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## **National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21\***

### **United Arab Emirates**

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## **I. Introduction**

1. The United Arab Emirates submitted its first report to the Human Rights Council in December 2008. The report was adopted on 19 March 2009. The State made nine voluntary pledges, accepted 36 recommendations and asked for more time to consider 8 recommendations. It rejected a number of recommendations on the ground that they were incompatible with the country's value system, culture and legislation.

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 first 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. UPR follow-up methodology**

4. Since the adoption of the first report, the Government has striven to follow up on the outcome of the review. By Cabinet Decision No. 51/4/2 of 21 March 2010, it established a standing committee<sup>1</sup> to follow up on the universal periodic review report. The committee conducts its work in accordance with a national plan that was unveiled following the adoption of the country's first report, following up on the fulfilment of the Government's commitments in connection with the universal periodic review.

### **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 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 second report.<sup>2</sup>

6. The draft of the second report on the universal periodic review was posted on the standing committee's page on the website<sup>3</sup> of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs so as to allow the public and interested parties in the Emirates to submit proposals and comments. An overview of the universal periodic review process and of the country's first national report was included and information was provided on the pledges and recommendations emanating from the process to familiarize the public with the process and with related practices and outcomes.

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

#### **A. The Constitution**

7. Amendments were made to the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates in 2009, with the adoption of amendment No. 1 of 2009. This marks the second phase of the programme established by His Highness the President of the State to boost the role of the National Council and enable it to serve as an authority that functions in support of the executive. Under the amendment, the duration of the Council's ordinary annual sessions was increased to not less than seven months and the term of office of members was increased to four Gregorian years, as compared to only two years previously, in order to give members the time needed to complete a full parliamentary session in line with international norms and the requirements inherent in the principle of participation.

8. The Council's rules of procedure were established by a decision of the President of the Federation, with the agreement of the Supreme Council of the Federation and not the Cabinet. The Council was given wider powers with regard to the international treaties to which the Federation is a party. The President of the Federation now has the right to refer certain treaties to the Council for discussion prior to ratification.

#### **B. Domestic laws, legislation and regulations**

- Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009;
- Federal Act No. 15 of 2009, prohibiting the sale or supplying of tobacco to persons below the age of 18 years;
- Federal Act No. 18 of 2009, concerning the organization of the register of births and deaths;
- Cabinet Decision No. 13 of 2009, concerning the adoption of the manual on general standards for shared housing for workers and ancillary services;
- Cabinet Decision No. 29 of 2010, concerning the scheme for the prevention of HIV and the protection of the rights of persons living with HIV;
- Federal Act No. 1 of 2012, concerning care for children of unknown parentage, which was enacted to regulate care for the delivery of such children in the Emirates by providing for the establishment and development of care facilities and a system of foster care.

#### **C. Draft laws and regulations**

- Domestic Workers Bill, approved by Cabinet Decision No. 1/1/1 of 2012;
- Bill on raising compulsory school age in the Emirates to 18 years, as approved by the Cabinet in 2012;
- Children's Rights Bill of 2012;
- Draft amendment to certain articles of Federal Act No. 51 of 2006, concerning the suppression of human trafficking offences, to provide better guarantees to victims of human trafficking;

- Health Insurance Bill;
- Federal Bill on combating infectious diseases.

## **D. Developments with regard to governmental bodies and public human rights institutions**

### **Ministry of the Interior**

- Human Rights Department: Established in 2008 to make an active contribution to all activities designed to protect and promote human rights, so as to ensure that the security best practices of the Ministry of the Interior are followed and that action is taken to follow up on issues relating to the protection of the rights of individuals in society in accordance with the Constitution, the laws of the United Arab Emirates and relevant international treaties;
- Bureau to Promote Respect for the Law: Raises awareness with a view to the dissemination of a culture of legality in society at large and has undertaken a number of initiatives, notably the publication of a booklet, in seven languages, entitled “Rights and obligations of workers”. Around a million copies of the booklet, which explains workers’ rights and obligations in detail, were distributed across the country;
- High Committee for the Protection of the Child: Led to the establishment of the Child Protection Centre in the Ministry of the Interior in May 2011, pursuant to Ministerial Decision No. 347 of 2011, which deals with all offences committed against children and all phenomena that encourage the exploitation of children, and devises solutions and initiatives to ensure that children receive protection;
- Committee to Combat Human Trafficking Offences: Established by Ministry of the Interior Decision No. 422 of 2009, its functions include: commenting on and updating the laws on human trafficking; liaising with institutions that raise awareness of the gravity of these offences; and liaising with homes for victims of human trafficking to help safeguard and protect the persons in their care;
- Social support centres in police departments: Deal with cases of domestic violence where there is no need to file an official complaint and with violence in schools; cases where children run away from the home but no report has been filed with the police; juvenile offending that does not involve a major crime; and disputes and fights between neighbours that do not need to be formally reported;
- Mechanisms for receiving complaints and communications: The Ministry of the Interior has seven free phone numbers for receiving complaints and communications about matters such as trafficking in people and workers. It also has an emergency messaging service (SMS messages) that it can use to receive reports from persons with special needs.

### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

- Human Rights Department: The Human Rights Department is one of the units that was set up at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2010 to ensure that the Emirates is able to meet its obligations vis-à-vis the human rights treaty bodies and to strengthen bilateral and international cooperation with a view to the promotion and protection of human rights.

**Ministry of Labour**

- Labour Guidance Department: Established by Ministry of Labour Decision No. 551, on 17 May 2009, the Department's main duties are to raise awareness of the Labour Code and of implementing decisions, to familiarize employees and employers with Ministry of Labour procedures and policies and to improve and develop relations between the labour partners and the Ministry;
- Labour services units: These represent one of the latest initiatives launched by the Ministry of Labour to offer services and protection to workers and raise their awareness of their rights. A mobile labour services unit was set up to reach out to all groups of workers in remote areas.

**Ministry of Social Affairs**

- Committee on employment for persons with disabilities: The Cabinet issued Decision No. 130/6E/9 of 2012 instructing the Ministry of Social Affairs to establish this committee to design policies and procedures for the employment of persons with special needs, particularly in the private sector, and to provide them with training to set up viable, profit-making enterprises.

**Ministry of Education**

- Department of Special Education: Established in 2008 in the Ministry of Education, the Department promotes the rights of students with special needs and ensures that they have access to the same educational opportunities as students in regular education. It has taken rigorous measures to integrate this category of students into 114 integrated education schools, which are fully equipped with a range of assistive technologies.

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

- National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking: 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;
- Supreme Council for Mothers and Children: The Council worked with civil society institutions to formulate the first national strategy of the United Arab Emirates on motherhood and childhood. It is a strategic partner of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the United Arab Emirates and set up a cooperation programme, between 2010 and 2012, to broaden the cooperation and partnership between the two parties.

**F. Public welfare associations and institutions**

9. Given the effective role of civic associations as partners that support the Government's efforts to develop associations and promote participation and a sense of civic responsibility among members of society in the United Arab Emirates, Federal Act No. 2 of 2008, concerning public welfare associations and institutions, was adopted in order to create a stable normative framework to regulate the activities of these entities. Moreover, the Ministry of Social Affairs provides funding of 3.6 million dirhams (Dh) per year to

these associations. There are 138 associations and foundations registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs.

