



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Summary record of the 2043rd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 7 February 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Akizuki (Vice-Chair)

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In the absence of Ms. Peláez Narváez, Ms. Akizuki (Vice-Chair) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention *(continued)*

Fourth periodic report of Oman ([CEDAW/C/OMN/4](#); [CEDAW/C/OMN/Q/4](#); [CEDAW/C/OMN/RQ/4](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Oman joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Al Khanjari** (Oman) said that his Government welcomed the opportunity to review with the Committee its achievements in the area of women's empowerment. Oman would continue to carry out its international obligations, including follow-up to the recommendations on the implementation of the Convention, with due consideration for national priorities and the country's Islamic identity.
3. **Ms. Al Najjar** (Oman), introducing her country's fourth periodic report, said that the Government was committed to respecting and protecting human and women's rights and achieving gender equality through both its laws and the international treaties and agreements it had ratified. The fourth periodic report had been prepared by the National Committee on Follow-up of the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, with the participation of the National Human Rights Commission. The Basic Law of the State, amended in 2021, provided a legal framework for the work of various authorities.
4. Among the objectives of the Oman Vision 2040 development plan was to create smart sustainable cities and a knowledge-based, socially and economically empowered and cohesive society, particularly with regard to women, children, young persons and persons with disabilities. The tenth five-year plan for Oman Vision 2040 (2021–2025) included programmes aimed at women's economic, social and political empowerment.
5. As part of ambitious reforms to achieve financial sustainability under Vision 2040, the Social Protection Fund, which was administratively and financially independent, had been established in 2021. It was responsible for implementing the Social Protection Act and related legislation in cooperation with the relevant authorities. The new social protection system benefited several segments of society, including widows, divorced women, persons with disabilities and older persons, in a range of social insurance programmes, including those relating to maternity leave, occupational injuries and diseases, sick leave and special leave. By the end of January 2024, nearly half of those registered for social protection benefits had been women.
6. A new Labour Act had been issued in July 2023 which guaranteed workers' rights, prohibited forced labour and the withholding of passports, and established a complaints and grievances system, including access to the courts in the event of unfair dismissal. Maternity leave had been extended from 50 days to 98 days, regardless of the number of children, in line with the recommendation from the International Labour Organization (ILO). In addition to maternity leave, women were entitled to up to a year of unpaid leave to care for their children. Working mothers could use one hour per working day for breastfeeding. Paternity leave was granted for seven days. Employers were prohibited from terminating employment on the grounds of gender, ethnic origin, language, religion, social status, disability, pregnancy or childbirth.
7. In 2023, a decree on marriage between Omanis and non-nationals had recognized foreign marriage certificates in Oman after certification by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including those issued before the decree had come into effect. Oman had also joined the Arab Charter on Human Rights and ranked fourth in the Arab world in the Social Progress Index. Precautionary measures taken during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had considered women in all segments of society regardless of nationality. Special telephone lines had provided psychological and social support to non-Arabic speakers.
8. In recent years, the illiteracy rate for all women in the country had slightly decreased. The School Education Act of 2023 had affirmed the right to free and compulsory education.

The number of female students in primary and secondary education had slightly increased between academic years 2020/21 and 2022/23. In the 2021/22 academic year, just over half of students in higher education had been women, who represented more than half of students studying pure mathematics, physics and chemistry and nearly half of those in vocational colleges. In 2021, just over 30 per cent of students contributing to research and experimental development had been women. For the 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years, the gender parity index in higher education had reached 1.3.

9. Between 2020 and 2022, the maternal mortality rate had decreased and the number of births under specialized medical supervision had increased. In 2022, Oman had become the first country in the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa region to receive a certificate from the World Health Organization for eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis. The Government was working towards similar certification for hepatitis B.

10. The number of women in the workforce had increased between 2021 and 2022, including in the public and private sectors and women working as public administrators, business managers and investors. During the same period, the number of registered female entrepreneurs and the share of Omani female workers who were business owners had increased.

11. A total of four leadership empowerment programmes had been provided to 32 female candidates to support their participation in elections for the tenth term of the Shura Council. Women constituted 16 per cent of the current Council of Ministers, including three ministers and five undersecretaries. In its eighth term (2023–2027), 21 per cent of State Council members were women. A total of eight women ambassadors had been appointed in 2023.

