevant educational and media authorities and institutions.

### **Ministry of Justice**

- The Judicial Inspection Department monitors the judiciary to ensure that justice is administered effectively. It also responds to queries submitted to it by all parties, including workers, and engages with them using various communications platforms to explain the procedures that must be followed to enable the competent judicial authorities to uphold their rights.
- The Department of Legal Advice and Legislation plays a prominent role in reviewing the drafting of legislation and national laws, taking into account the need to protect and promote human rights in accordance with the international conventions and protocols ratified by the State.

### **Ministry of the Interior**

- The Ministry of the Interior has established numerous units and committees concerned with the protection and promotion of human rights. These include the Human Rights Department within the Office of the Inspector General, the Public Authority for Community Protection and Crime Prevention, which oversees a number of departments, including the Juvenile Welfare Department, the Ministry of the Interior Centre for the Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, the Office to Promote a Culture of Respect for the Law, the Federal Community Policing Department, the Federal Social Assistance Department, and the Ministry of the Interior Federal Centre for Child Protection. The Ministry has also established human trafficking units within police command departments, and the Directorate General of Human Rights of the Dubai Police, which, inter alia, runs a human trafficking monitoring centre. The Ministry has, moreover, also established numerous committees, including the High Committee for the Protection of the Child, the Ministry of the Interior Human Rights Committee, the Legal Council, the Police Disciplinary Board, the Women's Police Coordinating Committee, the Happiness and Positiveness Committee, and the Penal Institution and Police Station Detention Facility Inspections Committee.
- The Ministry has established complaint and notification mechanisms, and has set up dedicated email addresses and toll-free phone numbers that members of society can use to submit information and complaints in a number of languages. The Ministry has also established websites and uses social media platforms to provide social support.
- Social support centres in police command departments deal with domestic violence cases in which the filing of an official complaint is deemed unnecessary. They also deal with cases involving school violence, cases in which a child has run away from home but the child's disappearance has not been reported to the police, and with minor acts of juvenile delinquency that do not constitute criminal offences.

### **Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization**

- The Human Trafficking Offences Department monitors the labour market and follows up on the inspectors' reports and complaints by workers to identify potential cases of forced labour or human trafficking. It also carries out inspections of recruitment offices and coordinates with the country's law enforcement agencies and other relevant authorities to combat improper worker recruitment procedures.
- Labour welfare units provide welfare assistance to workers and endeavour to make them aware of their rights. Furthermore, the mobile labour welfare unit is constantly striving to communicate with workers at their lodgings and places of work with a view to raising their awareness of their rights and duties under the Labour Code, as well as receiving, responding to and resolving their enquiries and complaints.

### **Community Development Authority in Dubai**

- The Child Protection Unit was established in 2014 to provide social and psychological support to children, including, in particular, children who have been

subjected to various types of abuse, and to help children overcome the difficulties they encounter.

#### **Dubai Police General Headquarters**

- The Human Trafficking Monitoring Centre: monitors human trafficking offences, upholds the rights of victims and takes action to enforce the Anti-Human Trafficking Act. The Centre also collaborates with international organizations working to combat human trafficking.

### **D. National mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights**

- The United Arab Emirates Gender Balance Council was established in 2015 to reduce gender disparities and achieve gender balance in the public and private sectors, particularly in decision-making positions.
- The Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood provides support and assistance to mothers and children, especially in the educational, cultural, health, social, psychological and pedagogical fields. A strategic partner of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Supreme Council played a key role in the formulation of the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood for the period 2017–2021.
- The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking was established pursuant to Federal Act No. 51 of 2006. The Committee is the focal point for Government efforts to combat human trafficking and update legislation on related matters with a view to the provision of the requisite protection. It includes representatives of federal and local governmental bodies and civil society institutions that deal with human trafficking issues.
- The National Committee on International Humanitarian Law disseminates and consolidates awareness among institutions and individuals of international humanitarian law principles and objectives. The Committee also shares its expertise with associations and organizations active in the field of international humanitarian law, and facilitates the implementation of international humanitarian legal instruments by promoting collaboration among relevant authorities, reviewing relevant legislation and making any necessary recommendations in that regard.

### **E. Public welfare associations and institutions**

7. Public welfare associations and institutions play a pivotal role in encouraging civil action, disseminating a participatory culture and upholding the principle that individuals have a social responsibility within the State. At the end of 2016, there were 166 welfare associations, 14 civil society institutions and 17 social solidarity funds. These included 8 women's associations, 32 professional associations, 48 associations providing public and cultural services, 21 women's associations and 15 community-based associations and clubs.

### **F. National policies and strategies**

8. The State has established a set of interrelated national policies and strategies<sup>2</sup> to promote and ensure the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms, consisting of the following:

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<sup>2</sup> قامت حكومة دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة بإعداد عدة استراتيجيات وخطط، وذلك تطبيقاً لأفضل الممارسات العالمية في مجال التخطيط الاستراتيجي، وللإطلاع على مزيد من المعلومات حول هذه الاستراتيجيات يرجى زيارة الموقع الإلكتروني <https://government.ae>.

- The National Agenda, which is being implemented over seven years, was launched by the State with a view to achieving the country's National Vision 2021. The Vision establishes six national priority objectives for the Government for the coming years. These include: a cohesive society that preserves its identity, a safe society and a fair judiciary, a competitive knowledge-based economy, a first-rate education system, and a sustainable environment and integrated infrastructure.
- The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking Strategic Plan was formulated on the basis of five internationally-recognized pillars, namely: prevention and prohibition, prosecution, punishment, the protection of victims and the promotion of international cooperation.
- The National Strategy for the Empowerment and Advancement of Emirati Women (2015–2021) promotes women's empowerment and capacity-building, addresses impediments hindering the participation of women in all fields, strengthens women's participation in development initiatives and enhances the status of Emirati women in regional and international forums.
- The Cabinet adopted the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood and the Strategic Plan for the Promotion of the Rights of Children with Disabilities for the period 2017–2021 with the aim of consolidating and coordinating efforts in the United Arab Emirates to protect and provide welfare services to children, including children with disabilities, safeguard their rights, and promote their active participation in society on an equal footing with other groups.
- The Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development launched the National Strategy for Youth Empowerment with a view to drawing up policies, measures and action plans to empower young people and provide them with opportunities to contribute actively to society at all levels. The Strategy addresses all issues of concern to young people, including education, training, employment, volunteering, the use of technology and community development.
- The National Innovation Strategy was launched in 2014 with the aim of making the United Arab Emirates among the most innovative countries worldwide within seven years. The Strategy aims to foster innovation in seven key national sectors, namely: renewable energy, transport, health, education technology, water and outer space. The Strategy will also support national policies to promote sustainable development.
- The National Tolerance Programme was adopted by the Cabinet in 2016 with a view to entrenching the values of tolerance and multiculturalism, promoting a culture of coexistence, and rejecting all forms of discrimination, hatred and intolerance.
- The United Arab Emirates Foreign Aid Strategy: As part of the country's efforts to facilitate the achievement of Vision 2021 through the provision of foreign aid, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation launched the country's Foreign Aid Strategy for the years 2017–2021. The primary objective of the country's foreign aid is to improve the lives of poor communities, alleviate poverty and promote stability, peace and prosperity worldwide.
- The Ministry of Education has adopted a Strategic Plan for the period 2017–2021 with a view to establishing and overseeing an innovative education system for all age groups that can help create a world-class knowledge-based society and meet future labour market needs. The Strategic Plan aims to ensure that the Ministry implements high quality initiatives and provides high quality assistance to internal and external stakeholders.
- The Government of the United Arab Emirates launched the National Policy for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in 2017 with a view to empowering and promoting equal opportunity for persons with disabilities and encouraging their active participation in society.

