

Joint UN Report for the Universal Periodic Review of Oman
- Tenth Session, January 2011-

I. Introduction

1. This joint Universal Periodic Review (UPR) submission was jointly drafted by United Nations field presences at both country and regional level for the review of Oman.¹ The report is a collective analysis of Oman's human rights record, challenges and achievements. It does not attempt to be exhaustive in its analysis considering the limited UN presence in the country. Instead, the report seeks to provide an overview of how the UN contributes to improve the exercise and enjoyment of human rights of Omani citizens and other groups and individuals living in the country.

II. Background and Framework

A. Political context

2. The Sultanate of Oman is a monarchy governed by Sultan Qaboos bin Said al-Said who has been in power since 1970. He holds the positions of Prime minister, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and the Royal Omani Police. During his reign, Sultan Qaboos has initiated a number of political reforms, which have gradually increased the space of elected representation in the government. The administrative system of the State under the Sultan is composed of the Diwan or Royal Court, the Ministry of Palace Office, the Cabinet of Ministers and the Secretariat of the Cabinet, the Governorate of Muscat, the Governorate of Dhofar and the Council of Oman (Majlis Oman). The Sultanate's legislative branch is based on a bi-cameral system; the Council of State (Majlis al-Dawla) and the Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura). Sultan Qaboos bin Said al-Said appoints members of the Majlis al-Dawla, while members of the Majlis al-Shura are elected by universal suffrage every three years; universal suffrage was extended by decree to all Omani citizens above 21 years old in October 2003. The two chambers do not hold independent legislative authority, but function as advisory entities to the Sultan. Laws, decrees and accession to international treaties are authorized and approved by Sultan Qaboos and become law from the date of their publication in the Official Gazette. There are no recognized political parties in Oman.

B. Human Rights Context

3. The state of human rights in Oman has made steady improvement over the past decade, but more progress is still needed. The legal system is based on English Common Law and the 1996 Basic Law, the constitution of the Sultanate, identifies Sharia as the basis for the legislation. The Basic law guarantees civil liberties for Omani citizens and states that all citizens are equal before the law.

4. Oman has in recent years, initiated a number of important developments related to the promotion and protection of human rights. Major challenges nonetheless remain severe restrictions to freedoms of expression, assembly and association, as well as discrimination and inequality on the basis of gender, race, descent and nationality. Serious concerns are also raised with regards to the sponsorship system (kabala), the situations of forced labour and reports of rights violations against the large expatriate workforce.

¹ The International Labour Organization's (ILO) Regional Office for Arab States, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Regional Office for the Middle East, the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Regional Centre in Cairo and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

C. Cooperation with human rights mechanisms

5. Oman is a State Party to four of the nine major international human rights instruments; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in Armed Conflict, in addition to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Oman has also ratified four out of the ILO's eight core conventions,² including: C29 Forced Labour, (1998); C105 Abolition of forced labour Convention (2005), C138 Minimum age Convention (2005), C182 Worst forms of child labour (2001).

6. Oman's reporting record has been inconsistent. Reports to the four UN human rights mechanisms have generally been submitted, but always exceedingly late. Oman currently has three outstanding reports: the 2nd, 3rd and 4th periodic report to CERD, which were due February 2010. Reports submitted within the framework of the ILO supervisory mechanism have been submitted on time.

7. Oman is the only Arab States that has not ratified any of the key ILO gender equality Conventions (C100 and C111) and the country's blanket reservations to CEDAW and CRC have made the two international conventions subject to conformity with the Omani Basic Law and Sharia. In a positive development, although not yet implemented, Oman announced in May 2010 its intent to withdraw its blanket reservation to the CRC and its two Optional Protocols. It is also noted that Oman expressed its willingness to review its reservations to CEDAW and the possibly to accede to the two Covenants; CESC and ICCPR.

- Oman is encouraged to act on its intent to remove its blanket reservation to the CRC and its two optional protocols,
- Oman is urged to remove its broad reservations to CEDAW,
- Oman is encouraged to ratify the two Covenants; the CESC and the ICCPR; and ILO Conventions Nos. 87, 98, 100 and 111

8. Oman has instigated measures to further the implementation of ratified treaties, including the establishment of a national Committee for the monitoring and implementation of the CRC under the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD). The Committee is responsible for the harmonization of the convention and its optional protocols in line with national legislation. It also contribute to the drafting of the national reports submitted to the Committee, but is otherwise limited in its effectiveness and impact, as it has no secretariat, rules of procedure and, significantly, no budget to support its work.

