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United Arab Emirates

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I. Introduction

1. The United Arab Emirates submitted its third national report for review by the Human Rights Council on 22 January 2018, and the Council adopted the report in June 2018. The United Arab Emirates duly accepted 132 recommendations and took note of a further 98 which, it considered, either required further study and the adaptation of the national legislative environment to bring them into line with international standards and treaties, or were partly inconsistent with the tenets and values of Islamic sharia or of national legislation. The country also rejected a further 2 recommendations, which fell outside the scope of the universal periodic review.

2. The present report outlines the course of action pursued by the United Arab Emirates since the adoption of its third periodic report by the Council. The country's aim is to move forwards while strengthening and developing its efforts in the field of human rights, and contributing to and interacting positively with international best practices in that regard. The fourth national report describes the principal efforts made in the promotion and protection of human rights, and the goals achieved. It also illustrates the measures taken by the State to implement the pledges it made and the recommendations it accepted during the review and adoption of its third periodic report.

II. Methodology and process for the preparation of the report

A. Methodology for the preparation of the report

3. The National Human Rights Committee, which was established by Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 11/12 of 2019, supervised the process of preparing the report and monitored the implementation of the recommendations that emanated from the Human Rights Council. The membership of the Committee includes representatives from a number of government institutions and mechanisms.

4. In drafting the present report, the National Human Rights Committee drew from a guidance note prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) concerning the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review, in line with Human Rights Council resolution 16/21 and with the annexes to the guidance note, which cover the form the report is to take as well as practical proposals and technical instructions.

B. Consultative process

5. The National Human Rights Committee held consultative meetings with civil society associations to examine and review the draft report. The meetings also involved the National Human Rights Institution, which was established in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). The National Human Rights Committee also organized a number of other meetings and workshops as part of the drafting process, including a workshop run in cooperation with the Universal Periodic Review Branch in Abu Dhabi in November 2022.

III. Evolution in the legislative framework and policies for the promotion and protection of human rights

A. National laws and legislation

6. Over the past four years a large package of important national legislation has been enacted that contributes to the promotion and protection of human rights. This includes a number of federal laws, notably on the use of communications technology in criminal proceedings; voluntary work; the rights of the older persons; public health; mediation in the settlement of civil and commercial disputes; the protection of witnesses and persons of

similar status; and the National Human Rights Institution. In addition to this, decree-laws have been passed on: equal pay between the sexes; protection against domestic violence; special education; combating drugs and psychotropic substances; labour relations; crimes and penalties; auxiliary service workers; the entry and residence of foreigners; personal status; and persons of unknown parentage. Furthermore, a number of pieces of legislation have been amended, including the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Code of Civil Procedure, the Social Security Act, the Anti-Discrimination and Hate Act, the Personal Status Act and the Civil Code (annex 1: National legislation).¹

B. National policies and strategies

7. The United Arab Emirates has adopted an interconnected and integrated system of national policies and strategies² that seek to promote and to guarantee the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The most important of these are: UAE Vision 2021; the national strategy for the empowerment and advancement of women; the national plan for women, peace and security; the national policy for older persons; the national strategy for higher education; the national policy to empower persons with disabilities; the policy to protect persons with disabilities against abuse; Council of Ministers Decree No. 43 of 2018 to promote the employment of persons with disabilities; the national programme for tolerance; the 2026 gender-balance strategy; the 2050 strategic initiative to achieve climate neutrality; the national immunization policy; the national family policy; the family protection policy; and the 2051 national food security strategy; as well as post-coronavirus disease (COVID-19) recovery plans and initiatives.

IV. Achievements and challenges in the field of human rights since 2019

8. The United Arab Emirates occupies leading positions on a number of global indicators, for example, it ranked first among Arab States in the 2020 Human Development Report issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and it ranked twenty-sixth globally in the UNDP report for 2021/22, up five places in the global ranking with respect to 2020. Moreover, the country ranked first in the Arab world and twenty-fourth globally on the happiness index, according to the 2022 World Happiness Report issued by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network. The United Arab Emirates ranked first regionally and thirty-seventh globally in the 2021 Rule of Law Index published by the Washington-based World Justice Project. In 2022, for the sixth consecutive year, the United Arab Emirates retained its lead in the Middle East and North Africa Region on the Corruption Perceptions Index, which is produced by Transparency International. In addition to this, the country maintained its first place among Arab States in the 2022 Global Competitiveness Report, in which it ranked twelfth globally. The report classifies States under four main headings: economic performance, government efficiency, business efficiency and infrastructure.

9. The COVID-19 pandemic has been posing severe challenges to the entire international community since the beginning of 2020, and its effects and repercussions have been felt across all social, economic, civil and political spheres. The pandemic posed challenges to all countries as the virus spread and mutated, and this prompted the nations of the world, including the United Arab Emirates, to roll out precautionary and preventive measures to contain that spread and to reduce the psychological, social and economic impact of the pandemic. On the health front, the State has provided vaccines – first, second and booster doses – for 24,922,054 beneficiaries of more than 200 nationalities. The vaccination rate for all doses stands at more than 95 per cent, while almost 100 per cent of the people have received at least the first dose. Centres of excellence have been established for the treatment of persons affected by the virus. At the international level, from the very onset of the pandemic the United Arab Emirates was quick to declare its solidarity with the peoples of the world as they faced up to the effects of the spreading virus, and it spared no effort in providing support and assistance to many countries affected by the pandemic. In fact, according to statistics from February 2021, the United Arab Emirates has sent 1,742 tons of

aid to 128 countries, thereby benefiting about 1.7 million health-care workers in those countries. The country has also strengthened partnerships and cooperation at the bilateral and multilateral levels in order to combat the pandemic.³

10. The Government of the United Arab Emirates has taken several exceptional measures to contain the impact of the pandemic, and a raft of guidelines and laws has been issued to help reduce the potentially harmful effects of the precautionary measures taken to limit the spread of the virus. Initiatives taken in that regard include a comprehensive economic support plan worth 100 billion UAE dirhams (Dh) adopted by the Central Bank for clients, individuals and companies affected by the pandemic, the intention being to boost economic growth and the financial sector. This is in addition to steps taken in the context of the national sterilization programme as well as social distancing measures and enhanced food security. Important initiatives rolled out by the United Arab Emirates during the pandemic include the launch of the “Homeland of Humanity” Fund, the Social Solidarity Fund and the “Together we are Good” programme.⁴

11. Charitable bodies, institutions and associations, as well as civil society organizations have played a very important role in complementing the Government’s efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the Emirates Red Crescent has provided care for the families of persons who died in the country as a consequence of the virus, irrespective of their nationality. This took place as part of the “You are among family” initiative, which covers a number of vital areas and enhances the Red Crescent’s existing community service programmes. The “Dubai Cares” organization, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, has launched the “Education Uninterrupted” campaign the aim of which was to supply 40,000 students of both sexes in the United Arab Emirates with the equipment they need to participate alongside their peers in remote learning. For its part, the Dar Al Ber Society has made a donation of Dh 19 million, which includes Dh 7 million to support the health sector, and Dh 12 million from an Emirati family group to purchase modern ambulances equipped with the latest technology, to support and enhance the capabilities of Dubai Corporation for Ambulance Services.