## **IV. Regional and international human rights commitments of the United Arab Emirates**

### **A. Reports submitted by the United Arab Emirates under human rights conventions**

9. In line with its obligations under the human rights conventions to which it is a party, and its commitments to submit periodic reports and report on the implementation of recommendations issued by relevant treaty body committees, the United Arab Emirates:

- Submitted its second periodic report on its implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child for consideration by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in September 2015;
- Submitted its second periodic report on its implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women for consideration by the relevant committee in November 2015;
- Submitted its second periodic report on its implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for consideration by the relevant committee in August 2016;
- Submitted its second periodic report on its implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination for consideration by the relevant committee in August 2017;
- Will submit its initial periodic report on its implementation of the Convention against Torture for consideration by the relevant committee before the end of the current year.

### **B. Regional human rights mechanisms and declarations**

10. In December 2014, Gulf Cooperation Council member States issued the Gulf Cooperation Council Human Rights Declaration, which affirmed the right of all individuals to life and underscored that all individuals are equal in human dignity and in terms of their rights and freedoms. The Declaration enshrines a commitment by Gulf Cooperation Council member States to uphold and comply with the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

11. The United Arab Emirates is a party to the League of Arab States Arab Charter on Human Rights. The initial report of the United Arab Emirates was submitted for consideration by the Arab Human Rights Committee in December 2013.

### **C. The United Arab Emirates and special measures in the framework of the Human Rights Council**

12. With a view to strengthening its cooperation with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, the United Arab Emirates has taken the following steps:

- Hosting the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, who visited the country between 28 January and 5 February 2014;
- Establishing a committee to respond to communications regarding human rights. The committee, which comprises representatives of a number of State authorities, coordinates and expedites responses to communications submitted to it by special procedures and other United Nations bodies and mechanisms concerned with human rights within the established time frame.



## **V. Follow-up action on voluntary pledges and the recommendations accepted in the second session of the universal periodic review (2013)**

### **A. Voluntary pledges relating to the candidature of the United Arab Emirates for membership of the Human Rights Council for the period 2016–2018**

#### **Adoption of the Rights of the Child Act**

13. The Federal Rights of the Child Act No. 3 of 2016 (the “Wadeema” Act) sets forth the fundamental rights of children, including the right to life, survival and development, provides for the necessary conditions to facilitate the enjoyment of those rights. The Act also offers safeguards to protect children from all forms of neglect, exploitation and ill-treatment, as well as all forms of physical violence and psychological abuse.

14. In coordination with its Ministries and national institutions, and on the basis of its engagement with civil society associations and representatives, the United Arab Emirates has taken appropriate measures and strengthened its national legislation with a view to enhancing and ensuring respect for the rights of persons with disabilities.

15. In April 2017, the State launched the National Policy for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. The Policy provides for the following:

(a) The designation of persons with disabilities as stakeholders in recognition of their significant efforts and achievements and their capacity to overcome all challenges;

(b) The designation in all service-providing institutions of an “officer for the provision of services to stakeholders” who is responsible for facilitating the provision of dedicated services to persons with disabilities;

(c) The establishment of the Stakeholder Advisory Board, comprising federal and local Government institutions and individual members of society. The Board provides guidance with a view to developing services and identifying solutions to the challenges impeding the integration of persons with disabilities into society.

16. Further measures have been taken to enhance protections for workers, including through engagement with workers’ countries of origin, the International Labour Organization and the Global Forum on Migration and Development, with a view to addressing the issue of recruitment fees, promoting the use of standard employment contracts, granting workers greater scope to work for a different employer, and enforcing implementation of the decree prohibiting the seizure of passports.

17. In May 2016 the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization launched the Innovation in Labour Market Governance Programme, which has three key axes, namely to develop labour market information and statistical systems, to develop labour and occupational health and safety inspection systems and policies, and to develop regulations and mechanisms to prevent and resolve individual workers’ labour disputes. The Programme is being implemented as part of the State’s efforts to strengthen its relationship with the International Labour Organization and draw lessons from its experience in order to empower the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization to implement a paradigm shift in its labour market governance and support the Ministry’s efforts to improve market outcomes and uphold workers’ rights. The State is also strengthening its efforts at the national level to combat human trafficking, and is also working to that end as a founding member of the Group of Friends United Against Human Trafficking and through its support for the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

18. The State had contributed \$4 million to support the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, strengthen efforts to combat that crime and raise awareness of the human trafficking with a view to countering the phenomenon at the global level. The State is providing ongoing support to OHCHR and is exploring the possibility of concluding a memorandum of technical cooperation with that Office.

19. The United Arab Emirates continues to provide support on an annual basis to a number of OHCHR funds with a view to facilitating implementation of OHCHR programmes. The State is currently exploring the possibility of signing a memorandum of technical cooperation with the Office with a view to promoting training and capacity-building in the area of human rights. That memorandum is likely to be concluded in the near future. The United Arab Emirates will continue to support UN-Women, including by funding the opening of a liaison office for UN-Women in the United Arab Emirates.

20. In July 2016, a Headquarters Agreement was signed between the United Arab Emirates and UN-women to mark the opening in Abu Dhabi of the UN-Women liaison office for Gulf Cooperation Council member States. The office was formally opened in October 2016, and the United Arab Emirates General Women's Union provided the necessary financial and other support for the opening. The liaison office provides policy guidance as well as technical assistance to Gulf institutions with a view to supporting their initiatives in various fields related to women's empowerment.

21. The United Arab Emirates will continue to work with partner countries and international organizations to meet international development targets through its foreign aid programme, in areas such as health, education, food security and economic and social development.