III. Promotion and Protection of Human Rights on the ground

A. Rule of Law:

9. The Basic Law outlines the institutions and administration of the country. There are four levels of courts in Oman: Supreme Court, Appeal Courts, Preliminary Courts, and Courts of

² Oman has not ratified: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESC), the Convention Against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (CAT), the International Convention on the protection of the rights of all Migrant Workers and members of their families (CMW), the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED) and the ILO Core Conventions; 087 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize 1948, 098 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining 1949, 100 Equal remuneration 1951, 111 Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) 1958.

Summary Jurisdiction. These courts hear all criminal, civil and commercial cases, while Shari'a Courts, under the authority of the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs, have jurisdiction over matters of personal status and family law. At the helm of the judiciary system is the Supreme Court, while the Administrative Court has the power to review all decisions made by Government bodies, while remaining under the jurisdiction of the Diwan of Royal Court and the Sultan.

10. In 1999, the Office of the Public Prosecution was established, separating it from the Police and placing it under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice. Courts dealing with civil, commercial, Sharia and criminal matters are located in the various regions of the Sultanate. In addition, there are military courts that deal exclusively with military offences.

11. In November 2008, Sultan Qaboos issued Decree No 124/2008, which provided for the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission. In January 2010, the names of the NHRC 14 members were announced in Royal Decree No 110/2010. The Decree outlined the composition and the mandate of the NHRC, including the task of undertaking a national human rights education campaign.

- Oman is encouraged to continue its effort to strengthen the mandate of its NHRI and harmonize it with the Paris Principles,
- Oman is encouraged to continue its efforts to undertake a national human rights education campaign,
- Oman should develop a National Human Rights Plan of Action and call on UN support.

a. Freedom of Expression

12. Freedom of expression remains limited. The state owns and controls local radio and television companies, which are operated by the Ministry of Information. Private print publications, radio and television companies are allowed, but most accept government subsidies and self-censorship is widely practiced. Omanis have access to the internet through the national telecommunications company Omantel and the other service provider Nawras, who exercise control over the information available to its users. The availability of satellite dishes has made foreign broadcast information accessible to the public.

13. The Press and Publication Law enables the government to censor publications if they are perceived to be politically, culturally, or sexually offensive. Individuals and media outlets are prohibited from criticizing the Sultan and the government uses defamation laws and concerns for national security as grounds to suppress criticism of government figures and politically objectionable views. In 2009, the Press Law was amended to further tighten these restrictions and to extend criminal liability to persons operating communication facilities. Courts have interpreted these laws to mean it is illegal to criticize any public official. Reports of the harassment of journalists and writers for criticizing government policies and public services have surfaced frequently in recent years.

14. In 2009, a then confidential government directive was leaked regarding a popular phone-in radio program giving instruction to change from live to pre-recorded broadcasting and to exclude calls about military, security and judicial matters or concerning the Head of State. A list of banned books during the Muscat International Book Fair in 2010 was similarly revealed and widely distributed.

- Oman is encouraged to revise the Press Law with a view to removing criminal liability for activities that constitute the legitimate exercise of freedom of expression.
- Oman is encouraged to adopt safeguards in the press law to ensure freedom of expression in accordance with human rights standards and principles

b. Freedom of Association and Assembly

15. The Omani law of Association provides for freedom of association "*for legitimate objectives and in a proper manner*". The Council of Ministers approves the establishment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), recognized as associations, for approved areas of work, including; women, children, orphans, the elderly, persons with disabilities, in addition to others areas approved by the Council on a case-by-case basis. The law also provides the Minister of Social Development with the prerogative to add new categories to this list at his own discretion. As stipulated in the law, associations cannot join international coalitions without the approval of the Ministry of Social Development. Moreover, associations can organize public events in Oman if the participants are exclusively Omani. However, prior approval must be obtained from the MoSD if participants or experts are invited from abroad.

16. International NGOs may not operate in the Sultanate, but the MoSD informed OHCHR in May 2010 that Oman is considering introducing a new Law of Association by the end of the year. It was indicated that the new law might also allow branches of international NGOs to operate in Oman.