V. Actions and measures taken to implement recommendations emerging from the universal periodic review

A. Evolution in the institutional framework, policies and programmes related to human rights and cooperation with civil society and human rights defenders

1. Human rights policies and plans (recommendations 61–63 and 83–85)

12. The Ministry of the Interior has run 144 training courses and programmes, and has held 403 lectures and workshops intended to build the capacity of its staff in various fields related to human rights, including human rights standards in the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and international and national mechanisms for engaging with inmates of prisons and correctional institutions. In addition, the Ministry has run a specialized programme to train government functionaries in how to draft international human rights reports. In all, 56 participants from the Ministry and other bodies benefited from the programme.

13. In 2016, the Council of Ministers adopted the national programme for tolerance, which is being monitored and overseen by the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence, and working groups were set up in cooperation with the principal authorities. The Ministry also developed a strategic plan concerning the key operational areas and strategic objectives for the implementation of the programme, and the plan itself then engendered important programmes and initiatives, notably a national initiative entitled “Government as an incubator for tolerance”, the Human Brotherhood Festival and the Global Alliance for Tolerance.

14. Over and above the health, educational and social programmes being implemented by the competent institutions, policies and strategies adopted by the Council of Ministers have

focused on promoting and protecting vulnerable groups. One significant initiative in that context was the launch, by the Ministry of Community Development, of a capacity-building programme for older persons. This is by way of being a training programme that aims to empower such persons with digital communication tools and modern technology and to build up a supportive environment to enable them to live active and quality lives in the future. A total of 63,752 older persons have benefited from the initiative. The Ministry has also launched an electronic platform for the employment of persons with disabilities, while the Ministry of Health has rolled out a home health-care initiative for older persons who have difficulty in accessing health services and for persons with special needs. A total of 5,333 visits have been conducted in the context of the initiative, which is part of a framework for promoting the health-related rights of older persons. Therapeutic, diagnostic and preventive services have been provided and the incidence of pressure sores has been reduced thanks to assessment visits and training imparted to family members. Fall risks have also been evaluated and measures have been taken for the early detection of cancer, dementia and risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease.

15. On 10 December 2020, the National Human Rights Committee launched the first phase of the consultative process to develop a national human rights plan for the country. This took place in cooperation with the Federal National Council (which is the federal legislative authority), civil society institutions in the country and other stakeholders. The Committee has recently held a number of virtual consultative meetings with other institutions and authorities regarding the drafting of the plan. The Committee has also organized workshops and other events to coincide with the drafting process, including a workshop run in cooperation with the European Commission. The Committee is resolved to continue to hold both executive and consultative meetings regarding the drafting of the plan, particularly following the establishment of the National Human Rights Institution, in accordance with the Paris Principles. The National Human Rights Committee is also looking forward to benefiting from technical support and expertise provided by United Nations bodies, mechanisms and human rights committees, foremost among them OHCHR, both to help it draft the plan and, subsequently, to follow up on its implementation.

16. The national plan will take the form of a programme of work for coming years through which the efforts and achievements the State has made in the field of human rights will be brought to fruition. The plan will include a number of measures, programmes, activities and initiatives that are intended to contribute to the advancement of human rights. Moreover, the recommendations received by the State during recent reviews of its periodic reports before the treaty bodies, and the recommendations it will receive in the context of the fourth universal periodic review cycle, will all constitute essential references in the preparation of the plan.

2. Structure of national human rights mechanisms (recommendations 64–82)

17. The Council of Ministers established the National Human Rights Committee in October 2019. The Committee acts as a point for liaison, communication and coordination between all State agencies concerned with human rights. The Committee's remit includes working to develop a comprehensive national human rights plan; formulating policies, programmes and plans to raise awareness and build capacity in the field of human rights; and following up on the State's periodic reporting commitments within the framework of regional and international human rights bodies, including the report under the universal periodic review. In fact, the National Human Rights Committee acts as the country's human rights implementation, reporting and follow-up mechanism.

18. The bill for the establishment of the National Human Rights Institution was drafted following a number of field visits to countries that already have national human rights institutions and following the review of a number of laws establishing such institutions in the Gulf region, the Arab States and internationally. The bill took account of the Paris Principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, annexed to General Assembly resolution 48/134 of 4 March 1994; of the OHCHR handbook on national human rights institutions; and of all relevant decisions and resolutions of the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. Account was also taken of the views and advice of relevant international experts, notably those of OHCHR.

19. During the tenth sitting of the second ordinary session of its seventeenth legislative term, held at its Abu Dhabi headquarters on Tuesday 20 April 2021, the Federal National Council approved a draft federal law on the National Human Rights Institution.

20. In August 2021, His Late Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan issued Federal Act No. 12 of 2021 concerning the establishment of the National Human Rights Institution. The Institution was established pursuant to the Act as an independent body with its headquarters in Abu Dhabi and the right to open branches and establish offices in other Emirates. The Institution has a separate legal personality and enjoys financial and administrative independence in the performance of its duties and activities. Its mission consists in promoting and protecting human rights and freedoms, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, the legislation in force in the United Arab Emirates and relevant international treaties.

21. The Institution's terms of reference and duties include, inter alia: cooperation with the authorities and competent bodies in developing a national action plan for the promotion and protection of human rights in the country and in proposing a procedure for its implementation; action to disseminate a culture of human rights and to raise public awareness thereof, for instance by organizing seminars, conferences and discussion panels on human rights; submission of proposals, recommendations and advice to the competent authorities and other bodies on all matters pertaining to the protection, promotion and monitoring of human rights; submission of proposals to the competent authorities regarding the compatibility of legislation with international human rights treaties that the State has ratified and monitoring the outcome; surveillance of human rights violations, ascertaining the underlying circumstances and reporting them to the competent authorities; field visits to monitor the status of human rights in prisons, places of detention, workers' accommodation and health-care and educational facilities; participation in international and regional forums regarding human rights; and expressing views on the national reports presented by the State to international human rights bodies.

22. In December 2021, His Late Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan issued a decree for the formation of the Board of Trustees of the National Human Rights Institution, representing the country's civil society institutions and its advisory and academic bodies, as well as technical and professional experts in human rights acting in their personal capacity. His Late Highness also issued a decision under which representatives from government bodies are entitled to attend the meetings of the Board of Trustees as non-voting participants. Specifically, they are to be representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization and the Ministry of Community Development.

23. In January 2022, the National Human Rights Institution announced the formation of six committees to deal with the main subjects that are to be addressed during the course of 2022. They are the civil and political rights committee; the economic, social, cultural and environmental rights committee; the committee for complaints, monitoring and field visits; the committee for international relations and non-governmental organizations; the committee for promoting a human rights culture; and the committee for legal and legislative rights. The Institution also announced a 100-day plan for developing its own structural and organizational plan.

3. Human rights training and education (recommendations 86, 137 and 138)

24. Between 2019 and 2022, the Abu Dhabi Judicial Academy organized 105 programmes and workshops and delivered 286 lectures on human rights at the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department, for the benefit of 4,611 participants. The Ministry of the Interior has also sought to disseminate a human rights culture, to which end it has used modern communications media – notably the Ministry's own smart app – to release 27 publications on human rights-related subjects. In addition, it uses text messages to raise the human rights awareness of ministerial staff and social media to raise awareness among the public at large, and it distributes educational leaflets in various languages including Braille. For its part, the Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Ports Security also ran human rights-related courses and workshops between 2018 and 2022, including 28 courses on health

and safety for 692 beneficiaries, and it distributed 80 educational brochures on subjects related to human rights.