12. At the beginning of 2023 there were 61 women's associations supporting efforts to empower women and enhance their skills, with 6 regional branches; 32 professional associations, with 8 branches; 31 civil society associations and charitable organizations, with 11 branches; and 6 charitable organizations whose boards of directors were headed by women. Women had a widespread, increasing presence in the military and security sectors and had obtained various military ranks, with their rights in those sectors equal to men's. Between 2022 and 2023, the number of female lawyers had increased to outnumber male lawyers.

13. Turning to rehabilitation services for girls with disabilities, she pointed out that the country's 101 rehabilitation centres included 35 government centres, 11 community centres and 55 private centres. In 2023, more than 7,000 people had used those facilities, including nearly 4,000 in government centres, more than 3,000 in private centres, and over 500 in community centres. In the 2022/23 academic year, nearly 900 of the nearly 2,000 students enrolled in the integration programme for persons with disabilities had been female.

14. Regarding women's role in socioeconomic development, the Rifi financing programme for the economic empowerment of rural women and girls targeted national, regional and global markets with agricultural and fisheries products created by rural women and women-led businesses. Its portfolio, worth 12 million Omani rials, could be increased annually without interest. Up to June 2023, 195 such projects had been funded with nearly 900,000 Omani rials. Some 200 technical courses had benefited nearly 700 women, in addition to more than 200 training workshops for Rifi members, entrepreneurs and girls living in rural areas. The programme comprised 5 electronic platforms, nearly 60 marketing platforms and 1 platform at Muscat International Airport.

15. Other initiatives included the "Turtle Commandos" programme to protect sea turtles, led by an Omani woman with the wide participation of young people of both sexes, which had won an environmental award in 2023. Maksab, an electronic platform, had been launched in June 2023, aimed at creating online sales outlets nationally and abroad; it prioritized women who owned small and micro-sized enterprises, and most registrations in its first phase had been from that group. Makeen, a national digital skills initiative, targeted female graduates and jobseekers and male and female entrepreneurs; more than 500 women graduate jobseekers had taken part in communications and information technology training. In 2023, that initiative had received a certificate of excellence under the Digital Government Award for Gulf Cooperation Council countries. As part of the Wiki Omani Women initiative, the biographies of 100 accomplished Omani women had been published on Wikipedia.

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16. **Ms. Morsy** said that she would like to know how the State party was effectively incorporating the principles of the Convention at the legislative, judicial and executive levels, including through comprehensive reforms; how the new Basic Law of the State incorporated the constitutional definition of discrimination; and to what extent that definition was applied to citizens of both sexes. She would like to know how the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs was coordinating with the relevant authorities to promulgate or amend laws in accordance with the guidance issued by the Council of Ministers in March 2021. She would be interested in learning about the main results and recommendations stemming from comparative studies between the Convention and national law.

17. She would appreciate clarification on how the Labour Act of 2023, as amended, protected the rights of women domestic and migrant workers. She wondered whether any measures had been put in place to ensure gender equality and care for children, young people and persons with disabilities. She would be interested to hear what quality support and legal services were available to vulnerable women, such as migrant and domestic workers and women with disabilities. She would like to know how effective the awareness-raising campaign on violence against women and girls had been and whether it had any measurable success indicators.

18. She would like to know whether any measures were in place to incorporate women's needs into Vision 2040 and whether there were any plans to evaluate the project at its halfway point. She would be interested to hear how the State party had been integrating the principles of participation, justice, equality and the promotion of women's role into national, regional and international peace and security initiatives. Was there any intention to develop a national plan for women and peace and security? Commending the State party for lifting its reservation to article 15 of the Convention, she wondered whether there were any plans to gradually lift its remaining reservations.

19. **A representative of Oman** said that gender equality was guaranteed under the Basic Law of the State, and legislation relating to children and education prohibited discrimination. References to "men" in law were deemed to encompass men and women. Access to justice was promoted through, for example, systems that allowed all citizens, including women, to lodge complaints electronically and free interpretation services for all languages in courts and in the Public Prosecution Service.