22. In 2016, the United Arab Emirates provided some 15.23 billion dirhams in official development assistance, equivalent to 1.12 per cent of the country's gross national income (GNI). More than 54 per cent of that assistance was provided in the form of grants. As a proportion of GNI, the United Arab Emirates remains one of the largest international donors in terms of its provision of official development assistance and was ranked first globally in that regard in 2016 by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

## **B. Implementation of accepted recommendations<sup>3</sup>**

### **1. Multidisciplinary or comprehensive recommendations**

23. These include recommendations on equality, non-discrimination, the right to development, environmental issues, human rights and combating terrorism:

- Federal Decree-Law No. 2 of 2015 on combating discrimination and hatred has been adopted. The Decree-Law's 21 articles address hatred, racism and extremism on the basis of religion, origin, race or colour, as well as the penalties imposed for perpetrating those offences;
- The United Arab Emirates has made every effort to establish the foundations of social cohesion, one of the most important of which is the guarantee of religious freedom enshrined in Article 32 of the Constitution. The Government has facilitated the establishment of places of worship for many religions and sects and granted them land free of charge for the construction of houses of worship. There are dozens of churches and Hindu temples in the country, and Christians and members of other faiths resident in the country enjoy full freedom to practise religious rites and rituals in an atmosphere of tolerance, coexistence and freedom of worship;
- The Shams 1 power plant, which complies with the clean development mechanism (CDM), was inaugurated on 8 September 2008. The plant is the first high-density solar power plant established in line with the CDM, and is expected to displace 175 thousand tons of carbon dioxide gas per year, which is equivalent to planting 105 million trees or removing 20 thousand cars from the roads;

<sup>3</sup> تم اعداد ملحق يتضمن تفاصيل التدابير المتخذة من أجل تنفيذ التوصيات المقبولة والواردة في وثيقة الفريق العامل المعني بالاستعراض A/HRC/23/13/Add.1. الدوري الشامل رقم

- Masdar City, which has established a sustainable residential complex that employs renewable clean energy, carbon management and water conservation, focuses on technology production;
- The Ministry of the Interior and a number of State actors have participated in numerous meetings and conferences on the fight against terrorism while also ensuring respect for human rights. Fifteen regional and international conventions and more than 20 bilateral agreements have been signed between the State and other countries with a view to combating terrorism while upholding human rights.

## 2. Civil and Political Rights

24. These include recommendations on the death penalty, the prohibition of torture and of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, the prohibition of slavery and human trafficking, freedom of opinion and expression, the administration of justice, the rule of law, freedom of association and the rights of human rights defenders:

- Article 26 of the Constitution provides that: “No one shall be subjected to torture or degrading treatment.” Under Federal Act No. 9 of 1976, concerning juvenile delinquents and vagrants, “capital punishment, imprisonment and financial penalties may not be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age”. The legislative authorities have also sought to establish appropriate alternatives to punishment for juveniles, so as to balance punishment with the desire to rehabilitate juveniles and guide them towards a return to normal life. Federal Act No. 9 of 1976 also prohibits bringing a criminal action against a juvenile (child) below the age of 7, and it entitles a judge to adopt measures in lieu of established penalties as he sees fit.
- The laws of the United Arab Emirates uphold the fundamental human rights principles enshrined in international conventions. The State strives to provide adequate guarantees to ensure respect for those principles, which are, moreover, taken into account in all legal proceedings. The Constitution and the country’s criminal laws prohibit all extrajudicial penalties. Penalties may only be imposed on the basis of a fair trial;
- United Arab Emirates law guarantees respect for the internationally-recognized rights of those facing the death penalty, as prescribed by Economic and Social Council resolution No. 1984/50. Those rights are guaranteed pursuant to the Constitution, the Code of Criminal Procedures No. 35 of 1992 and the amendments thereto, the Federal Criminal Code (Federal Judiciary Act) No. 3 of 1987 and Federal Act No. 9 of 1976, concerning juvenile delinquents and vagrants;
- The death penalty is handed down within the narrowest of limits for extremely serious crimes or crimes that result in the deaths of other persons, and only on the basis of a fair trial before a judicial body in which a lawyer is present to defend the accused. If a death sentence is handed down, an appeal and a cassation appeal against that sentence must be brought before the Supreme Court. A death sentence may not be carried out before all means of appeal have been exhausted and a request for amnesty or mercy has been made.
- Federal Decree Law No. 12 of 2016 amending certain provisions of the Federal Supreme Court Act No. 10 of 1973 amends section 8 of article 33 of that Act, thereby empowering the Court to consider cases involving offences that directly affect the interests of the State, including crimes that directly harm the interests of the Federation, such as offences against internal or external security, the forging of official documents and the seals of any federal authority and counterfeiting, and to hear challenges to the verdicts handed down in that regard by courts of appeal; this provides further protections for accused persons and allows for additional appeals to be lodged against sentences handed down against them.
- The Ministry of the Interior has established regulatory units to monitor and safeguard those rights, protect victims from abuse, and prevent professional

misconduct or abuse of authority. It has also established toll-free telephone numbers by which it can receive complaints and communications. The Ministry has, moreover, issued Ministerial Decision No. 109 of 1989 concerning violations of codes of conduct and related penalties. Pursuant to Ministerial Decision No. 654 of 2005, a police code of conduct and ethics was issued for personnel of the Ministry of the Interior. A policy on the use of force in the Ministry of the Interior has also been adopted;

- Steps are now being taken to amend Federal Act No. 15 of 1980 on publications and publishing so as to uphold a set of principles on freedom of opinion that are compatible with the Constitution of the State and international human rights principles;
- Articles 26 and 27 of the Constitution, which are contained in Part Three on freedoms, rights and duties, enshrine individuals' right to freedom and stipulate that personal freedom is guaranteed to all. Article 30 provides that freedom of expression and opinion is guaranteed to all;
- Article 8 of the Constitution affirms that "Citizens of the Federation shall have one nationality, which shall be determined by law and shall be protected abroad by the Federal Government in accordance with established international principles. The nationality of the citizen may not be revoked or withdrawn except in exceptional cases as provided by law." Article 37 of the Constitution stipulates that "Citizens shall not be expelled or exiled from the Federation";
- Federal Act No. 1 of 2015 amending certain provisions of the Federal Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 51 of 2006 provides provisions to deter the perpetration of the trafficking offences it sets forth, and establishes procedures for the protection of victims;
- In 2009, the United Arab Emirates acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol). It is also a founding member of the Group of Friends United Against Human Trafficking, which was established in September 2010 on the margins of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly;
- The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking has signed memorandums of understanding to prevent and combat that crime with Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Indonesia and, most recently, India;
- The State has launched a number of initiatives to establish how officials should deal with victims when enforcing the law, expand assistance and welfare programmes for victims, provide guidance and rehabilitation services and ensure that those responsible for human trafficking offences are punished. The Government provides shelters and psychological support for trafficking victims and collaborates with other governments and non-governmental organizations when responding to reports of trafficking cases. Shelter and protection are provided to victims while their papers and documents are prepared. Victims are returned free of charge by the State to their countries of origin on the basis of their consent under the terms of the country's victim assistance programme;
- In 2013, the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking established a non-governmental fund to support victims of human trafficking. The fund, which provides an example of effective cooperation between the public and private sectors and citizens and residents of the State, provides housing and education services to victims, covers their medical expenses and prepares them for their return to their countries of origin.