25. The Ministry of the Interior has launched and implemented a series of initiatives and training programmes to educate law enforcement officials. These have included a course on human rights in police work; a course on human rights standards in the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination; a comprehensive programme on basic police leadership skills, the aim of which is develop specialized abilities in the conduct of criminal investigations and techniques for dealing with persons in detention; a course on protecting the rights of suspects; a course on investigating contemporary forms of crime; and a course on human rights safeguards during the evidence-gathering stage, which was attended by 35 persons. In addition to this, the Ministry has organized no fewer than 88 training programmes, workshops, lectures and forums on how to prevent the abuse of authority and to raise awareness about the dangers of corruption. These include a campaign entitled “Those who are faithful to their trusts”; a course on administrative investigations; a course on disciplinary hearings and international and national rules to prevent the abuse and misuse of authority by the police; and a lecture on the harmonization of the national legislation of the United Arab Emirates with the country’s international obligations, which was attended by 3,226 ministerial staff. Moreover, a number of functionaries of the Ministry were sent on a course on oversight, integrity and abuse of authority, while a further 30 training courses on basic human rights concepts were attended by 1,888 persons.

26. In October 2019, the Dubai Judicial Institute – in cooperation with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the Euro-Arab Judicial Training Network – held its first “shaping the future of judicial knowledge” workshop which was dedicated to the theme of “Achievements and aspirations in artificial intelligence”. The purpose of the workshop was to exchange knowledge and experiences as a way of exploring achievements and aspirations in artificial intelligence and it was aimed at a wide range of groups, particularly persons working in the courts and the judiciary. For its part, the Abu Dhabi Judicial Academy has also organized training courses for judicial staff, notably an initial refresher course on recent amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Criminal Code, which was held from 17 to 24 February 2021. The aim of the course was to develop the knowledge of Emirati jurists, such as judges and members of the Office of the Public Prosecution, concerning the most recent amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Criminal Code, with a view to unifying trends and concepts and thus ensuring correct legal interpretation and sound jurisprudence.

27. In cooperation with OHCHR, the Ministry of Justice organized a workshop on human rights and the judiciary, which took place on 8 December 2019 and was attended by 26 jurists from the country’s federal and local courts. The initiative served as an opportunity to review best international practices in the field of human rights.

28. During the course of May 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Ministry of Justice organized a number of workshops on strategies for implementation, at the national level, of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The workshops – which were attended by an international consultant and expert who was a former member of the Committee against Torture – were part of an initiative for the exchange of information, experiences and best practices in the implementation of the Convention, for strengthening national capacities and for raising awareness about the international normative framework to combat torture. Some 75 persons from relevant organizations took part in the workshops, as well as members of the judiciary and of the Office of the Public Prosecution and representatives from the National Human Rights Committee and the National Human Rights Institution.

4. Cooperation with civil society and human rights defenders (recommendations 87, 88 and 127–129)

29. In July 2020, the Emirates Centre for Human Rights Studies, which is part of the Emirates Bar Association, held a remote workshop on basic human rights principles and concepts, which was attended by 87 members of the general public. During the same period, the Centre also organized a three-stage training programme on children’s rights in the United Arab Emirates in the context of COVID-19, which was attended by 269 people. In addition,

the Centre has issued 13 educational book series with a view to disseminating a culture of human rights among the public at large.

30. Between 2019 and 2022, 62 public interest associations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) came into being. The State supports such civil society organizations in every way so as to enable them to play their role in society, in which connection it has provided funding amounting to Dh 27,479,023 since 2019, as well as technical advice and various forms of care to improve service delivery, efficiency and performance. In addition, the State regulates the involvement of civil society organizations of all types and categories in different activities and initiatives, including civil associations and institutions concerned with the protection of human rights and with the protection and empowerment of women and children.

31. Relevant national legislation is the main bulwark and the most important and prominent element that supports and protects human rights workers, be they lawyers, journalists, academics, professionals or members of public interest associations in the country. The United Arab Emirates established its National Human Rights Institution in 2021 under a Federal Act that includes clear safeguards to the effect that the Institution and its members are to enjoy complete independence in the exercise of their duties.

B. Promotion and protection of the rights of vulnerable groups and protection of the family

1. Women's rights (recommendations 162–167, 173, 175, 176 and 182–190)

32. National legislation affecting women adopted by the United Arab Emirates over the last five years, as well as the 2015–2021 national strategy for the empowerment and advancement of women, the 2022–2026 gender-balance strategy launched in March 2022 and the goals, activities, programmes and initiatives both those strategies envisage, have all contributed to strengthening national efforts for the promotion of women.⁵

33. The United Arab Emirates enacted Federal Decree-Law No. 41 of 2022 concerning civil status (for non-Muslims), which envisages equality of rights and duties between men and women (art. 4). At the same time, the Gender-Balance Council of the United Arab Emirates, in cooperation with the World Bank, has launched the “Emirates Gender-Balance Centre for Excellence and the Exchange of Knowledge”. This is a regional centre that aims to promote gender balance in the Middle East and North Africa Region through consultancy, workshops and the adoption of best practices.

34. The 2022–2026 gender-balance strategy has been adopted. Its purpose is to bridge the gender-balance gap in all sectors, mainstream a gender perspective, promote gender balance in decision-making positions and consolidate the country's leading position in gender-balance legislation. The strategy covers four principal areas: (1) Economic participation, entrepreneurship and financial inclusion: This is to be achieved by bridging the economic gender gap, increasing women's involvement, promoting women as economic leaders, eradicating financial illiteracy among women and enhancing their presence in the business enterprise sector. (2) Well-being and quality of life: This means ensuring gender equality in all physical, mental and preventive health services. (3) Protection: This involves increasing social and legal protection and emphasizing the personal security of all women. (4) Global leadership and partnerships: This means promoting gender balance in the region and around the world through continued efforts towards leadership-positioning and partnership-building.

35. Women's rights are enshrined in the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates, which establishes the principle of equality between men and women, in accordance with their nature. The Constitution stipulates the right of women to education, to employment, to receive social and health assistance and benefits, and to hold public-sector jobs.

36. Over the past three years, the United Arab Emirates has issued more than 20 new pieces of legislation and amendments to existing laws that aim to empower women and promote their rights. These legislative improvements include gender equality and non-discrimination in banking transactions and access to credit, as well as an obligation for market-listed companies to have female representation on their boards of directors.

37. Women make up 66 per cent of workers in the government sector. Of them, 30 per cent hold positions of leadership and 15 per cent hold specialized or academic positions. Women also occupy about 75 per cent of posts in the education and health sectors.

38. The 2015–2021 national strategy for the empowerment and advancement of women was launched by the General Women’s Union acting under instructions from Her Highness Sheikhha Fatima bint Mubarak, Chair of the General Women’s Union, President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood and Chief Director of the Family Development Foundation. The strategy has achieved a number of major goals in the advancement of Emirati women and thus given the United Arab Emirates greater competitive strength vis-à-vis supporting and empowering women. The strategy, which was developed using the most up-to-date strategic development planning methods, had a total of 518 outcomes (153 projects, 174 initiatives and 191 studies) and involved the participation of 155 national bodies. The highest proportion of goals (38.8 per cent) was achieved by local organizations, while civil society organizations achieved 28.4 per cent, federal entities achieved 24.5 per cent and the private sector achieved 8.3 per cent. The strategy is currently in the process of being updated.

39. The Labour Relations Act was amended in 2021 to remove all restrictions on women working during evenings or in previously restricted sectors and professions, where they can now work without constraint. In addition, amendments favouring women have been introduced into the Personal Status Act, such as granting women the right to leave the house for the purpose of work without having to seek permission. Moreover, the laws of the United Arab Emirates contain no restrictions on the right of women to travel alone.