## **G. National policies and strategies**

10. The State has established a set of interrelated national policies and strategies to promote and ensure the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms, consisting of the following:

- Emirates Vision 2021<sup>4</sup>: The Vision comprises four components: an ambitious and confident people; a strong federation; a competitive economy; and a good quality of life in a generous and sustainable environment. The Government, in the approach that it takes to the realization of the Vision, accords absolute priority to the improvement of education, health and housing services, the development of human resources and the development of remote areas throughout the country;
- Strategy of the Government of the United Arab Emirates, 2011–2013<sup>5</sup>: The strategy is based on seven general principles and the overarching priority is to provide citizens with the best possible standard of living by making improvements to education and health-care systems and focusing on community development and the development of Government services;
- Strategy on the promotion of workers' rights<sup>6</sup>: The Ministry of Labour formulated a strategy and a plan of action to establish migrant workers' rights, provide for their protection and improve the working and living conditions of such workers;
- Strategic plan of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking<sup>7</sup>: The strategy is founded on four pillars: developing legislation on combating human trafficking; enabling the authorities concerned to take measures to deter and prevent human trafficking; protecting and supporting the victims of human trafficking; and concluding bilateral and international cooperation conventions;
- National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood<sup>8</sup>: Sets forth the principles for ensuring that mothers and children have access to an appropriate environment, enjoy their right to survival, development, health, education, capacity-building, effective participation in matters that affect, and protection from violence, ill-treatment and exploitation. It is considered a fundamental reference point for decision makers in the domain of motherhood and childhood in the United Arab Emirates;
- National Strategy for the Advancement of Women: This strategy allows the United Arab Emirates to meet the commitments it has made under international treaties on women and in relation to the Beijing Conference and Declaration of 1995. It was developed in response to the need for a national plan that would provide a road map for the empowerment of women in eight main areas, namely: education, health, the economy, law-making, the environment, the social domain, information, political participation, and decision-making;
- National Plan for Older Persons: The Ministry of Social Affairs is developing a national plan for older persons to encourage the private sector to invest in the delivery of social and medical services for older persons and the development of programmes and activities for the elderly and to draw from their experience.

## **IV. Follow-up action on voluntary pledges and the recommendations accepted in the first session of the universal periodic review (2008)**

### **A. Voluntary pledges**

#### **1. Study on possible accession to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984**

11. The United Arab Emirates acceded to the Convention on 19 July 2012.

#### **2. Study on possible accession to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

12. The United Arab Emirates acceded to the Convention on 19 March 2012.

#### **3. Study on possible accession to the optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

13. A committee comprising representatives of the competent institutions in the United Arab Emirates was set up to look into the possibility of acceding to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Work is being done to bring the country's laws into line with the provisions of those instruments, to prepare the ground for accession by the State.

#### **4. Study on possible accession to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime**

14. The United Arab Emirates acceded to the Protocol on 21 January 2009.

#### **5. Organization of workshops in cooperation with international human rights organizations to disseminate human rights principles in line with the international treaties to which the State is a party**

- The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, in conjunction with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), held a training workshop in February 2009, to further raise awareness among law enforcement personnel and those that deal with human trafficking cases;
- The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking and the United Nations Office on Drug Control (UNODC) organized the third annual interregional workshop on promoting law enforcement and judicial cooperation among source, transit and destination countries in response to human trafficking in Central Asia. The event was attended by 45 members of different entities, such as local and federal prosecution services, representatives of shelters for victims, the Ministry of the Interior, the Dubai Police Department and the Ministry of Labour, and representatives of different countries and Interpol;
- The Ministry of the Interior, in conjunction with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, held a regional training workshop in Abu Dhabi from 12 to 14 December 2012 on a rights-based approach to combating human trafficking. A book entitled "Recommended principles and guidelines on

human rights and human trafficking” was launched at the workshop. The United Arab Emirates paid for the book to be translated into Arabic;

- The General Women’s Union, in cooperation with the World Family Organization, organized the seventh World Family Summit, which was held from 5 to 7 December 2011. The participants discussed: social protection measures for families; techniques for preventing conflict and domestic violence; the challenges that the global economic crisis poses for families and efforts to find effective solutions; and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals;
- The Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood and the General Women’s Union, in conjunction with international organizations that deal with issues affecting women and children — UNICEF, UN Women, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) — held numerous courses and workshops to disseminate information about human rights principles in line with the treaties to which the United Arab Emirates is a party.

**6. Improving training for law enforcement officers with a view to raising awareness of human trafficking offences**

15. The Committee to Combat Human Trafficking organized a series of training courses and workshops in cooperation with various departments and ministries involved in law enforcement such as departments that deal with nationality and residence issues, the police and the Office of the Public Prosecutor. One of the goals of this programme is to ensure that officials of the United Arab Emirates who are responsible for combating human trafficking are equipped to carry out their work in accordance with international standards. The Committee has encouraged the relevant departments in Government offices and ministries to set up training courses so that they can acquire the skills needed to combat human trafficking more effectively, particularly now that a good number of ministries and Government offices are able to establish their own sections, at the local and federal levels, to combat human trafficking.

**7. Study on the possible establishment of a national human rights institution in the United Arab Emirates in conformity with the Paris Principles**

16. The secretariat of the Standing Committee on Follow-up to the Universal Periodic Review Report paid visits to several countries and to the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC) to learn about different experiences in this domain. The subject has been studied in detail and the Government is giving serious consideration to the possibility of establishing such an institution in line with best practices in this area.

**8. Study of a regulation to establish refuges for victims of human trafficking in the United Arab Emirates**

17. The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking drafted a regulation on the licensing and management of refuges for victims of human trafficking. The regulation is in the process of being enacted.

**9. Study on legislation to raise the age for the completion of compulsory education to 18 years**

18. The Cabinet has given its approval for the adoption of a federal law on compulsory education in the United Arab Emirates, that states that compulsory schooling begins at the



age of 6 and ends either at the age of 18 or with the completion of [compulsory] education, whichever of the two comes first. To deal with the problem of students dropping out of school and ensure compliance with the regulation, provision is made for the establishment of special mechanisms to ensure compliance with compulsory education attendance requirements and for the imposition of appropriate sanctions.

## **B. Recommendations that were accepted<sup>9</sup>**

19. These recommendations cover a number of aspects of human rights. The action taken in this regard is described below.

### **1. Freedom of information and of the press (recommendations 1, 17 and 20)**

20. A federal law on “media activities” will replace Federal Act No. 15 of 1980, concerning printed matter and publications. A set of principles related to freedom of opinion, as guaranteed under the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates, have been included in the new bill, which is on its way to becoming law.

21. One of the main features of this new law is that it allows the media to have access to information flows, does away with censorship and the practice of closing down media outlets or withdrawing their licences for protracted periods of time and does not require journalists to disclose their sources or make them subject to penalties of deprivation of liberty.

### **2. Promotion and protection of human rights principles and establishment of a national strategy to disseminate a culture of human rights (recommendations 2, 3, 4, 19 and 34)**

22. In follow-up to the above-mentioned recommendations, the Government took the following steps and measures:

- The Standing Committee on Follow-up to the Universal Periodic Review Report coordinates the State’s efforts to disseminate a culture of human rights and is looking into the possibility of devising a national human rights strategy in accordance with the relevant regional and international standards and based on the values and cultural heritage of society in the United Arab Emirates;
- The Ministry of Education drew up a document on teaching the human rights education curriculum to students in grades 1 to 12. Human rights concepts were incorporated in the national document on Islamic education in primary and secondary schools. These concepts include: civil and political rights, such as the right to life, the right to freedom of expression and the right to political participation; social and economic rights, such as the right to services and the right to own property; and environmental rights, such as the right to clean water, the right to breathe clean air, and the right to protection of the environment and of public health;
- Considerable attention has been paid to the delivery of training for members of the prosecution service and the judiciary; the principles and provisions of international human rights instruments have been included in the curricula taught at judicial training institutes.

**3. Recommendation 5, which states that the Emirates should be complimented for its pioneering and considerable experience in the area of ending employment of children in camel racing**

23. The United Arab Emirates has done a great deal of work and taken specific steps on this issue over the course of several years. For example, it adopted Act No. 15 of 2005, which prohibits the employment of persons under the age of 18 years in camel racing.