### **3. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

25. The recommendations on economic, social and cultural rights include recommendations regarding general measures of implementation, as well as the right to just and favourable conditions of work, the right to health, the right to education, and the rights of workers.

- The State has continued to take the necessary legislative and procedural measures to protect workers by implementing policies and strategies that promote labour rights, including but not limited to the introduction of a wage protection system for foreign workers in 2009. The State has also adopted a policy of transparency with regard to work contracts and had developed standard work contracts that draw on all legal provisions regulating worker-employer relations. Ministerial work permit procedures have been updated: an employer is now required to send a work offer to the worker for his or her review and signature. The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization must then certify the offer before permission can be granted to the employer to proceed.
- The State has established an office in the courts to provide legal assistance to workers involved in disputes. Workers' welfare units have also been established in all regions of the country to protect workers and raise their awareness of their rights. There is also a toll-free 24-hour telephone number for workers that they can call to make complaints and enquiries.
- In 2008, the State hosted a conference to discuss cooperation between the United Arab Emirates and workers' countries of origin with a view to safeguarding workers' rights. At the conclusion of the conference, the Abu Dhabi Dialogue consultation mechanism was launched.
- The State has enhanced workers' access to litigation mechanisms by establishing labour departments in many of the country's courts, by giving priority consideration to labour dispute cases and by exempting those cases from certain fees.
- In 2014, the General Women's Union launched the Domestic Worker Initiative. The initiative, which comprises legal, social and media outreach themes, was implemented by women's councils, through interactive meetings with relevant institutions and by using social media platforms;
- The 41 articles of Federal Act No. 15 of 2017 on domestic service provide definitions of terms used and address the scope of the law, recruitment offices, the hiring of workers, work contracts, the organization of employment, vacations, employer and worker obligations, inspections, penalties, end-of-service and end-of-contract indemnities and the resolution of disputes.

#### **4. The rights of specific persons or groups**

26. These include recommendations on the advancement of women, the rights of children and the rights of persons with disabilities.

- The State has continued to strengthen its efforts towards the empowerment of women, gender equality and the elimination of discrimination against women, and has continued its efforts to protect the rights of the child. Its most important initiatives in that regard include the following:
- The launching of The National Strategy for the Empowerment and Advancement of Emirati Women (2015–2021). The Strategy provides a general reference and guiding framework for all governmental institutions at the federal and local levels, as well as for private and civil society institutions to facilitate their development of plans and programmes to ensure that women enjoy decent lives and can participate fully in the sustainable development process;
- The issuing on 9 December 2014 of a Cabinet decision that mandates the inclusion of women on the governing boards of all Government bodies, institutions and companies;
- There were 9 female members of the Federal National Council during its 16th legislative session, constituting 22.5 per cent of the Council's total membership of 40 members;
- Emirati women comprise 43 per cent of the workforce and hold 66 per cent of governmental sector positions, including 30 per cent of senior decision-making posts. They also hold 15 per cent of professional posts;

- In March 2017, the Cabinet adopted the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood and the Strategic Plan for the Promotion of the Rights of Children with Disabilities for the period 2017–2021 with the aim of consolidating and coordinating efforts in the United Arab Emirates to protect and provide welfare services to children, including children with disabilities, safeguard their rights, and promote their active participation in society on an equal footing with other groups. The implementation of the two strategies will be overseen by a number of stakeholders in coordination with the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood. A national task force comprising all relevant parties will also be established to formulate action plans and coordinate steps with a view to facilitating implementation of the strategies.

#### **5. Enhancing the engagement of the United Arab Emirates with United Nations human rights bodies and mechanisms**

27. During the period 2015–2017, the State submitted a number of periodic reports due in accordance with the treaty body process, including reports on the rights of the child, the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, the rights of persons with disabilities and the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination. The United Arab Emirates also hosted the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers in 2014 under the special procedures system.

28. In 2016, the United Arab Emirates provided \$10,000 to UNICEF, \$50,000 to OHCHR, \$40,000 to the United Nations Environment Programme, \$40,000 to the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation, \$30,000 to a United Nations fund on crime prevention and criminal justice \$10,000 to support United Nations drug control programmes and \$30,000 to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, \$10,000 dollars for the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability, \$10,000 to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and \$4 million in support of the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking.

#### **6. Accession to international human rights conventions and protocols**

29. The State ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2015.

#### **7. Establishment of the independent national human rights commission on the basis of the Paris Principles**

30. The State Periodic Review Committee conducted field visits to learn about the experiences of some States that have established national human rights institutions on the basis of the principles relating to the status of national institutions. The United Arab Emirates has made significant progress towards the establishment of the national human rights commission and is currently conducting a third review of the draft law on its establishment, which the State intends to promulgate in the near future.

## **VI. State efforts to promote and protect human rights**

### **A. Promotion of political participation**

31. In 2005, the State launched the Political Empowerment Programme to empower Emirati nationals in the workplace and enable them to contribute to the development process. Political participation is promoted through elections to the Federal National Council and the establishment of its mandate. The third set of elections to the Federal National Council,<sup>4</sup> held in 2015, constituted one of the most important stages in the Political Empowerment Programme. Those elections were considered to be more important

<sup>4</sup> أصدرت اللجنة الوطنية للانتخابات تقريراً مفصلاً حول انتخابات المجلس الوطني الاتحادي 2015 يمكن الاطلاع على الموقع الإلكتروني لوزارة الدولة لشؤون المجلس الوطني الاتحادي [www.mfnca.gov.ae](http://www.mfnca.gov.ae).

than the previous elections in 2011, in that they widened the scope of citizens' political participation. A total of 224,281 individuals took part in the election, equivalent to an increase of 66 per cent compared with 2011, and women and men participated on an equal footing, in line with the commitments of the United Arab Emirates pursuant to international declarations on political rights and the rights of women. Women's participation rates in the 2015 election were high, with national participation rates of 52 per cent for men and 48 per cent for women. A total of 330 candidates stood for election, comprising 265 men and 74 women; women's participation rates in the elections were therefore particularly noteworthy. For the first time, voting also took place at State diplomatic missions abroad. The 2015 vote resulted in the election of the first woman to head the Federal National Council in the country's history; she is also the first woman to head a parliamentary institution in the Arab world.