20. **A representative of Oman** said that the eligibility criteria for legal assistance applied to all persons, regardless of citizenship or migration status. Electronic legal assistance was available to all.

21. **A representative of Oman** said that recently adopted labour legislation prohibited discrimination and provided for access to justice for workers. Legal assistance was provided to domestic workers by specialist departments in the Ministry of Labour which had dealt with more than 900 cases in 2019 and around 1,600 in 2023. Complaints could be lodged electronically, via a hotline or at the embassies of domestic workers' countries of origin.

22. **A representative of Oman** said that women had been involved in all stages of drafting and adopting five-year and long-term development plans and national development policies. They also chaired and participated in committees overseeing the implementation of Oman Vision 2040, under which more than 400 programmes relating to their needs and aspirations had been launched. Women also benefited from services as part of a well-being programme. Their empowerment was guaranteed through legislation, policies and measures, such as a programme to improve their economic empowerment that focused particularly on vulnerable women. Women's work-life balance was protected by law, and steps had been taken to promote their representation in decision-making forums and in roles at the international level. The social protection and labour market systems guaranteed women's rights.

23. **A representative of Oman** said that the Basic Law of the State required the State to respect family values, guarantee gender equality and protect the rights of groups, including women and children, while also providing that men and women had equal rights and responsibilities. Following the Law's promulgation, a working group of government and civil

society representatives had amended legislation relating to women's social protection and to labour, to the benefit of women workers in the public and private sectors. The Ministry of Social Development had integrated all its women's rights initiatives into its strategic plan and was drafting a national action plan on women that would include a section dedicated to women and peace and security, a field in which it also worked with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and legal organizations.

24. **A representative of Oman** said that the Omani awareness-raising campaign launched as part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence had been evaluated by measuring engagement on social media, assessing the initiatives undertaken and gathering the opinions of young persons.

25. **A representative of Oman** said that Oman Vision 2040 was assessed every six months against economic and strategic indicators, among others, with the participation of women in leadership positions. A midterm assessment of the tenth five-year development plan was under way.

26. **A representative of Oman** said that the Government's reservation to article 16 of the Convention did not affect national laws or mechanisms.

27. **A representative of Oman**, regarding the issue of personal status and social security, said that she wished to draw attention to the Social Protection Act adopted in 2023, which had replaced the previous legislation governing social security and included many provisions that might come up for discussion.

28. **A representative of Oman** added that the Act covered a range of groups, including widows, divorced women, older women, women with disabilities and low-income families.

29. **A representative of Oman** said that the Government's reservations to the Convention, which were under review, did not violate women's rights since those rights were guaranteed under the Basic Law of the State. The harmonization of national law with the Convention was addressed by an ad hoc committee, and legal amendments had been adopted to that end.

30. **The Chair** said that she would welcome more information on the national machinery, including where overall responsibility lay for protecting and promoting women's rights and coordinating the relevant ministries, and details of the membership of the National Commission for Family Affairs. She also wished to know what the relationship was between the National Commission and the Committee to Monitor Implementation of the Convention, whether the latter had the authority to make recommendations on women's issues to the National Commission and how the State party ensured the effective implementation of the Convention at the governorate and local levels. It would be useful to have more detailed information on the key components and specific objectives of the national strategy for women, such as how the strategy safeguarded the rights of women, persons with disabilities and children; what gender indicators were used to measure the strategy's impact; how the State party implemented, monitored and evaluated its progress; whether the strategy had a suitable budget and what percentage of the State budget was allocated to it.

31. The Committee wished to know what steps would be taken to allow for the National Human Rights Commission to be accredited with A status from the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. It would also like to know how the Commission's authority had been strengthened, how it was funded and whether it managed its budget independently. It would be good to have examples of the complaints relating to women's rights that had been received by the Commission, and their outcomes, and to hear how the Commission ensured that complaints relating to human rights were resolved in a timely and effective manner. She wished to have more details of the new law governing voluntary associations and to know how the State party worked with NGOs and institutions in implementing the national strategy for women. Lastly, information on the measures adopted to protect women human rights defenders from harassment, violence and intimidation would be welcome.