24. The Ministry of the Interior set up committees to follow up on the application of the Act. It also signed an agreement with UNICEF on rehabilitating child jockeys in their communities and raising their living standards. Some US\$ 30 million was allocated for this purpose in 2007 and drawn upon to pay compensation to each child who had participated in camel racing. On 6 June 2012, the committee responsible for following up on compensation payments held its final meeting, marking the closure of the dossier on child jockeys in the United Arab Emirates.

**4. Strengthening of cooperation between the United Arab Emirates and international human rights mechanisms (recommendations 6 and 36)**

- Following the adoption of its first report in 2009, the United Arab Emirates received several special rapporteurs, including the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It also received the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children, who visited the country from 11 to 17 April 2012 to look at what the State was doing on that issue;
- On 24 and 25 April 2010, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navanethem Pillay, undertook a mission to the United Arab Emirates. Ms. Pillay met with the Head of State, senior State officials and representatives of civil society organizations and praised the United Arab Emirates for the work that it was doing to promote and protect human rights;
- The Government continues to renew its support for the funds of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which will help the Office to implement its 2012–2013 programme. The State's contributions to these funds now amount to US\$ 390,000. Moreover, at the Pledging Conference for Development Activities held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, the United Arab Emirates announced its intention to donate the amount of US\$ 7,194,000 in 2012 to a number of human rights funds such as the Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery; the Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture; the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking; and funds for UNDP programmes.

**5. Labour (recommendations 7, 9, 14, 18, 21, 22, 27, 28 and 35)**

25. The Ministry of Labour devised a strategy and plan of action to safeguard and protect workers' rights and improve their working conditions. In outline, the strategy focuses on the following areas:

- Protecting workers' right to receive a fair wage, as agreed under a wage protection scheme, at the times and dates specified in the employment contracts;
- Developing of labour market mechanisms in the United Arab Emirates with the aim of achieving greater flexibility and freedom of movement in the labour market and of establishing a balanced contractual relationship between the employer and the worker;

- Protecting workers' right to housing and their right to live in an appropriate and safe environment that offers them everything they need for a decent life, and introducing a handbook on general norms for collective housing for workers;
- Providing workers with access to effective legal remedies in the event of a labour dispute and facilitating access to legal recourse through the establishment of public relations offices in labour courts that can help to resolve labour disputes amicably;
- Strengthening bilateral and international cooperation on manpower issues through memorandums of understanding and strengthened frameworks for cooperation and partnership between labour-receiving and labour-sending countries.

26. As for the recommendations made concerning domestic workers, by its Decision 1/1/1 of 2012, the Cabinet approved the Federal Bill on Domestic Service Workers. The Bill will be ready for promulgation once the Ministry of the Interior has completed the work of preparing the implementing regulation.

27. The Ministry of Justice has established special courts and services to examine workers' cases. Some of these bodies have an electronic interface with the Ministry of Labour and are thus able to exchange information and receive data. This speeds up the adjudication process. In addition, the Ministry has set up a collective labour disputes committee, with representatives of workers and employers, in each labour office. The committees must issue a decision on a dispute within two weeks of referral. Their decisions can be challenged before an appeal court within 30 days of issuance.

## 6. Organization of targeted workshops (recommendations 8 and 16)

*Recommendation 8: Establish a workshop on education to exchange views and experiences with developed and developing countries*

28. The Ministry of Education took part in several workshops that were held in February 2012 on the fringes of the Fourth Education World Forum and the Gulf Educational Supplies & Solutions exhibition, which is held in the United Arab Emirates every year and the slogan for which was "Teaching and Learning in the Knowledge and Technology Era". A total of 35 workshops were held.

*Recommendation 16: Organize training and seminars on human rights for law enforcement authorities in charge of combating terrorism*

- The Ministry of the Interior ran training courses and seminars for law enforcement officers who work in the area of counter-terrorism to make sure that human rights and the rule of law are observed when counter-terrorism measures are being taken;
- The Ministry of Justice held a seminar from 19 to 20 January 2011 on protecting the rights of victims and gathering criminal evidence. A seminar on the rights of the accused was held on 27 June 2011;
- The United Arab Emirates is finalizing the arrangements for hosting a global centre of excellence for countering violent extremism, the first global forum for Governments and civil society organizations to be setup to coordinate national, regional and international efforts to deal with violent extremism. The centre was established by the Working Group on Combating Violent Extremism established at the Global Counterterrorism Forum and is due to be officially opened in Abu Dhabi at the end of 2012.

**7. Dialogue with civil society organizations concerning follow-up on the outcome of the universal periodic review**

- Recommendation 10 refers to ongoing dialogue with civil society institutions on the follow-up given to the review and the creation of a permanent forum to facilitate the dialogue and further mutual understanding;
- By way of follow-up to this recommendation, a preliminary discussion with civil society organizations in the United Arab Emirates was organized by the Emirates Human Rights Association in April 2011. During the event, numerous special workshops were held to discuss the outcome of the universal periodic review with respect to the United Arab Emirates.

**8. Protection of children's rights (recommendations 11 and 12)**

29. The Ministerial Committee on Legislative Matters completed its consideration of the Children's Rights Bill, which contains 72 articles on subjects such as child care, children's rights and the entities responsible for monitoring those rights. The Bill regulates the exercise of children's freedoms and rights, including family, health, cultural, social and educational rights. It also includes a number of prohibitions that are designed to protect children, makes provision for the institution of mechanisms and measures to afford this land of protection and prescribes penalties for breaching its provisions.

**9. Strengthening women's rights and achieving equality (recommendations 13, 30 and 31)**

30. In the context of the State's efforts to strengthen women's rights and empower women, steps are being taken to update the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in the United Arab Emirates, 2013–2017. The relevant national institutions, notably the General Women's Union, have begun to trace the outline of the strategy for the next five years, taking into account the norms and standards set forth in the treaties to which the State is a party, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Millennium Development Goals. The key elements of the strategy are expected to be made public by the end of 2012. This will allow federal and local Government institutions and civil society institutions to formulate strategic plans for implementation and thus ensure that a mechanism is put in place that will foster ongoing efforts to empower women in the areas of education, health, the economy, the social sector, the environment, public information and political participation. On the subject of women's political empowerment, the National Electoral Commission reported high levels of participation among women in the second round of elections held on 24 September 2011. Women registered as candidates in 46 per cent of electoral colleges countrywide and seven women won seats in the 40-member Federal National Council.

31. With regard to gender equality, measures have been taken in the legislative and judicial domains in the United Arab Emirates to eliminate gender-based discrimination. The Government has adopted numerous policies to ensure the advancement of women and enable women to exercise their constitutional and legal rights and participate in decision-making and in representing the country in the international arena.<sup>10</sup>

32. The Government has established institutions, such as shelters for women and children, the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children and Ministry of the Interior social welfare centres, to protect women and children from domestic violence. In this way, effective action has been taken to follow up on recommendation 30, as these institutions provide health, psychological, social, legal and rehabilitation services to victims of domestic violence.

**10. Development of remote areas (recommendations 15, 26 and 33)**

33. Initiatives to develop infrastructure in remote areas were launched with a budget of US\$ 16 billion. They encompass several areas, such as: construction of public housing; the establishment and development of power plants and water installations; modernization of road networks and bridges; the establishment and development of hospitals and health-care centres; the construction and maintenance of dams; and the development of fishing ports. These initiatives are the culmination of the plans announced in 2009 concerning the creation of projects in the coming five years for the development of health facilities, roads, hospitals and housing. The Ministry of Public Works has allocated a budget of Dh5 billion for infrastructure development. The Ministry of Presidential Affairs and the Ministry of Public Works continue to pursue the strategy of the United Arab Emirates to develop infrastructure, particularly in remote areas.