## **B. Women's empowerment**

32. The Constitution of the United Arab Emirates stipulates that women and men enjoy the same rights. It also affirms the principles of equality and social justice and the full right of women to education and employment on an equal footing with men. There were significant improvements in the situation of women between 2013 and 2017, including the following:

- The promulgation on 9 December 2014 of a Cabinet decision mandating the inclusion of women on the governing boards of all Government bodies, institutions and companies;
- The inclusion of 8 female ministers in the 29-member Cabinet in 2016. This figure is one of the highest in the world, and reflects the progress achieved by women in the United Arab Emirates. The most important feature of the new Government is its structure, which includes recently-established ministries, some of which have no counterparts anywhere in the world. The most important of these ministries are the Ministries of Tolerance and Happiness, which are both headed by Emirati women and reflect the significant developments and remarkable progress achieved by the State in the fields of happiness and tolerance. Indeed, as a result of the country's wise leadership, the Emirati people is among the happiest peoples on earth;
- There were 9 female members of the Federal National Council during the 16th legislative session, constituting 22.5 per cent of the Council's total membership of 40 members;
- Emirati women comprise 43 per cent of the workforce and hold 66 per cent of governmental sector positions, including 30 per cent of senior decision-making posts. They also hold 15 per cent of professional posts;
- Women now work as prosecutors and judges within the judiciary and the Office of the Public Prosecutor. There are also increasing numbers of women in the police and the military;
- Women currently comprise 30 per cent of the diplomatic corps at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and, in total, there were 234 female staff members in the country's diplomatic and consular corps in 2017. These included a number of ambassadors representing the United Arab Emirates abroad.
- Women constitute 71.6 per cent of the students at government universities and 50.1 per cent of the students in private universities and colleges. These figures are among the highest in the world;
- Women's participation in economic activity and the labour market has increased steadily since the establishment of the Emirates Businesswomen Council. There are approximately 22,000 businesswomen registered with the country's chambers of commerce and industry; those businesswomen are active in both domestic and international markets and oversee investments of more than 42 billion dirhams.





paid leave. Employers are, moreover, obliged to provide adequate housing and a safe working environment;

- The following steps are being taken in order to entrench those protections:

### **1. Promoting contractual transparency**

37. The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization has adopted a new policy for the recruitment of foreign workers abroad. The policy aims to ensure that contracts are unambiguous and that foreign workers are given the opportunity to accept their proposed working terms and conditions prior to their departure from their home countries. The following steps have been taken to ensure compliance with that policy:

- The introduction of a new standard employment contract that complies with all legislative texts regulating the employment relationship between workers and the employers, as set forth in the Labour Code (Federal Act No. 8 of 1980). The contract is issued in the worker's language and also in Arabic and English in order to ensure that all parties involved in the working relationship, and particularly the worker, understand the terms of the contract and the legal provisions governing that working relationship. The worker is given a copy of the contract in his or her language with a view to ensuring that he or she does not fall victim to any form of deception;
- The adoption of an additional step in the Ministerial work permit application procedure, whereby an employer is required to send a work offer to the worker for his or her review and signature. The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization must then certify the offer before permission can be granted to the employer to proceed. The work offer includes all the terms and conditions of employment stipulated in the standard contract and as provided by law. The contract is retrieved from the Ministry records and is signed once again by the worker once he or she is in the country: this becomes the official contract of employment;
- The launching of a computer-based system to check work offers certified by the Ministry against corresponding definitive employment contracts signed by workers upon their arrival in the United Arab Emirates. The Ministry uses the system to ensure that there are no discrepancies between a worker's work offer and his or her employment contract before it issues a work permit. Permits are not issued in cases in which a discrepancy is discovered, unless the discrepancy is to the worker's advantage.

### **2. Entrenching the principle of work as a choice: protecting the right of workers to exercise free will in their decision to work**

38. The State has promulgated a number of legislative instruments that provide legal safeguards for this principle, most notably Ministerial Decision No. 765 of 2015, concerning the terms and for terminating the employment relationship and Ministerial Decision No. 766 of 2015, which allows workers to be granted new work permits in order to transfer from one enterprise to another.

### **3. Combating the illegal seizure of passports**

39. The 2015 Standard Model Work Contract affirms that employers are prohibited by the State from seizing workers' passports, and stipulates that the worker enjoys the right to retain his or her identity documents.

### **4. With a view to promoting fair and transparent recruitment practices, the United Arab Emirates has taken the following action**

40. Adopted Ministerial Decision No. 1205 of 2013, which amended the ministerial decisions regulating the establishment and activities of private employment agencies, empowers the Ministry to tighten its supervision of the activities of worker recruitment and employment agencies, particularly with regard to recruitment fees and expenses and contractual procedure transparency. Pursuant to that Decision, private employment agencies are required to sign written contracts with individual workers and their employers that

clearly stipulate the obligations of each party, including the obligation to cover recruitment fees. They must also provide workers with any necessary documentation so that they can review and sign their draft contracts prior to their departure from their home countries.

**5. Implementing a positive incentive policy to reward enterprises committed to protecting the rights of workers under the Labour Relations Regulation Act and relevant Decisions, and increasing the costs of services provided to enterprises who fail to comply with the law**

41. In 2014, the Cabinet promulgated Decision No. 40, which sanctions affirmative action through the imposition of low fees for services provided by the Ministry to enterprises in compliance, which are classified as Category 1 enterprises, and the imposition of high fees for services provided to enterprises who fail to uphold the fundamental human rights of workers, as provided in the country's legislation on forced labour.

**6. Continuing the campaign to raise workers' awareness their rights and establish direct channels of communication with the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization**

42. Between 2013 and 2015, the Labour Guidance Department held 1,027 awareness-raising workshops for workers on their rights under the laws in force, ministerial decisions regulating their employment and agreements to which the State was a party, as well as on appropriate mechanisms through which they could submit complaints regarding violations of their rights and the procedures to be followed if they were subjected to inappropriate treatment, and on their duties towards their employers. A total of 892,892 workers took part in those awareness-raising workshops. The Labour Guidance Department also conducted field visits to workers' places of work to distribute information pamphlets on their rights, and to meet workers in person and respond to their enquiries. Between 2013 and 2016, the Department met with 50,698 workers at their places of employment.