40. The United Arab Emirates has launched a pledge to accelerate the achievement of Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals and has made a voluntary commitment to increase the proportion of women in middle and senior management positions to 30 per cent by 2025. This important step supports the objectives of the 2022–2026 gender-balance strategy, which seeks to empower women in leadership positions and in the economic sector. As of the end of 2022, 56 leading national and international companies had joined the pledge.

41. Women hold nine ministerial portfolios in the Council of Ministers and make up 50 per cent of the members of the Federal National Council. In fact, the United Arab Emirates is considered to be one of the countries with the best women’s parliamentary representation. In addition to this women – thanks to the part they play in national women’s mechanisms such as the General Women’s Union and the Gender-Balance Council – have a prominent role in the development of policies and strategies, and in drafting and reviewing national legislation related to women’s rights and empowerment.

2. Children’s rights (recommendations 191, 193–198 and 200)

42. The competent State authorities have taken a series of measures to ensure the effective enforcement of the Children’s Rights Act, which is known as “Wadeema’s Law”. To that end, nine child protection units have been set up to create and run the mechanisms and to implement the procedures envisaged in the Act. For example, under Ministerial Decree No. 422 of 2018 the Ministry of Community Development set up a child protection unit that is administratively affiliated to the Social Protection Department. For its part, the Ministry of the Interior has opened a child protection centre which is responsible for developing and implementing initiatives and measures to provide security, safety and protection for all children. In 2022, the Ministry of Education also set up a child protection unit to operate and run child protection mechanisms. In addition to this, child protection specialists have been trained and appointed, and they have been conferred with the status of judicial officials, thus enabling them to exercise their duties in accordance with the law.

43. Article 32 (3) and (5) of the Children’s Rights Act prohibits all forms of corporal punishment in educational institutions and stipulates that the dignity of children is to be preserved when taking decisions or implementing programmes. Specific programmes have been put in place for reporting and filing complaints, thus ensuring that all violations of children’s educational rights envisaged in the Act and its implementing regulations are duly investigated. Provisions relevant to reporting violations of children’s rights are contained in article 5 of the implementing regulations.

44. In November 2019, the United Arab Emirates adopted a family protection policy, one of the goals of which is to protect children against all forms of sexual violence. The policy also contains protection and intervention mechanisms, including a reporting and complaints system, frontline prevention procedures and the establishment of family protection centres. The competent State institutions have established child protection centres to tackle all forms of abuse against children. For example, the Ministry of Education has opened a free telephone hotline to report cases of abuse and violence against children. Moreover the Ministry, under Federal Decree-Law No. 14 of 2016, has set up an oversight unit as part of its own structure which has the task of conducting visits to all educational institutions in the country, throughout the year. The unit has a number of tools at its disposal to achieve its task and has imposed penalties on educational institutions that fail to comply with the required standards. A total of 111 ministerial functionaries have been granted the status of judicial officials in order to increase their authority and enable them to deal immediately with cases where children are being abused, neglected, harmed, subjected to violence, deprived of their right to education or subjected to sexual harassment or assault. At the international level, the United Arab Emirates is a member of the WeProtect Global Alliance, which is a coalition of governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations that seeks to develop policies and find solutions to protect children from online sexual exploitation and abuse.

45. There is close and ongoing cooperation between the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Important joint initiatives include the launch of an injury prevention campaign, which provides advice and information to help ensure children's welfare and safety, and a safe learning project in 2018 entitled the "Biggest lesson in the world", which aims to put an end to violence in schools. The Council is also working with UNICEF on a manual for a school referral system and is seeking to ensure that all children in the United Arab Emirates are able to fulfil their developmental potential through access to quality care, health, nutrition and early education.

46. The Ministry of the Interior has developed procedures for investigations involving children including, notably the smart "Robotok" project to investigate crimes of physical and sexual abuse against children, and a guide on how to interview children during the evidence-gathering stage. Special interview rooms for children have been created and child protection specialists have been trained. The State has also participated in a joint international operation to combat child sexual exploitation online.

47. The United Arab Emirates issued Federal Act No. 6 of 2022 regarding juvenile offenders and juveniles at risk of delinquency. The Act includes important provisions concerning legal safeguards for the trial of juvenile offenders, legal protection for juveniles and the regulation of juvenile institutions.

3. Rights of persons with disabilities (recommendations 201–204)

48. All the initiatives and activities planned as part of the national policy for the empowerment of persons with disabilities, which was launched in 2017, have been implemented in line with expected outcomes and set objectives. This process – which took place in cooperation with the competent authorities and with due monitoring of the relevant performance indicators – covered different areas of education, health, employment, environmental adaptation, sports and recreation.

49. The Ministry of Community Development has strengthened its interaction with civil society associations such as the Emirates Down Syndrome Association, the Emirates Association for Persons who are Deaf, the Association of Parents of People with Disabilities, etc. The purpose of this is to provide optimal services to persons with disabilities, to qualify them for education and work and to integrate them into society by providing training, habilitation and coordination programmes.

50. The Ministry of Education has provided inclusive-education training to more than 70 per cent of staff in administrative and educational bodies. At the same time, students with disabilities have been provided with the assistive devices, tools and technology they require, and agreements have been concluded with a number of federal and local authorities to provide such students with specialized services. A total of 290 special education teachers and more

than 70 specialists in special education work with over 6,000 students with disabilities. The Ministry also provides educational support for students with disabilities thanks to special education teachers, who number 743 in State-run schools alone, along with 276 assistant teachers and 411 attendants. In addition to this, there are more than 190 specialists who work with students with disabilities, such as sign language interpreters. Moreover, speech, language, visual disability and special education specialists provide individual treatment and support sessions in speech and language, Braille, orientation and movement, behaviour modification and sign language. Each student with disabilities follows an individual educational plan, depending upon their needs, and the plan is periodically monitored with a view to improving the student's academic and social performance. The Ministry of Health has cooperated with health-care authorities and other stakeholders to protect the right of persons with disabilities to receive health-care, rehabilitation and support. As of 2020, more than 13,000 persons with disabilities were receiving services as registered holders of a disability card.

4. Rights of older persons (recommendations 229 and 230)

51. Under Decree No. 10/1 of 2018, the Council of Ministers approved a national policy for older persons which covers seven main areas: health care; community interaction and active life; energy investment and civic participation; housing and infrastructure; financial stability; security and safety; and future life quality. The policy aims to improve the quality of social services so as to ensure the well-being and happiness of persons over the age of 60. To this end, it focuses on preventive measures to guarantee the safety and protect the rights of adults in society. It also seeks to encourage joint efforts to provide competitive services in various fields, to open innovative channels through which to transfer knowledge and share experiences across generations and to create a supportive environment in which adults can lead active lives within the community.

52. Federal Decree-Law No. 9 of 2019 on the rights of older persons has been enacted and its implementing regulations have been adopted. The Law seeks to ensure that older persons are able to enjoy the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, to access information and services relating to their rights and to receive care that provides mental, physical and social stability.

5. Protecting the family (recommendations 60 and 177–180)

53. In March 2018, the United Arab Emirates adopted a national policy for the family which covers six main areas: marriage, family relations, balancing roles, childcare, family protection and work.

54. Federal Decree-Law No. 10 of 2019 regarding protection from domestic violence aims to strengthen social cohesion within families and to preserve the family as a unit.

55. The United Arab Emirates has adopted Federal Decree-Law No. 31 of 2021 promulgating the Criminal Code. Article 53 (1) in the old Code, under which a wife could be chastised, has been repealed and does not exist in the new iteration of the Code.