32. **Ms. Eghobamein-Mshelia** said that the Committee would welcome details of the temporary special measures that would be adopted to address the historical gaps and contemporary challenges that hindered gender equality in many sectors and of any planned

capacity-building activities for public officials on the use of such measures. She would like to know whether the State party had considered introducing temporary special measures in its procurement, hiring and promotion processes in key sectors and what specific gender targets had been set as part of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

33. She also wished to know how disparities in literacy and employment rates between men and women would be addressed and how the State party would meet the specific needs of women while taking into account the unpaid care work that fell to them. She would also like to know whether the State party had considered using gender-responsive budgeting and investment to create an inclusive economy and what specific temporary special measures would be adopted to redistribute wealth, productive resources and benefits, particularly to vulnerable women.

34. **Ms. Al Najjar** (Oman) said that the Ministry of Social Development had established directorates for family development and women's affairs and, together with the National Committee for Family Affairs, was responsible for all issues relating to women. The National Committee for Family Affairs worked to improve services for women and address challenges facing women and families. The Committee to Monitor Implementation of the Convention, whose members included representatives of government bodies, the National Human Rights Commission and civil society, as well as other public- and private-sector stakeholders, devised plans and initiatives to implement the Convention, established legal frameworks and reviewed legislation. All ratified international instruments had the force of law, and any legislation adopted subsequently must adhere to their provisions, while existing legislation was reviewed and harmonized. The Government's reservations to the Convention related only to provisions that did not align with Islamic sharia.

35. Work was required to ensure that data relating to the situation of women reflected reality; women contributed to all sectors of society and were not prevented from enjoying their rights or occupying key positions on an equal footing with men. Their achievements were celebrated during a national women's day. Women with disabilities were prioritized and enjoyed the same rights as women who did not have disabilities.

36. **A representative of Oman** said that the members of the National Committee for Family Affairs comprised representatives of the Ministries of Health, Education and Culture, Sports and Youth, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the police and the Public Prosecution Service.

37. **A representative of Oman** said that the National Committee for Family Affairs coordinated with government bodies working on family issues and followed up recommendations made by international and regional bodies. Legislation on families was implemented via regulations that ensured their well-being. An independent committee monitored the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

38. **A representative of Oman** said that services for women were provided by dedicated departments in all governorates. The national strategy for women was cross-cutting and took a human rights-based approach. A range of partners was involved in meeting the needs of women, persons with disabilities and children. The new national action plan for women would be aligned with Oman Vision 2040 and the Sustainable Development Goals. The response by the National Human Rights Commission to the complaints that it received included referrals to specialized institutions.

39. **A representative of Oman** said that national mechanisms and a high-level national committee – whose members included women – monitored progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. More than 40 per cent of members of government committees and working groups were women.

40. **A representative of Oman** said that the National Human Rights Commission enjoyed financial independence. It had undergone reforms to bring it into line with the Principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles) and it was due to be reaccredited by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions later in the year. Women human rights defenders could submit complaints of harassment electronically and expect a response from law enforcement within 24 hours.

41. **A representative of Oman** said that women and men enjoyed the same right to stand for election. Women's representation on municipal councils was high, and they had participated in the Shura Council. Women had accounted for more than 60 per cent of candidates and almost half of voters in a recent election, and they had chaired four government committees during the election process. Women wishing to stand for election had access to a training manual and training programmes.

42. **A representative of Oman** said that economic initiatives had been put in place to empower women, especially low-income women and women with disabilities. As of 2023, over 1,900 women had benefited from training programmes promoting their economic empowerment. A digital platform, which also served as an e-marketplace, had been launched to market women's products. Women in prison had access to programmes that encouraged entrepreneurship by helping them to develop future business projects and identify marketing outlets.

43. **A representative of Oman** said that the percentage of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics outnumbered men. The same was true for the percentage of women enrolled in scientific colleges. Illiteracy among Omani women and girls had fallen from 6.3 per cent in 2018 to 5.8 per cent in 2021.