43. The Know Your Rights campaign was launched to provide information to workers entering the United Arab Emirates through the airports in Dubai. The first phase of the campaign was launched in February 2016 and included:

- The distribution of information material in 11 languages, including Arabic, English, Hindi, Malayalam and Urdu. The material included legal guidance to educate workers during the pre- and post-arrival period, and to raise their awareness of their rights and duties while employed;
- During the May 2017 meetings of senior officials of the member States of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, 17,000 copies of the guidance materials were distributed to officials from labour-sending country ministries concerned with the rights of migrant workers.

**National and international cooperation in the area of workers' rights**

44. The United Arab Emirates continues to support the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, which it is honoured to host. The State organized the initial meetings of the Dialogue in January 2008 and continues to help draw up the Dialogue's agenda with a view to enhancing cooperation with labour-sending Asian countries. The Ministerial Dialogue of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, held in early 2017, adopted four guidelines for bilateral and multilateral cooperation among Member States in 2017 and 2018 to facilitate initiatives relating to contractual labour, involving Asian labour-sending and receiving countries. The guidelines focused on: promoting and monitoring legal and transparent practices; empowering governments to counter negative practices and hold accountable all parties that fail to comply with relevant national legislation and regulations; the development, endorsement and mutual recognition of skills with a view to ensuring the success of national employment policies in labour-sending countries and meeting their needs; and the need to invest in information technology in order to enhance the management of labour flows in Asia.

## VII. Achievements and best practices

### A. Achievements

45. The United Arab Emirates is ranked highly according to several international indexes, including the following:

- The human development index of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the United Arab Emirates was ranked third in the Arab world and 42nd globally, and was classified as a country enjoying “very high human development” according to the 2015 UNDP Human Development Report;
- The World Happiness Index: The United Arab Emirates was ranked first in the Arab world and 21st globally according to the 2017 World Happiness Report;
- The Rule of Law Index: The State ranked first in the Middle East and 33rd globally according to the 2016 World Justice Project Rule of Law Index. It also ranked 12th globally in terms of order and security;
- The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index: The United Arab Emirates was ranked as the most transparent country and the most successful at combating corruption in the Middle East and North Africa region, according to the 2016 Index. The country was also ranked 24th globally with a 66-point rating;
- The Global Competitiveness Index: The country was ranked fifth globally in terms of government efficiency, second in the world in terms of people’s trust in the country’s leadership and 21st in the world in terms of innovation and development in the 2016 World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report;
- The Global Innovation Index: The United Arab Emirates retained its top position in the Arab world and was ranked 35th globally according to the 2017 Global Innovation Index.

### Education

#### *General Education*

46. The Government of the United Arab Emirates provides a full range of resources to improve education in the country. A major process has been implemented to develop and modernize education by linking it to the knowledge-based economy, competitiveness and the requirements of the labour market. In 2017, the Ministries of Education and Higher Education received allocations amounting to 20.5 per cent of the general budget (10.2 billion dirhams). These resources were provided for the implementation of plans to achieve ongoing qualitative and quantitative development in all areas of State education, kindergarten education, ongoing integrated education programmes, and private education.

47. The Ministry of Education’s strategy for the period 2017 to 2020 provides for an integrated educational system based on the highest international educational standards, and the formulation of world-class curriculums that provide students with skills for the twenty-first century, in line with the country’s Vision 2021. In the 2016/17 academic year, there were 1,350 government and private schools in the country, and a total 1,096,180 male and female students at the various education stages. This compares with only 74 schools and 12,800 students in the 1971/72 academic year when the Federation was established.

48. Pursuant to Federal Act No. 29 of 2006 on the rights of persons with disabilities, as amended by Act No. 14 of 2009, and the State’s ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008, the Ministry of Education has provided training to more than 70 per cent of its administrative and educational staff on inclusive education. Stakeholder students are provided with key equipment, assistance and assistive devices, and agreements concluded with a number of Federal agencies and local bodies have facilitated the provision of specialized services to those students. A total of 290 special needs education teachers and more than 70 educational specialists work with more than 6,000 male and female stakeholder students.

*Higher education*

49. The United Arab Emirates has become an international centre for higher education that has attracted many of the world's leading universities, making it a magnet for thousands of students from neighbouring countries. The country hosts a large number of national and international universities, including the Khalifa University of Science and Technology, Zayed University, institutes of high technology, Abu Dhabi University, the Sorbonne University, Sharjah University, the American University of Sharjah, the American University in Dubai, St. Joseph's University in Dubai, George Mason University in Ras al-Khaimah, Ajman University of Science and Technology, the Abu Dhabi Institute of Applied Technology, and other world-class universities and colleges. As of the end of 2016, more than 95,000 students had graduated from these institutions.

**Health care**

50. The Government pays special attention to the health services sector and has made significant progress in that area according to all health-care indicators. It has also adopted a national health strategy in accordance with international standards and protocols with a view to delivering high-quality, world-class services in the areas of treatment, prevention and follow-up. In addition, it implements strategic programmes to combat non-communicable and communicable diseases and provide care for children and mothers, and other strategic plans to facilitate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in order to ensure the highest level of health for the individual and society. In 2015, there were more than 120 primary health-care centres in the country providing treatment and preventative and follow-up services, as well as school, maternal and child health-care services.

51. The financial resources allocated by the Ministry of Health and Prevention to health-care services in 2015 amounted to 3,915,257,000 dirhams. That figure excludes the budgets that local authorities allocated to their health institutions and major private sector investments. There are 126 hospitals in the country, including 16 federal government hospitals.

52. The United Arab Emirates was ranked 28th in the 2016 Healthcare Quality Index. The Index is published annually by the Legatum Institute within the framework of the Legatum Prosperity Index, which covers 149 countries. The Index health pillar measures a country's performance in three areas, namely basic physical and mental health, health infrastructure and preventative care, and the country was ranked 9th globally in terms of satisfaction with basic physical and mental health. This shows that the population enjoys high levels of physical and mental health, which facilitates the development and growing prosperity of the State.

53. The percentage of public and private hospitals in the country providing internationally-endorsed standards of care rose from 46.8 per cent in 2014 to 55 per cent in 2015. This reflects the existence of world-class state-of-the-art health infrastructure facilities that are staffed by highly-qualified medical personnel.

**Social welfare***Social assistance*

54. The United Arab Emirates provides monthly financial assistance to 21 categories of persons, including older persons, persons with disabilities, orphans, widows and divorcees. A total of 42,528 families, 2,997 children with disabilities, 673 orphaned children and 205 children of unknown parentage receive benefits under that programme.

*Support for persons with disabilities*

55. The State endeavours to support persons with disabilities and ensure the provision of all their educational, training and rehabilitation needs with a view to facilitating their integration into society. There are 87 specialized care centres in the country, including 30 State-run centres and 57 centres run by civil society. These centres provide educational, health, sports, and vocational services to persons with disabilities. For the 2017/18

academic year, a total of 4068 students with disabilities are enrolled in the country's specialized care and rehabilitation centres. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development has, moreover, formulated a set of five interactive educational applications for persons with disabilities, including developmental and communication applications, which have been used by 15,827 persons with disabilities.