C. Economic, social and cultural rights

1. Right to health (recommendation 156)

56. In August 2022, the Emirates Health Services launched an “automatic patient referral” service, which is part of online nutritional services and is the first service of its kind in the Middle East. The project takes a preventive approach and aims to transfer children in the target group – i.e., those suffering from malnutrition in various forms (overweightness, obesity, wasting, stunting, low weight) – from hospital to nutritional clinics, automatically and using an online system.

57. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the General Women's Union launched its “Be the bridge of safety” initiative in 2020, the purpose being to promote women's physical and mental health, to provide them with the necessary support and to enable them to balance work and family life and deal positively with the challenges posed by the global

spread of the novel coronavirus. The initiative covers three main areas: support for women’s physical and mental health, successful life management and environmental safety in the home.

58. One significant initiative intended to improve the health of older persons was the roll-out of a home health-care initiative for older persons who have difficulty in accessing health services and for persons with special needs. More than 5,300 visits have been conducted in the context of the initiative, which is part of a framework for promoting the health-related rights of older persons. Therapeutic, diagnostic and preventive services have been provided and the incidence of pressure sores has been reduced thanks to assessment visits and training imparted to family members. Fall risks have also been evaluated and appropriate measures have been taken.

2. Right to education (recommendations 159–161)

59. Federal Act No. 3 of 2016 (the Children’s Rights Act, known as “Wadeema’s Law”) stipulates that all children in the country have, up to the age of 18, the right to education without discrimination on grounds of sex, nationality or disability. In this context, the Government has provided opportunities for students who are not citizens to enrol in State-run schools at a nominal fee. A number of “schools of tolerance” have been opened in different regions of the country since 2019 to provide educational opportunities for students with limited income or who are living in exceptional circumstances. The schools accommodate more than 7,500 students and the fees for students in need are paid – on the basis of the outcomes of a survey of underprivileged families – by the Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation, which is a humanitarian organization. In addition, the State has permitted the licensing of charitable schools in several regions to provide educational services to needy students for nominal fees or, in some cases, free of charge.

60. The State has developed a body of policies and initiatives that aim to prioritize the development of education. In that connection, it has produced a model for Emirati schools that focuses on delivering quality education from the early stages of five syllabuses: the specialized syllabus, the general/academic syllabus, the vocational syllabus, the advanced syllabus and the advanced vocational syllabus. There are also a number of other educational curricula in the country, which aim to meet the needs of individuals in society with different cultural backgrounds. In fact, 18 different curricula reflect the nation’s cultural diversity, and this helps to ensure equal educational opportunities for children from foreign communities.

61. Curricula in police training and educational colleges, academies and institutes include modules on human rights. They cover, for example, basic concepts of human rights protection, an introduction to the study of law and the administration of prisons and correctional facilities in accordance with international standards.

3. Right to work (recommendations 152, 153, 206–221 and 223–228)

62. As part of continuing efforts to update the legislation necessary to provide full protection for the country’s workforce, Act No. 33 concerning workers in the private sector and Act No. 9 concerning domestic workers were issued in 2021 and 2022, respectively. They both envisage the protection of workers from discrimination and from sexual harassment, the right to receive wages regularly and at the times specified in the contract, due monitoring in the form of wage protection systems and the right to daily and weekly rest periods and to annual leave and sick leave. Moreover, it is forbidden to charge workers recruitment fees of any kind, while workers have the right to appropriate accommodation that protects their privacy and they can retain their own identity documents. They also have the right to file complaints, to have recourse to labour tribunals and to bring cases before the courts without being subject to legal fees.

63. In cooperation with major private insurance companies in the country, an innovative insurance system has been developed to protect the rights and entitlements of private-sector workers and domestic workers. The scheme involves an insurance policy of moderate financial value which employers are required to purchase before a work permit can be issued. The policy covers the risks of failure to pay the workers’ dues, particularly the late payment of wages, overtime and end-of-service indemnity, as well as the costs of a worker’s return

(or the return of a corpse) to the sending country. The amount covered by the insurance is Dh 20,000. During the course of 2022, Dh 79,301,979 were disbursed via the system to pay the dues of 5,583 workers. In addition to this, a smart inspection system has been developed that monitors all recorded complaints and violations then undertakes a risk analysis to come up with a list of workplaces with high rates of complaints. Those sites are then prioritized for periodic inspection.

64. The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization has signed memorandums of understanding with labour-sending countries concerning the workforce and domestic workers. The purpose of the agreements is to develop partnership and cooperation with a view to applying best practices in the administration of temporary contractual workers who come to the United Arab Emirates. They cover the use of information technology, the exchange of information and research in the field of employment. The memorandums of understanding envisage fair and transparent recruitment practices to guarantee the rights of workers before, during and after signing their contracts, and they seek to strengthen legislation and other provisions intended to combat human trafficking. The memorandums also leave open the possibility of negotiation with labour-sending countries with a view to adding other appropriate measures to protect the workers who are come to the United Arab Emirates. Lastly, the memorandums can include an obligation on recruitment bureaux in labour-sending countries to register workers in a social insurance fund or other form of social protection programme.

65. The United Arab Emirates attaches great importance to protecting the rights of workers in the country and to providing them all with comprehensive coverage under a number of different programmes that both safeguard their rights and ensure a decent standard of living. There are, in fact, several initiatives that have the primary purpose of protecting workers' rights and providing comprehensive insurance coverage so as to guarantee a dignified life during and after the period of employment. They include, for example:

- The unemployment insurance system: This is a unique system that is the first of its kind in the United Arab Emirates and in the region as a whole. It provides insurance coverage for private-sector workers in the event of unemployment, in the form of several insurance options that workers can choose for themselves and that guarantee them a decent life and a stable financial flow over three months of unemployment.

66. The United Arab Emirates has introduced a wide range of reforms over recent years. These include legislative and regulatory reforms as well as proactive services for workers of all categories in the country to ensure the protection of their rights. The most significant reforms are:

- Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021 on labour relations: The Decree-Law has, in fact, produced a structural transformation in the United Arab Emirates labour market and has led to new and progressive contractual relationships, as well as to new forms of work and of work permits in the country. It also includes provisions to preserve the rights of workers in jobs that were not contemplated in earlier legislation;
- Freedom of movement between jobs: Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021 on labour relations obliges employers to conclude an employment contract that is consistent with the model employment contract approved by the Ministry, for a specified and renewable period that is to be agreed between the parties. This standardizes the conditions for the termination of a contractual relationship between worker and employer and safeguards the right of workers to transfer to a new employer within the country. It also facilitates this process by requiring only the worker to give notice to the employer; such notice must be not less than one month during which time the worker is required to continue working. Earlier conditions such as compensation and employer consent have been abrogated;
- Recent amendments to residency laws in the United Arab Emirates grant a six-month deadline to workers whose period of residency is coming to an end to stay in the country and look for new work. In addition, new forms of residency permit have been developed that allow individuals to work independently without the need for an employer;

- Adoption of a model unified employment contract: A model unified employment contract – in both Arabic and English – has been adopted that guarantees workers’ fundamental rights. In addition, the Ministry runs regular introductory workshops to inform workers of their rights under the law;
- Universally available digital services: Smart services have been made available to everyone through several channels which workers can use to access services round the clock:
 - (a) Filing of labour-related complaints;
 - (b) Filing of labour-related complaints (domestic workers);
 - (c) Filing complaints concerning late payment of salary.

