



الرابطة الخليجية للحقوق والحريات
THE GULF ASSOCIATION FOR RIGHTS & FREEDOMS



Jun 2017

This contribution to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is made in the context of the (Second Cycle – 15th Session) of the Universal Periodic Review of the United Arab Emirates (the UAE).

The Gulf Association for Human Rights (GAHR) and The Arab Institute for Human Rights in UK (AIHR) will examine progress made on the implementation of accepted recommendations, as well as the developments of the human rights situations in the UAE on some specific issues related to women and child rights.

The GAHR & AIHR will also identify obstacles and challenges that face the UAE on these specific issues and provide some recommendations for further improvements.

A/ Women and Children's Rights in UAE:

The second cycle (15th session) review of the UAE, presented in the UPR report acknowledged the initiatives taken by the state to empower women and provide rights to children.

Along with this came recommendations relating to the protection and promotion of women's rights by integrating additional programs and projects to strengthen their role in society; ensuring gender equality and eliminating discrimination against women; and, the protection of children from violence, and abuses.

1/ The UAE is committed to women's human rights:

The empowerment of women is fundamental for our development as a modern and progressive society. Women participate on an equal basis in every facet of civic, economic and political life in the UAE.

Women's equality is part of the UAE's Vision 2021 National Agenda, which aims at protecting women from all forms of discrimination at work and in society and will continue to help Emirati women achieve ever-greater empowerment in all spheres.

National Strategy for Empowerment of Emirati Women in the UAE for 2015- 2021 was launched by Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, chairwoman of the General Women's Union (GWU), on March 8 2015, International Women's Day.

The strategy provides a framework for government, private sector and civil society organizations to establish work plans to position the UAE among the most advanced countries in the area of women's empowerment.

The UAE has implemented a number of initiatives to strengthen the economic empowerment of women in the UAE. In December 2012, the Government issued a decision on the mandatory membership of UAE women in the Boards of Directors of federal bodies, companies and institutions.

In May 2015, the Government adopted a decision to establish the UAE Gender Balance Council to ensure that Emirati women continue to play a leading role in the development of the UAE.

The Council is carrying out several functions, including reviewing legislation, policies and programs to achieve gender balance in the workplace.

On 28 August 2015, the 40th anniversary of the launch of the General Women's Union, the UAE held its first Emirati Women's Day, a national celebration of the role women play.

The number of women dying during pregnancy or child birth as well as the infant mortality rate in the UAE has halved in the past 25 years.

The UAE has the lowest rate of maternal deaths in the region and one of the lowest in the world, according to the World Health Statistics 2015 report.

The maternal mortality rate in the UAE is now eight in every 100,000 live births, down from 16 in 1990.

Infant mortality has dropped from 14 per 1,000 live births in the UAE in 1990 to seven for each 1,000 births in 2013, and under-5 mortality rate more than halved from 17 for each 1,000 live births in 1990 to eight for each 1,000 in 2013.

Key to the economic empowerment of women is equality in education.

According to the World Economic Forum's 2014 Global Gender Gap Report, the UAE has essentially reached equality between men and women in educational attainment.

95% of female high school graduates go on to pursue higher education (compared with 80% of the male students). Women constitute 70% of college graduates in the country.

Women occupy 66% of public sector jobs - one of the highest proportions worldwide, including 30% of senior leadership positions associated with decision-making roles. Women occupy 75% of positions in the education and health sectors.

Women in the UAE participate actively in the private sector, including as entrepreneurs and managers. Twenty-one thousand women are employers.

Female business owners account for ten per cent of the total private sector in the Emirates.

They run projects worth more than USD 10 billion.

Female business owners constitute 15 per cent of the members of the boards of directors of the chambers of commerce and industry in the State.

In the elections for the Federal National Council held on 3 October 2015, there were 78 women candidates (23.6% of the total).

There are eight women members of the Federal National Council, 20% of the total.

Eight women were appointed to serve in the new Federal Cabinet announced on 10 February 2016 (constituting 27.5% of the total), including in key portfolios for promoting the empowerment of women both nationally and internationally such as international cooperation, social development, public education and youth.

2/ Protecting children is at the top of the national agenda. The UAE is committed to providing a safe environment that allows the full development of children's abilities and talents and to taking appropriate steps in the health and education fields to care for the psychological, social, and cultural needs of children in accordance with its national strategy, based on the best interests of the child.

The UAE is implementing a range of initiatives to protect the rights of the child. The Ministry of Interior established the Higher Committee for Child Protection in 2009 and the Child Protection Center in 2011, which recently launched an awareness campaign dubbed "Together to Prevent Child Abuse" to raise community awareness and educate parents and teachers about various forms of child abuse and ways to prevent it through seminars, courses, and a media campaign.

B/ Recommendations:

1/ In compliance with the Paris principles, we recommend the UAE establish an independent national human rights institution with a focus on women's rights and gender equality. Additionally, implement mechanisms to receive and address complaints from women.

2/ The UAE government needs to continue its efforts and ensure that adequate support for physical and psychological recovery as well as reparation, are provided for women who are victims of violence. In addition, there is a need for creating cultural programs to develop awareness about the concept, aspects and dangers of domestic violence to all members, family and society's stability.