44. **A representative of Oman** said that a strategy to increase the presence and participation of women in the political sphere had been implemented over the previous four years in cooperation with regional and international organizations. Officials working at the Ministry of Social Development and relevant partners and civil society organizations had received training on addressing gender-based issues. A new programme had been launched in collaboration with the Royal Academy of Management to develop women's leaderships skills, encourage them to stand for election and increase the number of women in decision-making positions.

45. **A representative of Oman** said that Omani women were working as professors in higher education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The percentage of female students studying in those fields had risen to 42.1 per cent for the 2021/22 academic year. Women represented 34 per cent of researchers.

46. **A representative of Oman** said that measures had been taken to combat harmful gender-based stereotypes in Oman in the field of education, including through the dissemination of the Convention in pamphlets and booklets.

47. **The Chair** said that she would like to know how the State party coordinated with NGOs, whether its National Human Rights Commission was independent and how it protected human rights defenders.

48. **Ms. Eghobamien-Mshelia** said that she would be grateful for a response from the State party on the types of temporary special measures adopted to address the challenges hindering progress towards gender equality. She also wondered whether training had been provided to State officials on the effective use of temporary special measures. It would be of interest to the Committee to know whether the State party had considered using a gender-responsive budgeting. Lastly, details on the targets established to counter gender-based stereotypes would be welcome.

49. **Ms. Al Najjar** (Oman) said that meetings were held between NGOs and competent authorities on relevant human rights issues, including the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Development ran programmes in partnership with NGOs to build the capacity of Government officials. The Ministry also had partnerships with United Nations entities, such as the United Nations Children's Fund and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

50. The Ministry aimed to raise awareness about cases of abuse and exploitation in the home, school and work environment. Although her country faced challenges with regard to changing mindsets towards women, the highest authorities of the country had recognized that development could only be achieved through a true partnership between women and men. There was no discrimination against women or men when making high-level appointments.

51. The Ministry had a special budget for implementing women's programmes, such as programmes designed to empower women to hold decision-making positions. For example, women were given support with preparing an effective electoral campaign to improve their chances of election. Labour laws and regulations would be amended so that female workers had comprehensive protection and were guaranteed a safe working environment.

52. **Ms. Rana** said that she wished to know how the implementation of the new Penal Code had affected the prosecution and prevention of gender-based violence. She wondered whether the State party planned to adopt a specific, separate law criminalizing domestic violence, including marital rape, and what measures the State party was taking to reduce the prevalence of honour killings. She asked how the toll-free protection line had helped in reducing violence against women, and whether migrant women facing violence could easily obtain access to shelters.

53. She would be grateful if the State party could provide updated statistics on gender-based violence against women, including domestic violence and violence faced by migrant women, concerning the number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions, the sentences imposed on perpetrators and reparation provided to victims. It would also be useful to know whether the State party implemented any educational and public outreach programmes to raise public awareness of the practice of female genital mutilation.

54. She would welcome further details on measures taken to eradicate gender stereotypes of women, including migrant women, and to address cultural misconceptions as part of the social action strategy of the Ministry for Social Development. She would also like to know whether an impact assessment of the strategy had been carried out. Lastly, she wondered whether the State party had taken any steps to launch media-based information campaigns to strengthen public understanding of substantive gender equality and to continue eliminating harmful stereotypes about the roles of women and men.

55. **Ms. Leinarte** said that she would appreciate clarification from the State party on the implementation of the Ministerial Circular No. 2/2006 in the light of the fact that many domestic workers continued to have their passports withheld. She would also welcome a response to reports that domestic workers were not allowed to leave their employer's home and that "release money" was a common tool used to keep domestic workers bonded to their workplace. She wished to know whether there was a clear and accessible complaint mechanism established for all cases of discrimination in the world of work, including for domestic work, and, if so, how many complaints had been received from migrant domestic workers through that mechanism.

56. She would be curious to hear why no traffickers of migrant workers for forced labour had been investigated or prosecuted in 2021 and 2022. She also wondered how the State party ensured the effective enforcement of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act, and whether the Government would consider lifting the conditions placed on gaining access to shelters for trafficking victims. Lastly, she wished to know why, given that prostitution was illegal in the State party, only migrant women were punished in cases of prostitution and never the client.