34. The Global Competitiveness Report 2011–2012 produced by the World Economic Forum ranked the United Arab Emirates eighth out of 133 countries in terms of the quality of its infrastructure. The country was ranked first in the region and eleventh worldwide on the quality of its transport and communications infrastructure, in the 2012 Global Enabling Trade report<sup>11</sup> produced by the World Economic Forum.

**11. Countering human trafficking<sup>12</sup> (recommendation 23): Exchanges of information and best practices with other countries on the establishment of national legislation and mechanisms and on pursuing international cooperation**

35. With a view to taking action on the fourth pillar of the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking, the competent authorities, led by the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, have made sure to exchange experiences and best practices and to foster bilateral and international cooperation by sharing information on the experience of the United Arab Emirates in combating human trafficking and drawing on the experiences of other countries. This is clearly evidenced in the fact that several bilateral cooperation treaties and memorandums of understanding have been signed on sharing of experiences and expertise in combating human trafficking. Hence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates signed memorandums of understanding in 2010 with the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan respectively. Efforts are under way to conclude similar agreements with a number of other countries, such as the Republic of Belarus and the Kingdom of Thailand, in the near future. As part of its efforts to strengthen international cooperation on combating human trafficking and promoting human rights, the Ministry of the Interior signed no fewer than 11 treaties and memorandums of understanding with Governments and relevant organizations.

**12. External assistance to developing countries<sup>13</sup> (recommendation 24)**

- The Government of the United Arab Emirates has established many humanitarian aid institutions, the main ones being: the Red Crescent Society; the Zayed Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation; the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development; the Khalifa Humanitarian Foundation; the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Charity and Humanitarian Foundation; and the organizations Dubai Cares and Noor Dubai. An office was set up to coordinate the activities of the Government in delivering humanitarian assistance abroad;
- In 2009, donor institutions of the United Arab Emirates contributed in excess of Dh2 billion in external assistance to 51 countries, representing 53.7 per cent of the world's developing countries. The domains in which the assistance was provided include infrastructure development in remote areas, food security, the delivery of the right to education, health-care services, humanitarian assistance and access to clean water and sanitation.

**13. Accession to international human rights treaties (recommendations 25 and 32) and consideration of ratification of the Convention against Torture**

36. The United Arab Emirates became a party to the Convention on 19 July 2012.

**14. Recommendation 29: Consider establishing an independent national human rights institution that could advise the Government and receive and investigate complaints by the public**

37. The United Arab Emirates is looking into the possibility of establishing a national human rights institution. A detailed study was carried out, in consultation with competent institutions in the Federation, with the aim of establishing, in line with the Paris Principles, a national institution that will be responsible for dealing with all matters relating to human rights. The Standing Committee on Follow-up to the Universal Periodic Review Report has conducted visits to several countries and to the ICC to find out about experiences and best practices in this area.

**C. Recommendations under consideration**

38. On 19 March 2009, while the Human Rights Council was considering the outcome of the review with respect to the United Arab Emirates, the delegation of the United Arab Emirates explained in its position statement regarding a number of recommendations that it was unable to accept at the time, specifically the recommendations in paragraph 92 of the report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (A/HRC/10/75), that eight of the recommendations were still under review, since the Government wished to study them more closely. The Government has been able to take action on a number of those recommendations, as is explained below.

**1. Recommendation 3: Sign and ratify the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime**

39. The United Arab Emirates became a party to the Protocol on 21 January 2009.

**2. Recommendation 4: Introduce amendments to national laws on citizenship to enable the children of female citizens married to non-citizens to acquire nationality of the United Arab Emirates**

40. The laws on acquisition of nationality by the children of female citizens were amended pursuant to a presidential decree of 2011, which includes the following provisions:

- The children of female citizens are entitled to the same treatment as nationals of the United Arab Emirates, without any discrimination, in the areas of education, health and employment;
- When they reach the age of 18 years, these children have the right for citizenship in the United Arab Emirates.

## V. State efforts to promote and protect human rights

### A. Promotion of political participation

41. The second round of the 2011 elections for the Federal National Council<sup>14</sup> marked a key phase in the rollout of the political empowerment programme. The elections were unprecedented in terms of wider participation by citizens in the political process. The Supreme Council of the Federation, in its Decree No. 1 of 2011, defined the procedures for electing representatives of the United Arab Emirates to the Federal National Council, while, under Presidential Decree No. 2 of 2011, the number of members of electoral colleges was increased to no fewer than 300 times the number of seats allocated to each Emirate in accordance with the Constitution, there being no discrimination between women and men in this regard. By this decision, the Government has honoured its obligations under international instruments on political and women's rights.

42. The political empowerment programme is designed to boost the role of the Federal National Council and to enable it to assist and support the executive, allowing it to become more effective and to have a better understanding of national issues and citizens' concerns, and thus serving as a vector for the progressive promotion of the values of participation, consultation and engagement of citizens.

### B. Women's empowerment

43. The Government ensures that women are accorded their rightful proper status in society. The principles of social equity for all have been written into the Constitution in keeping with the precepts of the noble Islamic faith. Legislation has been enacted which recognizes that men and women have equal civil, political, social and economic rights.

44. In the period from 2008 to 2012, major changes were introduced in favour of women, as detailed below:

- The number of Cabinet seats held by women was raised from two to four in February 2008, the highest proportion in the Arab world;
- In the 2011 parliamentary elections, women nationals gained 7 seats out of the 40 in the Federal National Council, representing 17 per cent of members. This is also the highest level of women's representation in a legislative body;
- Women have gained access to positions in the judiciary and prosecution services such as those of judges of first instance courts, deputy public prosecutors, police officers and officiating officers in marriages, as well as in other sectors such as the air force and civilian aviation;
- Women have joined the diplomatic and consular professions; there are three women nationals serving abroad as ambassadors and one as a consul general;
- Women hold 66 per cent of public sector posts and 30 per cent of senior decision-making positions in the sector;
- 95 per cent of girls and 80 per cent of boys who complete their secondary education enrol in higher education. Women account for 70 per cent of university graduates in the United Arab Emirates, one of the highest proportions worldwide;
- According to official data, the country's Business Women's Council has around 12,000 members who manage 11,000 enterprises representing a total investment of

around Dh12.5 billion. In the banking sector, one of the country's most important economic sectors, around 37.5 per cent of employees are women.

### **C. The media**

45. Significant progress has been made to enhance media transparency and freedom in the United Arab Emirates, update media laws and develop a media infrastructure to keep pace with global changes in information and communications technology and to create new free zones for the media.

46. It is the responsibility of the Federal National Council, which was established in 2006, to oversee media activities and coordinate the information policies of the United Arab Emirates in line with the country's internal and external media policy, due regard being had to the importance of accurate, impartial and credible reporting and coverage.

47. The Media Activities Bill<sup>15</sup> regulates the work of the various media in the United Arab Emirates. Media institutions in the United Arab Emirates have made qualitative progress in professional and technological terms and in terms of the quality of their performance. In the United Arab Emirates there are eight English-language newspapers, in addition to dozens of magazines and specialist periodicals. The number of television stations has grown exponentially since the advent of satellite broadcasting. More than 1,400 specialist companies operate out of the free zone established for the media in Dubai city, with 60 television companies running upwards of 150 stations and around 120 publishing houses producing some 400 publications. In the Abu Dhabi Media Zone there are 135 domestic and foreign companies which produce and distribute print and audiovisual media content. The free media zones in Fujairah and Ras al-Khaimah host dozens of radio and television companies. This is not to mention the activities of the Dubai Press Club, the Journalists' Association, which has 734 members, local media outlets and hundreds of accredited media correspondents in the United Arab Emirates.

### **D. Temporary workers**

48. The labour market in the United Arab Emirates is highly competitive. Indeed, it is ranked seventh in the world in the Global Competitiveness Report and is highly diverse in terms of the economic sectors involved and the international character of the workforce, with close to 4 million migrant workers and 200 nationalities being represented.