67. The Ministry of the Interior has sought to protect the rights of persons under arrest and accused persons at all stages of the evidence-gathering process. One significant step taken by the Ministry in this context is the activation of a mechanism for communication with the embassies and consulates of such persons. The Ministry has also facilitated request procedures for accredited foreign embassies and consulates wishing to visit their nationals, and it has produced a guide for foreign nationals in police stations who, during the evidence-gathering process, wish to communicate with their country’s embassy or consulate.

68. Under Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021, workers are guaranteed the right to file a complaint regarding access to translation and legal services. All accused persons in police stations are provided with a simultaneous interpretation service, without discrimination on any grounds. A total of 33,844 people have benefited from this service.

69. Thanks to its integrated legislative framework, the United Arab Emirates has ensured workers’ right to health-care coverage as well as to maternity leave and sick leave of all kinds. The State has also developed a cohesive framework to cover cases of total and partial disability and to guarantee workers’ rights as enshrined in the country’s labour laws. There are three types of insurance policies for private-sector workers: for skilled labour, for semi-skilled labour and for workers in high risk establishments that are in breach of regulations. The risks covered by the insurance policy include end-of-service indemnity, wages for up to a maximum of 120 days, worker’s repatriation expenses, costs associated with workplace injuries and illnesses, travel tickets for workers who have lost their jobs, costs of transporting the body in the event of a worker’s death and other financial rights envisaged in Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021 and its implementing regulations.

70. The United Arab Emirates enacted Federal Act No. 10 of 2017, which was subsequently amended and updated under Decree-Law No. 9 of 2022. The latter was drafted on the basis of the provisions of relevant international treaties to ensure the protection of domestic workers, as explained in the following paragraphs.

71. Domestic workers have the right to receive their wages from the date of their entry into the country and not the date they sign their contract of employment. The wages are to be paid on a monthly basis and the burden of proof that the payment has effectively been made is placed upon the employer, who is required to provide a written receipt to that effect. As a way of monitoring the extent to which employers fulfil their obligations in that regard, the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization launched a pilot project for the payment of wages via a bank account in the domestic worker’s own name. The State is currently seeking to roll out this project on a wider scale to include more domestic workers.

72. According to the law, workers have the right to daily periods of rest amounting to not less than 12 hours, including at least 8 consecutive hours of sleep. They also have the right to paid annual leave of at least 30 days and 15 days of paid sick leave, followed by another 15 days without pay if the situation so requires.

73. The law obliges employers to provide and furnish decent accommodation for resident domestic workers, such as guarantees their comfort and privacy. Employers are also required to treat workers well, to preserve their dignity and physical integrity, to guarantee the workers’ right to keep their own their identification documents and to bear the costs of medical treatment in case of illness or injury, under the State’s own health-care system.

74. The United Arab Emirates has recently introduced a system to regulate the entry and residency of foreigners, under Council of Ministers Decree No. 65 of 2022 promulgating the implementing regulations of the Act on the Entry and Residency of Foreigners. The new system envisages a visa scheme that draws a net distinction between residency and work, and allows foreigners to obtain a variety of entry and residency visas, including jobseeker visas and visas allowing foreign workers can bring in members of their family under simplified procedures. The new system also allows foreigners to remain in the country for between one month and six months after their residency has expired or been rescinded. Moreover, under current legislation, workers are not required to obtain prior authorization or approval from anyone, including their employer, before leaving the country. This means that the *kafalah* system has been abolished in its previous form, which required workers to obtain a job offer and a work permit before entering the country.

75. In drafting Federal Act No. 9 of 2022, which regulates labour relations in the domestic work sector, the Government took due account of most of the rights and duties envisaged in the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

76. Article 4 of Domestic Workers Act No. 9 of 2022 prohibits the recruitment or employment of a domestic worker under the age of 18. The Act also prohibits the following: discrimination between domestic workers on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, national or social origin or disability, in such a way as to prejudice equality and equal opportunity in obtaining or remaining in employment and enjoying the concomitant rights; sexual harassment of domestic workers, whether verbal or physical; and any working practice that falls within the definition of human trafficking, according to laws enacted or treaties ratified by the State. The Act also envisages the right of workers to keep possession of their own identity documents.

77. The United Arab Emirates has provided workers with a number of free and confidential channels via which to file complaints. As of the end of December 2022, 207 complaints had been received concerning the alleged seizure of passports from workers in the private sector. Of these, 120 were settled amicably by the competent ministerial department while 87 complaints were referred to the Office of the Public Prosecution. As concerns domestic workers, during the years 2021 and 2022, 2,896 complaints were received concerning the alleged seizure of passports. Of these, 2,291 were settled amicably by the competent ministerial department while 39 complaints were referred to the Office of the Public Prosecution.

78. A female worker may not have her employment terminated or be notified of such termination by reason of pregnancy, maternity leave or absence from work in accordance with the law. Female workers are entitled to 60 days of maternity leave, of which 45 days are to be with full pay and 15 days with half pay. The worker is entitled to maternity leave after 6 or more months of her pregnancy. In addition to this, if the worker delivers a child that is sick or has a disability, she is entitled to 30 days of leave with full pay after the end of the maternity period, which she can then extend for a further 30 days. For a period of more than 6 months after giving birth, the worker is entitled to one or two rest periods per day to breastfeed her child.

4. Right to an adequate standard of living (recommendation 151)

79. In July 2022, the Government restructured its integrated social support programmes, which have a value of Dh 28 billion. The programmes seek to provide for Emirati families with low incomes via new allocations, increased bonuses and the introduction of allowances for inflation and basic needs such as food, water, electricity and fuel. The programmes also take account of increases in inflation and seek to keep pace with economic changes.

5. General measures of implementation (recommendation 154)

80. The Ministry of Community Development has completed the draft of the Social Action Charter, which is currently being reviewed with stakeholders before being submitted to the Council of Ministers for adoption. The Charter aims to guarantee the rights of beneficiaries of workers' services, protect the rights of social workers, advance the profession and improve service quality. The Ministry is also seeking to obtain a decree from the Council

of Ministers concerning the licensing of family counsellors. The decree has the purpose of ensuring that family counselling services are delivered by personnel with adequate academic qualifications and practical experience, thereby helping to ensure the cohesion and stability of families, to strengthen family and community bonds and to enable individuals to address and overcome their problems.

D. Civil and political rights

1. Freedom of opinion and expression (recommendations 112–114, 118, 119 and 121)

81. Freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association are guaranteed under the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates, article 33 of which stipulates: “Freedom of assembly and freedom of association are guaranteed, as prescribed by law.” Article 30 states: “Freedom to hold opinions and express them orally, in writing or by other means of expression are guaranteed, as prescribed by law.” The State has always been eager to create a supportive and enabling legislative environment for the formation and establishment of public interest associations, and the first law in that regard was enacted in 1974. Since then the State has worked to develop its legislation with a view to enhancing the participation and involvement in civil action of all individuals and social groups. In that connection, Federal Decree-Law No. 35 of 2020 was issued to amend certain provisions of Federal Act No. 2 of 2008 on civil associations and public interest groups.

82. Partial implementation: The first draft of a new law to replace Federal Act No. 15 of 1980 concerning printing and publishing has been prepared. The new law is intended to keep pace with rapid developments in the media in its various forms, including digital media, in line with relevant international standards. It also takes account of laws concerning printing and publishing promulgated by other States.

2. Administration of justice and fair trials (recommendations 133–136, 139 and 141)

83. The principle of judicial independence in the United Arab Emirates is rooted in the Constitution and the relevant federal laws. The matter is addressed explicitly in article 94 of the Constitution, which states: “Justice is the basis of governance. Judges are to be independent and are subject to no authority in the performance of their duties other than that of the law and their own consciences.”