#### *Support for older persons*

56. Older persons in the United Arab Emirates enjoy high social status and are viewed as making a key contribution to the country's social, cultural and religious environment. All community institutions endeavour to uphold their right to remain in the family setting. The Government has made efforts to provide older persons with all necessary support through the establishment of a number of specialized centres and homes that provide a wide range of care, social support and other services and a total of 15,097 older persons receive social assistance. Care homes, clubs and mobile units providing specialized care to older persons in their homes and private geriatric care facilities have also been established. Among the most important State programmes in this regard is the "Support" initiative, through which families, foundations, charities and members of the community can make donations with a view to providing elderly persons with the health-care services and equipment they need.

#### *Support for children*

57. The United Arab Emirates takes a close interest in the situation of children and has thus enacted legislation on the right of children to care and development. It implements a number of plans in the health, social welfare and educational domains to support children's development. There are 295 crèches, including 39 that are State-run, providing social, health, educational and psychological support and recreational activities to 40,723 male and female children under 4 years of age.

58. The United Arab Emirates has chaired meetings of the virtual global task force to combat the online sexual exploitation of children and has obtained two permanent seats on the advisory board of the WeProtect global alliance.

#### *Support for juveniles*

59. The Government of the United Arab Emirates protects juvenile offenders of both sexes and has established social education homes to provide them with necessary care. Those homes are equipped to deliver social welfare, education, assistance with behavioural reform and vocational training and house 287 juvenile offenders. Furthermore, a series of interactive programmes targeting children under 18 years of age have been launched. These include the good friends campaign, which, in collaboration with sports and cultural clubs, encourages children to select positive companions and avoid companions exerting a negative influence, the education through play programme, which seeks to instil ethical values in children in line with societal mores, and the don't be a zero programme, which helps juvenile offenders review their personal values with a view to regaining a sense of personal stability.

## **B. Best practices**

60. Programme of Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking: The State has opened up residential and psychosupport centres for victims of human trafficking, as this is a key element of the country's strategic plan to combat this scourge. The following are some of the most important centres:

- The Dubai Association for the Protection of Women and Children, which was founded in 2007 to provide urgent care and support services to victims, in line with international human rights standards. The Association provides its services free of charge to female and child victims of domestic violence, children subjected to ill-treatment and victims of human trafficking.

- Homes for victims of human trafficking. These were established in 2008, under the auspices of the national Red Crescent Society, to provide rehabilitation services, including psychological, health and legal assistance, to victims of human trafficking. The first home for male victims of human trafficking was opened in Abu Dhabi in January 2014. The home can receive male trafficking victims from anywhere in the country.
- The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking established the Support Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking: in 2013, which receives financial support from national foundations and charitable societies and members of the business community. The Fund covers certain expenses related to the needs of trafficking victims and their families in their countries of origin, and helps them establish small businesses and organizes training courses to prepare them for future employment. Since its establishment, the Fund has provided \$153,735 in assistance to trafficking victims.

61. The Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Health Care and Disease Control Initiative: This initiative seeks to address the health concerns of underserved communities and provide high-quality basic health-care services to those in greatest need. In 2016, the Initiative provided a variety of health-care services and spent a total of \$61 million on health and disease-control initiatives and programmes, which benefited 10 million people worldwide. The affiliated Al Jalila Foundation continued its efforts to combat infectious diseases in 2016, and provided 1.6 million tetanus vaccines in 15 countries. The Noor Dubai organization also continued its efforts to prevent blindness and succeeded in treating more than 6.6 million people suffering from trachoma in 2016. The organization provided mobile clinics for the treatment of eye diseases in a number of countries, examined 15,603 patients, distributed 2,862 pairs of glasses and conducted 1,794 surgeries. To support medical research and develop treatments for a number of incurable diseases, the Al Jalila Foundation Research Centre funded more than 55 local research studies in 2016.

62. The Teachers' Charter of Tolerance: launched by the Ministry of Education in 2016 to promote tolerance in public and private schools and universities, the Charter underscores the need to disseminate a spirit of tolerance and equality within the country's various educational sectors.

63. The Smart Guidance Initiative: The Smart Guidance device, launched in 2015, is the first remote intelligent device to provide guidance and deliver legal information in a simple and accessible way to skilled workers at all levels. The devices are placed in locations frequented by workers, including the country's airports and departments of preventive medicine of the Ministry of Health and Protection across the country. They have also been installed on Saadiyat Island. Workers can use the devices, which have touch screens and are connected to the Internet, after entering their personal data or swiping their identity cards. They can then watch a 20-minute film that provides a wealth of information regarding their rights and duties. The film can be watched in eight languages, including Arabic, English, Urdu, Hindi, Chinese, Malayalam, Filipino and Vietnamese. The devices have helped raise many workers' awareness of their rights and duties pursuant to the Labour Code and the country's regulations. Approximately 28,800 workers have received a Smart Guidance Certificate since the launch of the Initiative.

64. The Year of Giving Initiative:<sup>6</sup> In December 2016, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, declared 2017 the Year of Giving. The Year focuses on three key areas, namely social responsibility, volunteerism and serving the nation. All Initiative projects and programmes aim to promote and entrench those principles and involve all sectors of the country's population in efforts to that end. In that context, the 1,400 Government initiatives and programmes launched by the Supreme National Committee for Good are being implemented by a range of local, quasi-governmental and private-sector stakeholders.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.giving.ae> للاطلاع على مزيد من التفاصيل حول مبادرات عام الخير 2017 يرجى زيارة الموقع التالي

## VIII. Capacity-building

65. In cooperation with relevant United Nations agencies, the Emirati authorities have organized numerous courses, workshops and training sessions for Government officials and members of civil society organizations with a view to strengthening their capacities in the field of human rights. The United Arab Emirates also collaborates with many other countries and NGOs with expertise in that area to share relevant experiences. The most important authorities involved in this process include:

### **The Ministry of the Interior**

- The Ministry of the Interior has continued to build and develop its human resources through its training and awareness-raising programmes and courses in the field of human rights. From 2013 until mid-2017, the Ministry held 3,406 lectures and workshops, which were attended by 81,848 Ministry employees;
- In accordance with the Ministry's 2014–2016 strategic plan, the Ministry of the Interior has launched a human rights training initiative to train Emirati specialists on human rights concepts, as provided in the country's laws and international conventions. This strategic initiative is the first of its kind in the region and, like other Ministry initiatives, has been approved by and receives input from the Cabinet;
- Trainees on the human rights training initiative programme also take part in field visits to government agencies and civil society organizations concerned with human rights to learn about best practices and ongoing efforts in that area. The most recent field visit was to Geneva and took place in March 2017.