#### **Measures taken by the Government to safeguard workers' political rights**

##### **1. Protection from all forms of exploitation**

49. The Cabinet, by Decision No. 10 of 2012, concerning fees and fines for Ministry of Labour services, and the Ministry of Labour, by Decision No. 1187 of 2010, concerning enterprise classification rules and norms, introduced large fees and fines for the services that the Ministry levies on enterprises that fail to observe the fundamental human rights of workers or to comply with domestic legislation.

##### **2. Access to decent housing for workers**

50. The Cabinet, by Decision No. 13 of 2009, adopted a manual on general norms for workers' collective housing and related services stating that, as of 1 September 2009, the authorities competent to issue building permits for workers' housing must only issue such permits of housing in accordance with the Decision. The Decision affirms that employers are responsible for providing housing in conformity with the norms laid down therein.



Work began on the construction of model workers' cities, of which there are now 21 serving 345,400 workers. Moreover, according to the Decision, every enterprise in the United Arab Emirates has five years from the date on which the Decision entered into force until the deadline for completing implementation, i.e. the end of 2014, to modify workers' housing in order to conform to these norms.

### **3. International cooperation and initiatives to protect workers' rights**

51. The Government is committed to strengthening its partnership with labour-sending countries in line with the recommendations emanating from the first round of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, which was held in January 2008 to open the way for the establishment of full cooperation between sending and receiving countries in dealing with the problems of migrant workers in such a way as to ensure that the rights of all partners are observed and their responsibilities are met. The Ministry of Labour, in cooperation with the labour ministries of India and the Philippines, introduced a model pilot project on managing the cycle of contractual labour. The four phases of the cycle are:

- The phase prior to departure to the receiving State;
- The phase when the worker resides and works in the receiving State;
- Preparation for return to the sending country;
- Return and reintegration into the sending country.

52. The United Arab Emirates has signed 10 memorandums of understanding with Asian labour-sending countries and 8 bilateral cooperation agreements with Arab labour-sending countries with a view to the regulation and protection of the rights of migrant workers from these countries.

#### **Workers' health insurance**

53. Workers have a health card that they can use to receive free treatment. The Emirate of Abu Dhabi has devised a comprehensive, compulsory health insurance scheme to cover all workers, including domestic workers. The cost is borne by the employer and the scheme, which is already in effect in Abu Dhabi, will be extended to all parts of the country.

### **5. Protection of workers from deception or fraud in the recruitment process**

54. Under the contract validation system, which is currently being piloted in conjunction with India, labour-receiving countries send contracts to labour-sending countries to be signed and endorsed before workers leave their country of origin. This makes it easier to expedite departure arrangements and resolve any subsequent disputes.

### **6. Regulation of employment agencies for migrant workers**

55. In the light of a study conducted jointly with the International Labour Organization (ILO), Minister of Labour Decision No. 3821 of 2010, concerning the conditions and requirements for licensing and regulating the work of private employment agencies, was issued to tighten up the conditions for granting licences to such agencies. The Decree states that no one can act as an agent or employer of temporary labour without first receiving authorization from the Ministry. Applicants must meet a number of eligibility criteria, in particular they must have no prior convictions for offences against indecency or for committing a breach of trust, a human-trafficking offence, or a breach of the Labour Relations Act or the ministerial decrees relating to the implementation of the Act. Applicants must provide a bank guarantee, in the amount of not less than Dh300,000, in order to be able to operate as intermediaries in this sector and of not less than Dh1 million to be able to recruit temporary workers. The agency manager must have the experience and

qualifications needed to be able to manage the activity and the applicant must be an owner or a partner in an enterprise that has been proven to have committed breaches of the Labour Code and implementing decrees.

#### **7. Free movement of labour**

56. The Minister of Labour issued Decision No. 1186 of 2010, concerning the rules and conditions for granting new work permits to workers whose contract has ended. Pursuant to the Decision, workers can now join another enterprise, subject to certain conditions, without having to wait for six months, as was the case previously. The introduction of this measure has led to a marked improvement in internal labour mobility.

#### **8. Establishment of workers' advice units**

57. There are eight units in areas with high concentrations of workers and there is one mobile unit. These units were set up to provide guidance to workers and their primary function is to design and deliver programmes to raise awareness of labour market laws and implementing decisions. They give advice to the parties in the production process — workers and employers — at the workplace and offer legal and managerial guidance to workers and employers on how to deal with labour relations issues. Unit officials carried out 1,154 visits to workplaces in 2010 and 2011 and advised workers and received 1,104 complaints. They found amicable solutions in 1,059 cases and referred a further 45 complaints to the relevant authorities for investigation and follow-up. The Ministry produced and published a guide in seven languages on the rights and obligations of workers. A total of 250,000 copies were distributed in Arabic, English, Urdu, Hindi, Bahasa Malaysia, Bengali and the Sri Lankan languages in places where there are high concentrations of workers and in airports and the embassies of labour-sending countries.

#### **9. Effective action to address labour disputes**

58. The Ministry of Labour took the initiative of establishing labour relations bureaux in some courts. The Ministry supports these bureaux by providing them with data and information on litigants, thus helping to expedite legal proceedings and resolve disputes, particularly with regard to the enforcement of court judgements, the suspension of all dealings with enterprises that fail to comply with court judgements and the disbursement of bank guarantees to workers in accordance with court judgements. The Ministry is running a programme aimed at establishing an electronic interface between it and the labour courts so as to cut down on formalities and make it easier to complete their shared tasks.

## **VI. Achievements and best practices**

### **A. Achievements**

#### **The United Arab Emirates and international indices**

##### *Human Development Index*

59. In the 2011 Human Development Report, the United Arab Emirates was ranked first in the Arab world and thirtieth out of 187 countries, having moved up two places with regard to its previous ranking. Moreover, it is ranked thirty-eighth on the indicator of women's empowerment.

*Gender equality index*

60. The United Arab Emirates was ranked first in the Arab world in the gender equality index published by the World Economic Forum in 2011.

*Happiness and satisfaction index*

61. The United Arab Emirates was ranked first in the Arab world and seventeenth in the world in the 2012 report on the first United Nations survey of happiness and satisfaction among nations.

*Rule of Law Index*

62. The United Arab Emirates was ranked first in the Arab and Middle East region and thirteenth in the world in the index on the rule of law and judicial transparency (2011) developed by the World Justice Project.

*Index on transparency and combating corruption*

63. The United Arab Emirates was ranked second in the Middle East and North Africa region in the 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index developed by Transparency International and was ranked twenty-eighth in the world, out of 183 countries listed, which was a step higher than its ranking in 2010.

*Competitiveness Index<sup>16</sup>*

64. The United Arab Emirates was ranked fifth in the world on the indicator of Government efficiency, twenty-fifth on performance and capacity, and twenty-seventh on innovation and development, which are sub-indices in the Global Competitiveness Report 2011–2012 published by the World Economic Forum.

## 1. Education

*General education*

65. 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 2010, the Ministry of Education received allocations amounting to 16.5 per cent of the general budget (Dh7.2 billion). Moreover, 6.2 per cent of the budget was allocated for higher education (Dh2.7 billion). These resources were provided for the implementation of plans to achieve ongoing qualitative and quantitative development in all areas of State education (kindergartens, illiteracy eradication, technical and vocational education, women's education and private education).

66. The Ministry of Education Strategy for Educational Development (2011–2013) was devised to establish a world-class integrated education system that uses state-of-the-art technologies. Education councils established in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Al-Sharjah help to turn the principle of decentralization embraced by the Ministry of Education into a strategy for developing and modernizing the country's education system.