84. The United Arab Emirates has issued Federal Decree-Law No. 32 of 2022 concerning the federal judiciary. The Act underscores the independence of the courts and of the Supreme Council of the Federal Judiciary which, it states, are to have an autonomous budget. The Council, moreover, is to oversee the independence of the courts as well as the independence and immunity of the members of the judiciary. Article 1 in section I of the Decree-Law, which concerns the independence of the judiciary, states: “Judges are independent and have no authority in their administration of justice other than the Constitution, the law and their own consciences. They cannot be dismissed save in accordance with the provisions of the present Decree-Law. There is to be no infringement of judicial independence or interference in the course of justice.”

85. The courts constitute the foundation for social justice, and the right of recourse to justice and the right to file complaints are guaranteed for all individuals in the country, without discrimination. In fact, individuals may turn to the courts or to the police at any time and without restriction. In addition to this, other non-traditional mechanisms have been set up via which persons can express their grievances or complaints. Other guaranteed rights include the right to appeal against court rulings, the right to seek the assistance of a lawyer at all stages of justice and before committees of inquiry and the right to legal aid in case of need.

86. Article 2 of Federal Act No. 35 of 1992 (the Code of Criminal Procedure), as amended, stipulates: “No one may be sentenced to a criminal penalty save after being found guilty under the law. No one may be arrested, searched, detained or imprisoned save where provided for by the law. A person may be detained or imprisoned only in a location designated for such purposes and for the period prescribed by the competent authority.

Moreover, arrested persons may not be subjected to physical or mental abuse or to torture or ill or degrading treatment, and any evidence obtained by any of those methods is to be discarded.”

87. Federal Decree-Law No. 41 of 2022 (the Personal Status Act) is applicable to non-Muslims residing in the country. Article 4 of the Decree-Law, which concerns the issue of equality of rights and duties between men and women, aims to promote the principle of equality in matters of witness testimony, inheritance, the right to request divorce and joint custody.

88. The Ministry of the Interior has organized 34 lectures on the police and human rights, which focused on the international Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and on principles of professional conduct and ethics in police work. In fact, under Ministerial Decree No. 346 of 2021, the Ministry of the Interior issued a document outlining the principles of professional conduct and ethics in police work, which is consistent with the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials.

89. Article 8 of Federal Decree-Law No. 38 of 2022 promulgating the Code of Criminal Procedure concerns “the assistance of an interpreter”. Under that provision, in the event that an accused person or a witness does not know Arabic, the law enforcement official, the prosecutor or the trial judge (depending upon the circumstances) is to seek the assistance of a licensed interpreter or make use of any technical means approved by the Ministry of Justice or the local judicial authority.

90. The measures taken by organs of the judiciary against accused persons, beginning with the investigation and the charges and ending with the verdict, are all carried out within a framework of legitimacy enshrined in the Constitution and the law, specially the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Criminal Code. The Office of the Public Prosecution, in its capacity as the body responsible for judicial oversight, supervises the inquiry and the gathering of evidence. The Office then pursues the investigation, including the interrogation, in its capacity as the sole body legally entitled to do so. Prosecutors must ensure that the lawyers defending the accused persons are able to appear before the court to represent and defend their clients. Accused persons and persons in detention have a general right to appoint lawyers to defend them in court. If they are unable to do so, the court appoints one on their behalf. In addition to this, the Code of Criminal Procedure envisages procedures whereby accused persons can lodge appeals against rulings issued against them before courts of different degrees.

3. Combating human trafficking (recommendations 85, 86, 88, 89 and 90–93)

91. The United Arab Emirates has established a number of centres and institutions where victims can receive shelter and care from professional staff. These are the Abu Dhabi Centre for Shelter and Humanitarian Care, the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children and the Aman Shelter for Women and Children. All these centres take in victims of human trafficking from around the country and provide them with the support they need. The centres also play an important role in the voluntary return of victims and in their reintegration into society. The latter can take place inside the county, in which case the centres help victims find suitable work then modify their legal status to enable them to remain in the country, or through cooperation and coordination with the with the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking and other bodies such as foreign embassies and international organizations, so that victims can safely return to their homeland.

92. The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking has opened the 8007283 (800SAVE) hotline to receive reports of human trafficking from around the country. The hotline is administered by staff of shelters for human trafficking victims who have received training in how to deal with such situations in a number of languages, including Arabic, English, Urdu, Russian, and others. Other mechanisms to report human trafficking also exist, such as the 999 emergency line, the website of the Ministry of Interior (www.moi.gov.ae), the 800111 hotline of the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children and the 80089999 hotline of the Aman Centre for Women and Children in Ras al-Khaimah. The “Smart Police Station” initiative run out of police headquarters in Dubai also allows people to provide information and data on suspected cases of human trafficking. For its part, the Ministry of

the Interior has rolled out the *Himaya* smart app, which can be downloaded onto smartphones and is intended to be used to report cases of abuse against children. Such reports can also be filed via the 116111 hotline or the website.

93. During the period 2021/22, the Ministry of the Interior took part in three international operations, notably Operation Liberterra, which was organized to combat migrant smuggling, human trafficking and other related crimes along transcontinental routes. The Operation – which was conducted in coordination and cooperation with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and involved 47 other countries – led to the arrest of 286 people, the rescue of 430 human trafficking victims and the rescue of 4,000 illegal migrants in 74 countries around the world.

94. The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking exercises its functions as part of a national strategy that covers five main areas, the first of which is prevention. One example of prevention was the distribution, by the Office of the Public Prosecution in 2020, of educational materials via social media regarding Federal Act No. 51 of 2006 on combating human trafficking. The materials drew attention to the fact that the Act envisages penalties for persons who fail to report a trafficking offence of which they are aware, and a total of 5,630 members of the general public benefited from this initiative. The second area is prosecution, in which context the United Arab Emirates launched a national evaluation of the dangers of money laundering in 2019 with the aim of prioritizing the investigation of certain offences, including human trafficking. The third area is punishment, in which regard 20 cases of human trafficking have been referred to the courts, a number of sentences have been handed down while other cases are still under consideration. The fourth area is victim protection, in which connection one of the most important initiatives launched by the National Committee was the establishment of the Support Fund for Human Trafficking Victims which, according to statistics for 2021, has provided Dh 1,304,700 to victims since its inception in 2014. The fifth area is greater bilateral cooperation, in which regard the United Arab Emirates has signed eight memorandums of understanding with countries to cooperate in combating human trafficking and protecting victims.⁶

E. Acceptance of international standards and cooperation with United Nations bodies and mechanisms (recommendations 19, 41, 48, 50, 51 and 58)

95. Under Federal Decree-Law No. 8 of 2016, the State acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The recommendation to that effect had thus already been implemented prior to the review of the State party's third periodic report in 2018.

96. The United Arab Emirates is examining the possibility of acceding to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

97. The United Arab Emirates is keen to improve cooperation with the human rights treaty bodies and submitted its fourth periodic report under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in June 2022. The National Human Rights Committee is completing the drafting of remaining periodic reports, which will be submitted to the relevant committees during 2023.

98. The State also seeks to improve cooperation with all United Nations mechanisms and to support them as they go about their tasks. In that regard, the Government provided \$878,425 in 2020 and 2021, which included annual voluntary donations to support United Nations funds, the fulfilment of voluntary pledges to donate to the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review and support for anti-corruption and human rights projects.