17. Trade Unions have been permitted in Oman since July 2006 and the Sultanate currently counts 72 trade unions, a number which is expected to rise. Oman's trade union movement is organized under the umbrella of the General Federation of Oman Trade Unions, established in February 2010. All trade unions are required to register with the Ministry of Manpower and the law prohibits unions from accepting grants or financial assistance from any source without the Ministry's prior approval. Foreign migrant workers have recently been allowed to join trade unions with limitations regarding their election to executive functions. However, domestic workers, government and security personnel as well as the armed forces remain excluded from the right to join a union. The law allows employees to engage in collective bargaining on the terms and conditions of employment, and prohibits employers from firing or imposing penalties for union activity. Workers are required to give three weeks' notice of intent to strike, which must be supported by an absolute majority of the workforce.

- Oman is encouraged to revise the Law of Associations to be in conformity with international human rights law treaties principles and standards,
- The Sultanate is encouraged to ratify the ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98.
- Oman is encouraged to recognize the importance of the participation of an independent civil society in public life.

B. Women's rights:

18. Omani women have achieved significant progress in recent years particularly in the areas of health, education, employment, and a number of civil and political rights. However, government efforts to introduce a more moderate interpretation of women's rights and duties into the country's laws and practices, have had mixed success and women continue to face discrimination in law and practice.

19. Oman was one of the first countries in the region to promote the political participation of women. In spite of efforts to the contrary, the rate of women partaking in the political process has nonetheless remained low. In 1994, the right to vote in elections to the Majlis al-Shura

(Consultative Council) was extended to a small number of citizens, men and women, selected by Sultan Qaboos. Universal Suffrage was introduced in 2003. However, while women were continuously represented in the Shura Council from 1994- 2007, no female candidates were successful during the last elections in 2007, despite 21 women out of a total of 631 candidates running for office. In an executive order following the election, Sultan Qaboos appointed 14 women to the 70-member Majlis al-Dawla (State Council). The move, which doubled the number of female members from 2004, was seen as part of a continuous effort of the Sultan to improve the representation of women in political bodies. In fact, several women have been appointed to higher office or senior positions in recent years. Currently three women hold the position of Minister and there are also two women represented in the recently established Executive Committee of the General Federation of Oman Trade Unions.

20. Positive steps been taken in recent years with regards to women's economic and social rights. The Omani women's labour force participation increased from 6 percent in 1980 to 18.7 percent in 2003. However, in spite of reports that more women than men are registered in tertiary education institutions in Oman, it remains that the rate of unemployment among young educated women is alarmingly high. Women are more likely to be employed in the public sector where they generally are concentrated in lower job categories than men (vertical occupational segregation) such as clerical and administrative jobs. Women's participation in informal economic activities, such as handicrafts and traditional industries, is reportedly high.

21. There is considerable difference between the rank of Oman on the The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) and Oman's Gender Development Index (GDI), which indicates that out of the 155 countries with both HDI and GDI values; 128 countries have a better ratio than Oman. To improve women's access to rights and increase participation, the Government has initiated some steps to encourage the empowerment of women in Oman. The Forum on Omani Women, held in October 2009, opened the path for major reforms for the situation of women, including legislative reforms, review of personal status laws and state support to divorced and widowed women,

22. Omani women continue to face legal and social discrimination and inequality in areas relating to civil rights such as marriage, divorce, inheritance and child custody. While the penal code treats men and women equally for the most part, notable exceptions are Articles 109 and 252, which grant men substantially reduced sentences based on a crime's circumstances, thereby mitigating the crime and punishment in the case of so-called "honour crimes." Oman has no specific legislation that criminalizes domestic violence, including marital rape. Gender-based crimes usually go unreported as female victim are faced with the possibility of being treated as an offender and criminalized together with the perpetrator if she chose to pursue legal action. It is also noted that there are no confidential reporting mechanisms for complaints for gender based crimes, nor any facilities, such as shelters, for women seeking refuge from violence. Despite these gaps, there have been some efforts towards addressing the issue, including the establishment of a hotline, known as the "family counseling hotline", for four hours a day.

23. There is evidence of Female genital mutilation (FGM) in some regions of the Sultanate. Oman addressed the issue for the first time in 2001 in a survey of secondary school students. The majority of enrolled boys (80.3%) and girls (79.5%) described the practice as "important" and "necessary". Recent research similarly confirms that the practice does exist in Oman.

24. The Basic Law grants citizens certain civil rights and bans discrimination, which provides an important safeguard for women. However, these safeguards only apply to citizens, leaving

the country's large population of foreign workers, particularly female domestic servants, vulnerable to discrimination. Omani women may not transfer their nationality to their non-citizen spouses and children who must obtain and renew their residency visas every two years, while Omani men may do so without restriction.³ Non-citizen husbands are also not permitted to work without a sponsor.