67. In 2011/12, there were 1,186 public and private schools with 796,836 students, all stages of schooling taken together. This compares with only 74 schools and 12,800 students in the 1971/72 academic year when the Federation was established.

68. The Ministry of Education has taken steps to implement a school integration project: a series of laws have been enacted on the inclusion of young persons with disabilities in schools so as to afford them equality of opportunity in education. The Ministry has trained

personnel to look after students with special needs so that they can overcome all the difficulties that people in this group encounter. In this connection, Ministerial Decision No. 166 of 2010 was issued on the enforcement of general regulations on special education programmes in public and private schools.

69. As evidence of its belief in the importance of the teaching vocation, the Cabinet issued a decision in June 2012 on the creation of posts and the allocation of career development funds for 7,782 education personnel (teachers and employees in educational institutions, such as tutors, school heads and deputy head and administrative staff employed by the Ministry of Education). Around Dh368 million is allocated each year for this purpose.

#### *Higher education*

70. 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. In the United Arab Emirates there are 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.

71. As of the end of 2009, more than 95,000 students had graduated from these institutions, a figure that does not include the students who graduated at foreign ministries.

## **2. Health care**

72. The Government pays special attention to the health services sector and to delivering high-quality, world-class services in the areas of treatment, prevention and follow-up. In addition, it implements strategic programmes to combat chronic and communicable diseases and provide care for children and mothers. The allocations for health services in 2009 exceeded Dh2,644,000,000. This figure excludes the budgets that local authorities allocated to health institutions and major private sector investments. The expenditure in 2010 amounted to Dh33.7 billion, which includes the large budgets of the Ministry of Health, the Abu Dhabi and Dubai health authorities and major private investment.

73. There are 65 hospitals in the United Arab Emirates, 15 of them federal institutions, and over 150 primary health-care centres and clinics, in addition to 11 school health centres, 10 centres for mothers and children and 110 special units for mothers and children in hospitals and primary health-care centres. This compares with 7 hospitals and 12 health centres when the Federation was established in 1971.

74. The figures show that the infant mortality rate fell to 6.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2009, down 2.2 per cent from the figure for 1990. This means that the target of 3.8 set for 2015 is not only achievable but could be exceeded, if progress continues to be made at the current rate.

## **3. Social welfare**

#### *Social security*

75. The Government of the United Arab Emirates dispenses financial assistance each month to 20 categories of persons, namely, persons with disabilities, widows and divorcees. The programme benefits 40,121 families. A total of 4,882 children, 862 of them orphans,

receive assistance, in addition to 3,697 children with disabilities and 323 children of unknown parentage. As of 2012, the amount disbursed to these families was increased to Dh7.14 billion.

#### *Care for persons with disabilities*

76. The United Arab Emirates supports children and adults with disabilities and provides them with the training required for their integration into society. Some 4,511 children with disabilities regularly attend 42 centres, of which 19 are local and Government centres and 23 are private and voluntary sector centres. The centres provide educational, health, sports and vocational training services to persons with disabilities. There are also special education classes in general education institutions serving around 2,000 children with disabilities or learning difficulties. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior endeavour, in cooperation with partners in the governmental, private and civil society sectors, to place persons with disabilities in employment. The Ministry of Health has set up a health and rehabilitation committee for persons with disabilities.

#### *Geriatric care*

77. The Government of the United Arab Emirates pursues a policy designed to provide older persons with care and services to enable them to remain in the family setting by offering them financial assistance and care provided by mobile units. Social welfare assistance is provided to as many as 14,075 older persons, representing 37 per cent of the total number of older persons in the country. Older persons have access to care institutions and day clubs that offer services without their being subject to conditions on residence. This reflects a determination to ensure that older persons remain with their families. The mobile units, consisting of a nurse, a doctor and a social worker, deliver health and psychosocial services to older persons at their homes. The Ministry of Health has set up geriatric care departments in some hospitals.

#### *Childcare*

78. 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.

79. As of mid-2012, there were 295 crèches in urban areas and villages in the United Arab Emirates catering for children below the age of 4. These institutions provide children with health, social, educational and psychological care, teach them skills and organize recreational activities and programmes for them. The Cabinet issued Decision No. 19 of 2006 providing for the establishment of crèches in State institutions, Government departments and administrative offices to look after the children of female employees and offer the children a measure of social stability. Thirty-two crèches have been established pursuant to this decision.

#### *Juvenile care*

80. The Government of the United Arab Emirates protects juvenile offenders of both sexes. It set up social education homes to care for young persons. The centres are equipped to deliver social welfare, education, assistance with behavioural reform and vocational training. Juvenile social education homes have received 342 juvenile offenders and 159 young persons placed with them for at least one week as a precautionary measure. Under an after-care programme, young persons are monitored after release with a view to supporting their social reintegration.

#### 4. Housing

81. The Government's housing policy is set forth in national housing plans established to meet citizens' needs by supplying them with modern housing that is suited to their specific requirements and that is in keeping, from an architectural point of view, with their surroundings. In this way, citizens are assured a decent life, social stability and a secure future.

##### *Ministry of Public Works*

82. Since 2007, the Ministry of Public Works has been implementing a national housing plan for the forthcoming 20 years that is designed to meet the needs of all citizens. In addition, housing projects are being carried out in the framework of the Sheikh Zayed Housing Programme and by the Mohammed bin Rashid Housing Foundation.

##### *Sheikh Zayed Housing programme*

83. This programme was established in 1999 with capital of Dh640 million a year. It was set up to fund housing projects for nationals with low incomes by providing interest-free loans repayable over a 25-year period. Federal Act No. 10 of 2009 regulates the functioning of the Programme. Under the programme, grants and non-reimbursable assistance are dispensed to the poorest segments of society. The Federal Government doubled the programme budget in 2010, taking it up to Dh1.8 billion, to enable it to expand its activities. A total of 13,000 homes have been delivered and 14,000 are under construction. As of September 2011, the number of beneficiaries exceeded 48,000. In July 2012 alone, 423 persons registered for housing assistance.

##### *Housing loans office in the Abu Dhabi Emirate*

84. The Abu Dhabi Government has embraced a modern vision of public housing which is new and is based on replacing the popular housing concept with that of an integrated housing complex. A total of 7,500 modern housing units have been built in Abu Dhabi, at a cost of Dh33 billion. On 17 August 2009, the Abu Dhabi Town Planning Council announced plans to construct 1,200 popular housing units in various towns in the western region in the framework of a plan for the development of the Emirate up to 2030.

##### *Mohammed bin Rashid Housing Foundation*

85. Since its inception in 2006, the Foundation has done much to help citizens to gain access to decent housing in Dubai, issuing them with housing loans or buying turnkey homes for them. In the first six months of 2009, approximately 500 people received these loans.

##### *Sheikh Saoud Housing Programme*

86. This programme was launched in 2008 to meet the housing needs of citizens in the Ras al-Khaimah Emirate.

87. Recently, the issue of housing was accorded particular attention in the initiatives taken by the Head of State to mark the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the Federation. The committee responsible for follow-up on these initiatives is taking steps to speed up the work on the construction of 1,538 villas in different Emirates in 2012, in line with the State's strategic plan, a key objective of which is to meet citizens' needs for decent housing over the coming years.

## **B. Best practices**

### **1. Programme of Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking**

88. 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. Reception centres, working in coordination and cooperation with various partners, including victims' charities and home countries, provide a full range of care and health, psychological and legal services to victims while their cases are being investigated. Victims are then returned to the country of origin, at the State's expense, in the framework of the Programme of Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking. There are a number of institutions that care for victims of trafficking in the United Arab Emirates, the main ones being listed below.