### **The Ministry of Justice**

- The Ministry has adopted a multifaceted annual training plan that keeps abreast with recent legal developments and reflects the real needs of judges, prosecutors and staff at service centres. Under the training plan, the Ministry provides training on international humanitarian law, domestic violence and the ethical conduct of public employees, successful investigations and judgments in criminal cases, and dealing with the objections and complaints of parties;
- The Ministry holds annual theoretical and practical training courses for law graduates that all lawyers must take prior to practising their profession in court.

### **The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (formerly the Ministry of Labour)**

- Sixty-three legal scholars who speak multiple languages have received training on the types of disputes submitted to the Ministry. Another 100 staff have been trained to resolve disputes and arbitrate fairly with a view to helping workers and employers resolve their disputes expeditiously;
- The Department of Labour Guidance has run a number of programmes for employers to raise their awareness of workers' rights in accordance with recently-promulgated ministerial decisions, the regulations on workers' safety, health and social welfare, the regulations on reporting injuries in the workplace and compensation, and the regulations on the imposition of penalties, contract termination and end-of-service indemnities. A total of 3,111 employers have taken these courses during the time period mentioned above;
- The Ministry has also concluded a technical cooperation agreement with the International Labour Organization with a view to enhancing the capacity of the country's labour inspectors to monitor, prevent and combat all forms of forced or compulsory labour.

### **The Ministry of Health and Prevention**

- In March 2016, the Immunizations Department in the Department of Preventive Medicine held a workshop on the management of the poliovirus vaccine, which was attended by 110 doctors and technicians from the public and private sectors. The Ministry provides ongoing training to all its medical and technical personnel to enable them to keep abreast of the latest developments in the areas of preventative medicine and immunization.

### **The Ministry of Education**

- In 2015, 2016 and 2017, the Ministry implemented a specialized training programme for staff teaching all subjects and activities in government schools at all stages of education. Some 300 activities, training sessions and workshops covering 23 subjects were held annually in each of the three years in question. In addition, 380 five-day training courses were held during the annual teachers' conference. Training was, moreover, provided to special education teachers on how to draw up personalized education programmes for students with disabilities, including those with learning disabilities and on teaching strategies for students with disabilities. Kindergarten teachers received training on ways to teach Arabic and mathematics.

### **The General Women's Union**

- In June 2015, the General Women's Union, in cooperation with UNDP, and the Abu Dhabi-based National Committee for Elections to the National Council, organized a workshop on women and political participation. The workshop was organized as part of the State's efforts to promote women's empowerment and their participation in decision-making.

### **The Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood**

- In January 2015, the Supreme Council in collaboration with the UNICEF Gulf Area Office, organized a workshop on child protection measures. The workshop aimed at raising awareness of how to protect children from violence, abuse and neglect, and looked in detail at the procedures, mechanisms and practices of all parties working in the field of child protection.

### **Community Development Authority in Dubai**

- In May 2017, the Community Development Authority in Dubai organized a workshop on the latest global methods for evaluating the integration of persons with disabilities in the labour market. The workshop was attended by representatives of all State authorities concerned with employment and integration, as well as the Authority's internal technical team.

### **Dubai Foundation for Women and Children**

- The Foundation participated in a training programme, held in Geneva in March 2017, on the relationship between legal experts and United Nations human rights mechanisms and specialized organizations.

### **The Shelter for Women and Children**

- The Shelter participated in a capacity-building workshop for relevant national authorities on victim support mechanisms. The workshop was organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Office for the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries and held in Lebanon in May 2015.

### **The Emirates Human Rights Association**

- The Association participated in a training course, held at the Dubai Judicial Institute in January 2016, on international humanitarian law; the course focused on capacity-



building and aimed to enhance the skills and knowledge of human rights of the Association's members in various areas related to human rights.

- The Association also organized a training course on 17 and 18 May 2016 on women's rights in the light of international conventions and national legislative instruments.

## IX. Challenges and priorities

66. The United Arab Emirates takes a transparent and gradualist approach that succeeds in binding its legislative and administrative norms and aligning them with the human rights commitments that the State has made to the international community. Like other States, the United Arab Emirates faces certain challenges and must establish priorities in the area of human rights in the light of the rapid changes taking place in the world in that regard. Special attention must be focused on the following:

- (a) Strengthening the role of specialized national mechanisms in the area of human rights protection in order to keep abreast with international developments;
- (b) Strengthening existing national laws and legislation with a view to further protecting human rights and keeping up with the best global legislative practices in that regard;
- (c) Creating a team of specialized human rights officers and providing them with the training they require;
- (d) Disseminating a human rights culture to the greatest extent possible and taking steps to entrench that culture in the professional world and in academia.

67. Despite the challenges it faces, the United Arab Emirates will continue its efforts to promote comprehensive sustainable development by taking action to achieve the goals set forth in Vision 2021, which aims to make the United Arab Emirates one of the best countries in the world, and in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;<sup>7</sup> its efforts in that regard will no doubt have a significant impact on the human rights situation in the State.

## X. Voluntary pledges

68. In submitting its third periodic report, the State undertakes to:

- (a) Promulgate the federal act on domestic violence;
- (b) Continue to engage with the United Nations human rights agencies, mechanisms and committees with a view to ensuring that it receives all necessary support to facilitate the implementation of its programmes and activities, and to take action to comply with its international obligations within the context of those agencies and mechanisms.
- (c) Formulate a comprehensive national human rights plan that is updated in the light of new developments and is in line with the laws of the State and its international obligations in the field of human rights;
- (d) Continue its efforts to promote the protection of labour rights through the adoption of the necessary institutional and legislative measures, and to develop legislative and institutional mechanisms to provide greater protection for domestic workers and strengthen their access to effective arbitration mechanisms;
- (e) Continue its efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to human rights;

<sup>7</sup> <http://uaesdgs.ae> يرجى زيارة بوابة دولة الإمارات لأهداف التنمية المستدامة على الرابط

(f) Launch a national plan to raise political awareness and promote a culture of political participation;

(g) Establish an independent national human rights commission on the basis of the Paris Principles.

## **XI. Conclusion**

69. In submitting its third periodic report for review, the United Arab Emirates, underscores that it will continue its efforts to promote and protect human rights in line with its national legislation and laws and its international obligations. The State is determined to move forward by building on achievements made in the field of human rights and to continue to make a positive and active contribution to support best global practices in that area. The United Arab Emirates looks forward to continuing its cooperation with the Human Rights Council, the universal periodic review mechanism and the mandate holders to strengthen and safeguard human rights.

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