99. On 20 June 2018, the United Arab Emirates submitted its initial report under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The report was discussed before the Committee against Torture on 13 and 14 July 2022.

100. The United Arab Emirates is also eager to improve cooperation with special procedures, and it has extended invitations to make field visits to the country to the Special Rapporteur on the right to education and to the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities. It is also considering extending invitations to other special rapporteurs, including those who have previously made visit requests.

F. Cross-cutting issues (recommendations 89–91, 95 and 124)

101. The United Arab Emirates is a haven of tolerance, peace, security and multiculturalism, where more than 200 nationalities live lives of dignity and respect under national laws that ensure justice, respect and equality for all while criminalizing hatred and extremism and eliminating sources of strife and division. The most significant of those laws is Federal Decree-Law No. 2 of 2015 on combating discrimination and hatred, as amended, which criminalizes discrimination between individuals or groups on the basis of religion, belief, confession, community, race, colour, ethnic origin, gender or sex. The Government has also enacted Federal Decree-Law No. 27 of 2018 which concerns gender equality in salaries for federal government workers.

102. In 2016, the United Arab Emirates created the post of Minister of State for Tolerance, and it has rolled out a number of programmes and initiatives that aim to promote tolerance, notably “the national programme for tolerance” which seeks to consolidate values of tolerance, multiculturalism and acceptance of others and to quash discrimination, hatred and extremism in ideas, education and behaviour. In December 2019, the State launched a national initiative to promote tolerance and enshrine it as a value in all programmes and activities run by the Government and government institutions. The initiative seeks to raise awareness and spread a culture of tolerance in the operational mechanisms, daily practices, policies and methodologies followed by those institutions.

103. The right of all persons to lodge complaints is enshrined in the Constitution and the law, and any person who has suffered harm or been ill-treated or tortured, or subjected to inhuman treatment has the right to file a complaint against any individual, functionary or official, regardless of position or place of work. On that basis, the Office of the Public Prosecution has developed a number of channels and mechanisms through which it can receive complaints. These include websites and smart channels that prosecutors can use to interview convicted persons and detainees via video. In this context, 329 interviews were held between 2018 and 2020 to look into complaints from prison inmates and convicted persons.

104. The United Arab Emirates issued Federal Decree-Law No. 11 of 2019 to amend certain provisions of Federal Decree-Law No. 2 of 2015 on combating discrimination and hatred. The amendments envisaged the introduction of gender as an additional form of discrimination.

105. Nature reserves were established in the United Arab Emirates to address challenges associated with marine and terrestrial biodiversity. As of 2020, the number of nature reserves – both terrestrial and marine – had increased to 49, with 15.53 per cent of the total area of the country being protected in that way. The country has reached the global target for nature reserves, as the total area of protected land amounts to 18.4 per cent and of protected sea to 12.01 per cent. The Ministry for the Environment and Climate Change has rolled out a number of biodiversity conservation projects including, notably, the United Arab Emirates Smart Map of Natural Capital. The Smart Map involves a set of biological and geographical surveys and environmental and economic assessments of terrestrial and marine environments and habitats at the national level. Its purpose is to provide information and data related to ecosystems in the country in the form of a smart and interactive map that can then be used when developing policies and making decisions related to land use and investment opportunities. The United Arab Emirates is also preparing to host the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) in the last quarter of 2023, which marks the culmination the country’s decade-long regional leadership on climate change.

106. The United Arab Emirates makes constant efforts to combat terrorism. It adopted comprehensive strategies to address the problem, which were then translated into Federal Act No. 7 of 2014 concerning the prevention of terrorism. The Act arose out of the State's commitment to fulfil its international pledges to confront and combat terrorism, criminalize its international forms and prevent terrorists, their financial backers and supporters from accessing funds, weapons and safe havens. The Act concerns itself with actions that are criminal and unlawful, and it does not interfere with legitimate activities carried out by citizens or residents of the State as they exercise their constitutionally and legally protected rights.

VI. Sustainable Development Goals 2030

107. Under Federal Decree No. 14 of 2017, the Government formed its National Committee for the Sustainable Development Goals, the membership of which brings together the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and 15 federal-level government bodies. All of those entities are in some way responsible for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level, monitoring progress in that regard, engaging relevant stakeholders and reporting periodically on the country's achievements. In October 2017, thanks to joint efforts by the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Centre and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Arab Emirates opened a centre to collect data on the Sustainable Development Goals. A database of indicators relevant to the Goals has been set up in a geospatial data format, which helps in the mapping, visualizing and analysing the data.

108. According to a statistical report issued in 2022 by the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Centre, the United Arab Emirates led the world in the rate of satisfaction with public transport (84 per cent), under the Goal of "sustainable cities and communities". The United Arab Emirates also came ahead of other countries of the world in two indicators under the Goal of "peace, justice and strong institutions", registering 100 per cent under the indicator concerning the "proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority" and 92 per cent under the indicator concerning the "proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live after dark". In addition to this, under the Goal of "good health and well-being", the United Arab Emirates came in first place under three indicators, by reducing maternal mortality ratio to just 3 per 100,000 live births; by reducing tuberculosis incidence to 0.79 per 100,000 population; and by having 99.9 per cent of births attended by skilled health personnel. As concerns the Goal of "gender equality", the United Arab Emirates was ahead in the indicator "proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments", with 50 per cent. Under the Goal of "zero hunger", the United Arab Emirates ranked first under the indicator of increased agricultural productivity, registering a 27.5 per cent growth. Under the Goal of "affordable and clean energy", the United Arab Emirates led in indicators concerning access to clean fuels and technology for cooking, and access to electricity, both of which stood at 100 per cent. The country also led the world in the proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services.

VII. Voluntary pledges

109. To submit a voluntary report every two years setting forth the action taken on the recommendations that the United Arab Emirates will accept following the adoption of the outcome of its fourth national report under the universal periodic review mechanism.

110. To continue to support the funds and programmes of OHCHR thereby enabling it to carry out its tasks and pursue its activities in the field of human rights.

VIII. Conclusion

111. As the United Arab Emirates submits its fourth national report under the universal periodic review mechanism, it reaffirms its intention to continue to strengthen and develop its efforts in the field of human rights, within the framework of its own national laws and

legislation and its regional and international obligations. The State is resolved to move forwards and build on its human rights achievements, and will seek to contribute positively to and engage with international best practices in that regard. The United Arab Emirates looks forward to its continued cooperation with the Human Rights Council, the universal periodic review mechanism and mandate holders in order to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights.

Notes

- 1 البوابة القانونية لدولة الامارات العربية المتحدة (وزارة العدل)
<https://www.moj.gov.ae/ar/laws-and-legislation/latest-legislations-and-laws.aspx>.
- 2 الضغط على الرابط الإلكتروني الخاص بالسياسات والاستراتيجيات: <https://u.ae/ar-AE/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards>
- 3 الضغط على الرابط الإلكتروني الخاص بتقرير: جهود ومساعدات دولة الإمارات الإنسانية لمكافحة فيروس كورونا-
[pdf.19](#)
- 4 الضغط على الرابط الإلكتروني الخاص بتقرير: مبادرات حكومة دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة لمواجهة أزمة كورونا
- 5 الضغط على الرابط الإلكتروني للاطلاع على تقرير التوازن لغد أفضل.
- 6 للاطلاع على التقارير السنوية للجنة الوطنية لمكافحة الإتجار بالبش:
http://www.gbc.gov.ae/ENG_GBC_Report.pdf
<http://www.nccht.gov.ae/default.aspx?PageId=50&LanguageId=1>