- The Dubai Association for the Protection of Women and Children, which was founded in 2007 to provide psychological support to all women and children, whether nationals or expatriates, who are victims of human trafficking, domestic violence, neglect, ill-treatment by an employer, or other social problems;
- Homes for victims of human trafficking: These were established in 2008, under the auspices of the national Red Crescent Society, to provide protection and psychological, health and legal assistance to victims of human trafficking. Their remit was widened following the opening of new homes in Al-Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah.

### **2. Rashid Al Maktoum Intelligent Education Initiative**

89. At a cost of Dh1 billion, this initiative was launched in 2012 with the aim of realizing the Emirates Vision 2021 — in which education is regarded as a fundamental element of the sustainable development that the Vision seeks to achieve — and of creating a new learning environment in schools that provide intelligent education. Touchpads will be distributed to all students and all State schools will be connected to high-speed, fourth generation (4G) networks. Moreover, the teachers will receive specialist training and new syllabuses will be added to support the basic curriculum. The project will be carried out jointly by the Ministry of Education and the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority and will be directly overseen by the Office of the Prime Minister.

### **3. Wage protection system**

90. Established pursuant to Ministry of Labour Decision No. 788 of 2009, this system was put in place with the help of the Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates. It is an electronic system that logs company payments of wages to workers through banks, currency exchange companies and service providers. It allows the Ministry to keep track of payments using a comprehensive database set up for the purpose. With the introduction of the system, it has now become possible to provide wage protection to more than 3,548,000 workers in 215,681 enterprises who receive their wages through the system.

### **4. Citizens' Debt Repayment Fund**

91. The Fund was set up with capital of around Dh10 billion to help pay off the loans of citizens on low incomes who are having difficulty paying their debts. Its main aims are to establish mechanisms for repaying debts on which people have defaulted, to increase awareness of the dangers of imprudent borrowing and to promote the habit of saving in society. Some 6,800 nationals had received credit support from the Fund as at 21 May 2012. People with unpaid personal loans amounting to less than Dh5 million were included

in the categories that the Fund assists. Around 368 people with unpaid debts of Dh568 million have benefited from this arrangement.

## **5. Development initiatives of the United Arab Emirates**

### *Greening the economy*

92. The United Arab Emirates promotes sustainable development and is committed to supporting civil society initiatives aimed at “greening the economy”, which has become a key national priority. The Vice-President, the Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Governor of Dubai, launched a long-term national initiative — “A green economy for sustainable development” — to green the economy of the United Arab Emirates. Through this initiative, the United Arab Emirates aims at becoming a world leader in this domain and a centre for the export and re-export of green products and technologies. It also wishes to maintain a sustainable environment that supports long-term economic growth. The initiative consists of a series of programmes and policies in the areas of energy, agriculture, investment and sustainable transport systems, together with new environmental and urban planning policies to improve the quality of life in the United Arab Emirates.

93. That the Emirates hosts the headquarters of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and provides it with unstinting support is evidence of the State’s firm commitment to this cause. The United Arab Emirates took another important step in defence of the environment when it launched an ambitious project (“Open source”) involving the use of renewable energies to make the country less dependent on traditional energy sources, the main cause of the increase in emissions of carbon dioxide and of global warming and climate change.

### *Khalifa Enterprise Development Fund*

94. The Fund was set up in 2007 with a view to the creation of a generation of entrepreneurs, the promotion of an entrepreneurial spirit among young citizens and the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises in the United Arab Emirates. The Fund offers diversified funding solutions for all types of projects, with low interest rates for promising projects that can help the economy to grow. Moreover, the Ministry of the Economy is currently drafting a bill on providing support to small- and medium-sized enterprises to enable them to gain access to the labour market.

## **6. Promotion of a human rights education and community participation**

### *Human rights education game*

95. The human rights education game was designed by the national Human Rights Association in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. It is for students aged between 9 and 15 years. It was designed to disseminate information about children’s rights, familiarize children with their rights and obligations and teach them social skills such as how to cooperate with others and take part in dialogue. In this connection, a series of workshops were held by the Ministry of Education for target groups in all educational sectors.

### *Children’s parliament*

96. The Ministry of Social Affairs is preparing to launch a children’s parliament made up of 40 children between the ages of 8 and 18, who will be elected by different educational establishments across the country. The aim is to promote participation in parliamentary life and give children the chance to express their views. A committee representing the various parties concerned was set up to develop the project. The Cabinet will determine which body



will oversee the future parliament; the committee responsible for developing the project proposed that the Federal National Council should perform the oversight function.

## VII. Capacity-building

### Ministry of the Interior officers, officials and other personnel

- The Ministry of the Interior ran a total of human rights training courses in 2009 and 2010 in police academies and schools to brief its personnel on human rights concepts, the international and regional human rights regimes, collective rights, the rights of prisoners, human rights in domestic legislation, and the role of the police force in safeguarding human rights. The Ministry also included courses on combating human trafficking in its training plan. A total of 121 courses on the subject were delivered between 2009 and 2012;
- The Ministry's Human Rights Department held a workshop entitled "Protecting victims of human trafficking" in Abu Dhabi in April 2009. The event was attended by participants from civil society organizations, ministries and Government offices and by representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR);
- The first meeting of institutions that afford protection to women and children was held in Abu Dhabi in April 2010;
- A course on common mistakes in reporting human trafficking cases and the role of the police in such cases was held in Dubai in July 2012;
- The Dubai Judicial Institute ran a training programme in October 2011 on investigating and dealing with human trafficking offences;
- A series of courses on the theme of the population and human rights were held in the United Arab Emirates in 2012.

### Ministry of Justice

- The Judicial Training and Studies Institute includes the principles and provisions of human rights instruments in its human rights training curricula for members of prosecution departments and the judiciary;
- The Ministry of Justice, in conjunction with subject matter experts, has run human rights conferences and courses for officials in the judiciary and prosecution departments and sent them to relevant international conferences.

### Ministry of Labour

- The Ministry of Labour and the Abu Dhabi Justice Department have worked together on a special programme to familiarize the Ministry's labour inspectors with the legal procedures involved in dealing with labour disputes and with the legal aspects of employment cases, so as to help streamline the processing of labour cases and resolve them more expeditiously;
- Talks are held on protecting workers' health and safety (courses on first aid and on how to prevent swine flu (H1N1)).

### **Ministry of Health**

- The Ministry has run several training and awareness courses on women's rights. In this connection, 20 talks on breast cancer prevention were held in Dubai and Abu Dhabi between 2008 and 2010;
- Courses on protecting the rights of persons living with AIDS were held on the occasion of World AIDS Day, which is marked every year on 1 December.

### **Ministry of Education**

- The Ministry of Education is taking steps to establish a students' parliament, whose composition and rules of procedures will be modelled on those of the Federal National Council. The Ministry has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Council, and the memorandum of execution proposed by the Council secretariat is in the process of being signed. The future parliament should provide students with a chance to learn about effective participation in public life and should establish opportunities for them to engage in dialogue directly with decision makers.

### **National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking**

- The Committee held a brainstorming workshop in January 2009, which was attended by 80 Government officials, to discuss the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking. The participating officials were drawn from different law enforcement services and from federal and local judicial offices in the United Arab Emirates;
- The Committee ran a two-day workshop jointly with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in February 2009, on how to identify the victims of trafficking. The event was held in the framework of the Global Programme of Support for Victims of Trafficking;
- Training courses on human trafficking legislation were held for judges and public prosecutors at the Federal Institute of Judicial Studies and the Dubai Judicial Institute.

### **Dubai Police**

- A training course ("Combating human trafficking from a national security perspective") was held in April 2009 to sensitize members of the police to the gravity of human trafficking and its impact on national security;
- The Human Trafficking Surveillance Centre of the Dubai Police and the Dubai Association for the Protection of Women and Children held a two-day colloquium in November 2009 on the theme "Human trafficking: challenges and obstacles". The objective was to unify the efforts of all the entities involved in combating this crime. Representatives of the interior, labour and health ministries and of the Dubai and Abu Dhabi police forces were there, as were other stakeholders;
- The Dubai Police and the Dubai Association for the Protection of Women and Children organized a second colloquium, in 2010, on combating human trafficking. The theme of the event was the media and human trafficking.