- Oman is encouraged to revisit articles in the Penal Code that mitigate ‘honour crimes,’ with a view to removing them,
- Oman is urged to consider revising legislation to ensure that both parents, male and female, are allowed to transmit their citizenship to their children,
- Oman is encouraged to conduct a review of the Personal Status Law and the Labor Law, and consider revising articles that discriminate against women,
- Oman is encouraged to ensure awareness raising on FGM at both the national and local community levels and with the service providers,
- Oman is recommended to revisit the draft of the National Strategy for Advancement of Women,
- Oman is urged to take measures to ensure that equality between citizens and non-citizens in the enjoyment of fundamental rights.
- Oman is encouraged to ratify ILO Conventions Nos. 100 and 111.

C. Child Rights:

25. While the legal system generally protects children’s rights, the implementation of its provisions is inconsistent and the limited availability of data on child protection remains a challenge. As a result, the Ministry of National Economy and UNICEF have developed the DevInfo database on all children living in Oman, which incorporates a comprehensive system of child protection indicators. A joint mapping of child protection undertaken in 2009, identified positive measures undertaken by the government as well as systemic gaps, especially with regards to the lack of a structured multidisciplinary referral system in cases of child abuse. A lack of legislation in view of investigation and service delivery in cases of abuse was also noted.

26. Legal and social protection against abuse of children’s rights and their exploitation remain a challenge. A draft Child Law has been finalized, but has not yet been submitted to the Cabinet for approval. In addition, the proposed child law alarmingly includes provisions of the Juvenile Law issued in 2008, which established minimum age of criminal responsibility at nine years of age. Sentences of imprisonment are not imposed before the age of 13. Progress has been made in the past two years in developing a National Child Strategy, but the strategy has yet to be passed. Equally, the 2010 decision of the State Council to establish a Committee for “women and children affairs” set out to assess the impact of State Council legislation and policies on women and children is a step in the right direction, but has yet to be implemented.

27. A number of steps to provide alternate care arrangements for children without parental care have been implemented. Concern is nonetheless raised with regards to the lack of a sufficient monitoring system of the children placed in foster families, in order to ensure that adequate support and rehabilitation is provided to both the family and the child.

28. Basic education is free in Oman, but not compulsory by law. It is normally completed between the ages of 6 and 16, but high drop- out rates are increasingly an issue of concern. The government, in cooperation with UNICEF, is looking at approaches to mitigate this trend.

³ Oman Citizenship Law (No. 3 of 1983), Articles 1-2, www.mola.gov.om/maraseemno.htm, in Arabic.

29. A number of reforms have been introduced to the juvenile justice system. Juvenile offenders are dealt with by the juvenile unit of Oman Royal Police and appear in front of a juvenile court. Juveniles who are awaiting trial are similarly placed in the newly established “Home for observation of juveniles” and if condemned placed in the juvenile correction institute and enrolled in vocational training or community services. There is a concern, however, that not enough emphasis is placed on rehabilitation of both victims and young offenders.

- Oman is encouraged to strengthen the prosecution of offenders engaged in any form of exploitation of children,
- Oman should ensure that the draft Child Law raises the minimum age for criminal responsibility to be in accordance with international standards, and that mechanisms to ensure the establishment of a protective environment for children, particularly children who are victims of violence is established,
- Oman is urged to work towards the full implementation of the newly established Committee for Women and Children Affairs and ensure that its members are named as soon as possible
- Oman is encouraged to strengthen the monitoring of children placed in foster families, to ensure that adequate support and rehabilitation are provided to both family and child.
- Oman is urged to make basic education compulsory.

Child labour

30. While child labour does not exist in any formal industry, numerous actors raised concerns in recent years over children working in the informal sector in Oman. As a response, the Government of Oman has taken steps to issue legislation banning commercial exploitation of children as camel jockeys. In 2005, a decree was issued to regulate the involvement and participation of children in camel races. The Decree raised the legal age for camel jockeys to 18 years and ensured that only Omani nationals are recruited as camel jockeys. The Omani Labour law was amended to prohibit all forms of child labour and the minimum age for employment was raised to 15 years, or 18 for hazardous work. The Omani Camel Racing and the Ministry of Sports Affairs are monitoring the implementation of the Decree, while a joint occupational safety and health committee composed of representatives of the Ministries of Health and Manpower regulates the employment of young persons, identifies the tasks, occupations and industries in which they are employed.

- Oman is encouraged to continue ongoing efforts to protect children working in the informal sector and strengthen mechanisms to monitor and enforce the implementation of new legislative measures.
- Oman is encouraged to take the necessary measures to raise the minimum age for admission to employment (15 years of age) so as to link it with the age of completion of basic education (16 years of age) as well as to implement compulsory education up to the minimum age for admission to employment.

D. Right of People living with HIV/AIDS

31. Oman requires mandatory testing of expatriates applying to reside and work in Oman, of prisoners and other groups. Persons who test positive for HIV are repatriated. Health policies encourage a non-discriminatory policy towards People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and emphasize equal access to HIV-related services. However, fear of exposure to stigma and discrimination is likely to hinder the ability to reach those populations who are at risk as well as the proportion of PLWHA who are immediately in need of treatment and care. Additionally,

there is no specific anti- discrimination legislation targeting vulnerable and most-at-risk populations in relation to HIV/AIDS, nor any established mechanism to record, document or address cases of discrimination related to HIV/AIDS.

- Oman is encourage to consider establishing a mechanism of identification, monitoring and reporting of cases of discrimination related to HIV/AIDS,
- Oman should consider updating its National Policy on HIV/AIDS in accordance with the ILO international labour standard Recommendation 200, adopted in June 2010.

E. The rights of Minorities:

32. The tribes, Al Tawayya and the Al Khalifayn (Al-Balushi tribes) continue to express grievances following the decision by the Ministry of the Interior in 2006 to change their name and status into *Akhdam* (servants), of the Al-Harithi tribe. An attempt in 2008 to bring a lawsuit against the ministerial decision that changed their status failed, when the Court of Administrative Judiciary maintained that the Decision was a sovereign act beyond judicial scrutiny. In 2009, the Government stated that the difficult situation of the two tribes was resolved, but reports persists that they continue to experience difficulty in accessing their basic social and economic rights.

- Oman is encouraged to take steps to ensure the prevention, prohibition and punishment of racial discrimination as noted in article 4 (a) and (b) of the CERD,
- Oman should considerate ratifving the ILO conventions Nos. 111 and 169.

F. Rights of Persons with disabilities.

33. Oman has established a National Committee for the Care of Persons with Disabilities, which aims to identify and meet the needs of persons with disabilities, and raise awareness. In 2008, national legislation was introduced for the protection of persons with disabilities, which provides for the access to preventive and rehabilitation health services, education and vocational rehabilitation. The decree also includes provisions to secure the right to work of persons with disabilities as well as their participation in social, cultural and sports activities. In spite of these positive efforts some challenges remain. A recently undertaken sector review on disability in Oman highlighted gaps in data, classification of disabilities and the need to strengthen service provision in a number of key areas. Concurrently, the implementation of international standards in national legislation needs to be strengthened in order to ensure equal access to social, economic and civil rights, including education and health services for all.

- Oman is encouraged to strengthen the effectiveness of the National Committee on Disabilities, with the establishment of a secretariat, allocation of a budget and rules of procedure for the Committees work,
- Oman is encouraged to continue with its efforts in strengthening the services for disabled women in a way that promotes their personal empowerment and inclusion in the community and the labour market.

G. Labour rights:

34. The Omani Labour Law, last amended in 2003, offers protection to Omani citizens and non- Omani individuals working in the public sector, but does not cover domestic servants, temporary workers, or those with work contracts for less than three months. Complaint mechanisms have been put in place and workers may submit labour complaints to the Ministry of Manpower, which currently employs 160 labour inspectors who investigate claims of abuse against workers. Labour inspectors can also investigate complaints regarding domestic workers,

but may only enter private homes with a warrant from the General Prosecutor. The Ministry of Manpower developed a health and safety list for the employees in the private sector since the Omani Civil Services Law only covers the public sector.

a. Migrant Workers

35. The sponsorship – *Kafala*- system is prevalent in Oman. Migrant domestic workers in particular, routinely encounter exploitative working conditions, including excessively long working hours, lack of rest days or rest periods, poor living accommodations and restrictions on freedom of movement and association, including the prohibition from forming or joining unions. Despite prohibition by law, migrant workers generally have their passports confiscated by the employers, some of whom hold them in exploitative and difficult work conditions. There is evidence that some employers induce migrant workers by deceit and false promises, and sometimes sub-contract them out, mainly on construction work. The current system does not allow migrant workers the right to change employers without their sponsors' consent; otherwise, the worker is considered as an illegal resident in the country.