### **General Women's Union and the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood**

- Workshops and training sessions on treaties (the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) have been held for women's associations and the State institutions that deal with issues affecting women and children in particular;

- A national awareness campaign on children's rights ("Give us our rights") was conducted, between 25 October and 3 November 2011, jointly by the Ministry of the Interior, the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and the Department of Social Services. In the framework of the campaign, a seminar was held, at which several working papers on children's rights were presented. Moreover, a workshop, managed by children, was held at the Federal National Council to discuss children's rights. In addition, talks were delivered in schools;
- A seminar on children's rights was held in June 2012 by the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood and the Judicial Training and Studies Institute. Several interesting working papers were presented on children's rights;
- Special workshops and training courses on the economic empowerment of women living in remote areas were held, jointly with UN-Women, in May and June 2012 in Ras al-Khaimah, Fujairah, Umm al-Qaywin and Ajman.

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

- Around 100 volunteers from the Hatt region have signed up to the Authority's volunteer programme. They have attended training courses and taken part in numerous activities and events. Moreover, social welfare assistance was delivered to the people of the region through the Social Benefits Department.

#### **Dubai Association for the Protection of Women and Children**

- In March 2011, the Association held a course on the role of women in supporting the fight against human trafficking.

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

- The Association organized a debate and screened a documentary on human trafficking and the situation in the United Arab Emirates;
- A conference on human trafficking was held at the Dubai Cultural and Scientific Association headquarters to disseminate information about this crime and how to tackle it.

## **VIII. Challenges and priorities**

97. 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.

98. Like other States, the United Arab Emirates has to meet certain challenges and set priorities in the human rights domain in the light of the rapid changes in the world, which will be its centre of focus in the forthcoming phase. Special attention will be focused on the following issues:

- Strengthening the role of national mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights in the light of changes unfolding at the national and international levels in this domain. One of the State's main objectives at the present time is to consider the possibility of establishing national human rights institutions that would include Government and civil society representatives that would promote and coordinate the efforts of the State to promote and protect human rights;

- Pursuing efforts to develop domestic legislation in order to provide better protection for human rights, drawing on international best practices in this domain;
- Pursuing efforts to provide capacity-building in various aspects of human rights, to train cadres, using sustainable techniques and to integrate those persons into the workplace and educational institutions so that human rights and human rights education become an integral part of the culture of all institutions and entities in the United Arab Emirates;
- Evaluating existing strategies on women, children, employment and combating human trafficking so as to establish whether strategic goals have been met and to create a database that provides qualitative and quantitative information on Government action in all areas relating to human rights.

## IX. Conclusion

99. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is an essential part of the principles and values espoused by society in the United Arab Emirates. The State has made tremendous gains, of which it is proud, in this area, gains that have made it an attractive and successful country committed to the promotion of tolerance, justice and equality, values that form part of its cultural heritage.

100. The United Arab Emirates and its political leaders are determined to build on the outstanding achievements that have been scored made in the promotion and protection of human rights and to make a constructive contribution to the international efforts being made in this domain.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> تضم في عضويتها عدداً من الجهات الحكومية ومؤسسات المجتمع المدني وتجتمع بشكل دوري لمتابعة تنفيذ نتائج عملية الاستعراض الدوري الشامل.
- <sup>2</sup> كان آخر هذه اللقاءات ، اللقاء التشاوري مع المجتمع المدني للتعريف بجهود الدولة في اعداد التقرير الثاني بتاريخ 2012/10/11.
- <sup>3</sup> زيارة الرابط المخصص للجنة الدائمة لمتابعة التقرير الدوري الشامل لحقوق الانسان على الموقع [www.mofa.gov.ae](http://www.mofa.gov.ae)
- <sup>4</sup> أطلقها صاحب السمو الشيخ محمد بن راشد آل مكتوم رئيس مجلس الوزراء حاكم دبي في 6 فبراير 2010 تحت عنوان "نريد أن تكون دولة الإمارات من أفضل دول العالم بحلول عام 2021" وهو العام الذي يصادف احتفال الدولة ببوبيلها الذهبي للمزيد يرجى زيارة موقع مجلس الوزراء <http://www.uaecabinet.ae>.
- <sup>5</sup> تضع هذه الإستراتيجية الأسس لتحقيق رؤية الإمارات 2021، وتسعى إلى ضمان أن يتم إنجاز كافة أعمال الحكومة بما يتوافق مع مجموعة من المبادئ التوجيهية للوصول إلى حكومة تركز على المواطن أولاً ، للمزيد يرجى زيارة موقع مجلس الوزراء <http://www.cabinetuae.ae>.
- <sup>6</sup> للمزيد يرجى الإطلاع على ( بء ) من الفصل الرابع بشأن تنفيذ التوصيات في مجال العمالة صفحة (13) من التقرير أو زيارة موقع وزارة العمل <http://www.mol.gov.ae>.
- <sup>7</sup> للمزيد حول الإستراتيجية يرجى الإطلاع على الملحق المرفق تقرير اللجنة الوطنية لمكافحة الاتجار بالبشر لعام 2011-2012م.
- <sup>8</sup> تؤكد الإستراتيجية الوطنية للأمومة والطفولة على التزام دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة بالاتفاقيات الدولية لحقوق الإنسان، وخاصة اتفاقية حقوق الطفل والتي تغطي أربعة محاور مترابطة لحقوق الطفل هي: البقاء والنماء والحماية والمشاركة.
- <sup>9</sup> تم اعداد ملحق يتضمن تفاصيل التدابير المتخذة من أجل تنفيذ التوصيات المقبولة الواردة في الفقرة رقم (91) في الوثيقة الخاصة بالفريق العامل للاستعراض الدوري الشامل رقم: (A/HRC/10/75).
- <sup>10</sup> للمزيد من التفاصيل بشأن انجازات الدولة في تمكين المرأة يرجى الاطلاع على الفقرة (باء) من الفصل الخامس من التقرير (تمكين المرأة) صفحة (19).
- <sup>11</sup> للمزيد يرجى زيارة الموقع [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GCR\\_Report\\_2011-12.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GCR_Report_2011-12.pdf).
- <sup>12</sup> لمزيد من التفاصيل يرجى الإطلاع على التقرير السنوي للجنة الوطنية لمكافحة الاتجار بالبشر 2010 – 2011 أو زيارة موقع اللجنة الوطنية [www.nccht.gov.ae](http://www.nccht.gov.ae)

- <sup>13</sup> لمزيد المعلومات يرجى الاطلاع على مرفق كتيب تنسيق المساعدات الإنسانية بشأن كيفية توزيع قطاعات المساعدات للدول النامية.
- <sup>14</sup> أصدرت اللجنة الوطنية للانتخابات تقريراً مفصلاً حول انتخابات المجلس الوطني الاتحادي 2011 يمكن الاطلاع عليه من خلال زيارة الموقع الإلكتروني للجنة الوطنية للانتخابات [www.uaenec.ae](http://www.uaenec.ae)، أو زيارة صفحة إصدارات في الموقع الإلكتروني لوزارة الدولة لشؤون المجلس الوطني الاتحادي [www.mfnca.gov.ae](http://www.mfnca.gov.ae).
- <sup>15</sup> للمزيد من المعلومات حول قانون الأنشطة الإعلامية يرجى الاطلاع على التوصيات المقبولة في مجال حرية الإعلام و الصحافة في التقرير صفحة (11).
- <sup>16</sup> للمزيد يرجى زيارة موقع المنتدى الاقتصادي العالمي <http://www.weforum.org/reports>