36. Although migrant domestic workers are excluded from the Labour Law, some protective measures are in place, including a ministerial decree outlining their rights and work conditions. In addition, a unified contract is in place for both domestic and commercial migrant workers. Employment agencies fill in the computerized contract, which is shared automatically with the Ministry of Manpower. However, while migrant workers may file a complaint against their employers for illegal practices, most workers are both unaware of their rights and existing protection mechanism, or are fearful of losing their jobs or being deported.

- Oman should consider ratifying the ILO convention C97 and C143 as well as the CMW; or consider incorporating their provisions into its current legislation;
- Oman should consider abolishing the sponsorship system (*Kafala*) and replacing it with an updated labour law that respects rights and duties of both employers and foreign workers;
- Oman is urged to include migrant domestic workers in its Labour Law.

H. Trafficking

37. Oman continues to be a destination as well as a transit country of trafficking for forced labour and sexual exploitation of individuals mainly from Southern Asia. After many years under international scrutiny, observers noted that the 2008 Royal Decree No. 126 was an important advancement, although the definition of trafficking in the law remains less comprehensive than what is laid down in the Palermo Protocols. The Penal Code prohibits slavery and prescribes penalties up to fifteen years imprisonment. In an attempt to further combat trafficking in 2009, the Government established the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons (NCCTP). Several cases were tried under the new law and in 2009, 11 defendants were convicted and sentenced to 7 years in jail and fined of 26,000 dollars, while two defendants were acquitted for lack of evidence.

38. Despite recent initiatives and achievements in countering human trafficking, experts continue to express concern with regards to the level of implementation of recent initiatives, as few cases have been tried so far. Attention is also brought to the fact that the system does not distinguish between illegal immigrants and trafficked persons. Concerns are also raised with regards to the insufficient measures to ensure the provision of legal, psychological and medical services to victims of the worst forms of child labour. It similarly remains unclear to which degree the Government is taking actions to facilitate their rehabilitation and social

reintegration.

- Oman is encouraged to continue its efforts to combat human trafficking and enhance its cooperation with states in the region;
- Oman should take measures to identify and protect victim of trafficking and prosecute offenders in line with its anti-trafficking law;
- Oman is encouraged to review domestic legislation to harmonize it with the requirements set out in the Palermo Protocols and, in particular, to take into account all elements of the trafficking definition;
- Oman should take effective and time-bound measures to ensure the provision of legal, psychological and medical services to victims of the worst forms of child labour and to facilitate their rehabilitation and social reintegration;
- Oman is urged to include repatriation, family reunification and support for former child victims of trafficking who are foreign nationals, in cooperation with the child's country of origin.

IV. Achievements, Best, Practices, Challenges and Constraints:

39. Oman was virtually closed to the outside world until the 1970s and modern development of the country did not take place before the rule of Sultan Qaboos. Although Oman has significantly improved in the area of human rights in recent years, it is recognized that great advances still have to be made.

40. Oman has undertaken measures to enhance its human rights situation in order to fulfill its obligations under international human rights treaties. The recent establishment of a National Commission for Human Rights is noteworthy, as is the plan to undertake a national campaign on human rights education. Moreover, the 2008 decision to amend the law on acquisition of government-owned land for housing providing women equal rights to men with respect to the acquisition of such properties is seen as one step towards offering men and women equal rights and opportunities. A number of initiatives to investigate the impact of national legislation and policies on women and children are considered important as is the establishment of specific mechanisms to evaluate and monitor cases of abused children. These mechanisms include; the establishment of "decentralized" task forces at the regional level to evaluate and monitor the cases of abused children in June 2008, as well as the Mother and Child Health Committee and the Ministry of Health in addressing and examining cases of abuse of children (including sexual abuse). Other significant initiatives include efforts to identify reasons behind school drop-outs, particularly in the post-basic education years (grades 11 and 12), through the examination of approaches to enhance school retention. Oman is also commended for its anti-trafficking initiatives in recent years and encouraged to continue its efforts and ensure their implementation.

41. Oman will need to continue its efforts towards a consistent implementation of international human rights norms and standards into its national legislation and practices. Specific measures to incorporate a gender perspective in all efforts will need to be introduced in order to reduce gender discrimination, which is still anchored in laws, culture and traditions. The promotion and protection of rights for all, including; women, children, minorities, migrant workers, refugees and stateless persons is highlighted. The protection of most vulnerable groups, including migrant domestic workers, unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking, persons with disabilities and PLWHA, should equally be made a national priority.