57. **A representative of Oman** said that the Islamic sharia and the Penal Code clearly criminalized acts of violence, including those committed against women, and penalties for such acts had been increased to up to 15 years' imprisonment. There were also ad hoc penalties for perpetrators under the age of 18. Honour killing did not take place in Oman. Between 2017 and 2021, 1,888 cases of violence against women had been registered, which represented 1.4 per cent of all criminal cases. Cases pertaining to women and children were referred expeditiously to the relevant courts, and Public Prosecution officials had undergone specific training on dealing with such cases.

58. **A representative of Oman** said that the ad hoc departments of the Ministry of Labour worked to raise female domestic workers' awareness of their legal rights and how they could go through official channels in cases of abuse by employers. Brochures with the relevant information had been made available at border posts and had been published in 14 languages.

59. The ban established by Ministerial Circular No. 2/2006 on withholding the passports of domestic workers had been strengthened through its inclusion in the Labour Act under

article 147. Perpetrators were liable to pay a penalty of 500 to 1,000 Omani rials. The process of filing a complaint against an employer had been facilitated for domestic workers, and workers were no longer required to hold a “no objection” certificate in order to change employer following the expiration of their previous work contract. Complaints could be filed with the Royal Oman Police or with the Ministry and were dealt with expeditiously. If all attempts at conciliation failed, the matter could be taken to the courts. More than 930 complaints by female domestic workers had been recorded in 2022, and 1,675 complaints had been recorded in 2023.

60. The regulations on the conditions of domestic work would be brought into line with the ILO international labour standards, for example in relation to entitlement to annual leave and the prohibition of forced labour. The Ministry also maintained communication channels with domestic workers’ countries of origin and required recruitment offices to send a contract of employment to workers while they were still in their country of origin. The contract should clearly state all relevant conditions, such as leave entitlement and the number of families for which the employee would work, and should be authorized by the Ministry.

61. **A representative of Oman** said that shelters were available to victims of domestic violence and victims of trafficking. They provided social protection services, psychological support, health-care services, financial aid and legal protection in cooperation with civil society organizations. The relevant foreign embassies were kept informed about the number of nationals present in the shelters.

62. Training on temporary special measures on gender equality had been provided on a yearly basis to judges and law enforcement officers since 2018, thanks to a cooperation programme between the Ministry of Social Development and the Supreme Judicial Council.

63. **A representative of Oman** said that in order to eliminate gender stereotypes, the curricula for schools at all levels had been modernized to incorporate the principles of gender equality. Guidance had already been produced for teachers and educators on how to inculcate those principles in children in grades 1–4. Another set of guidelines would be produced for other grades. The Ministry of Education was running awareness-raising campaigns in all governorates to counter the practice of female genital mutilation and was producing manuals on adolescent health. In 2020, it had issued a guide for social workers on how to tackle cases of sexual abuse and bullying. Strategies had been devised for dealing with pupils who had engaged in sexual abuse or bullying and with the victims. Parents were provided with counselling on how to help children to express their emotions and on how that would affect children’s psychology. The manuals guiding the work of social workers also covered the subject of gender equality.

64. **A representative of Oman** said that, in 2022 and 2023, the Ministry of Health had held 13 courses for health-care workers on child abuse and harmful traditional practices, including female genital mutilation and 10 seminars for the general public on the same topics.

65. **A representative of Oman** said that the main goal of investment in women’s education was their economic empowerment. The Government efforts to promote job opportunities for women in the public and private sectors had led to greater participation of women in the labour force. Emphasis was also placed on supporting women who had set up small and medium-sized enterprises. The owners of 40,000, or 32 per cent, of such businesses were women, 40 per cent of landowners were women and a substantial percentage of housing units were owned by women.

66. **A representative of Oman** said that the implementation of the Tamasuk programme for newlyweds and couples was continuing. By the end of 2023, 641 women had received health check-ups under that programme. Several hundred women had already benefited from a new health awareness and disability prevention programme that had been introduced in 2023.

67. **A representative of Oman** said that if an employer breached the terms of an employment contract, the employee could apply to the courts to have it terminated.

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68. **Ms. Ameline** said that she wished to know what steps would be taken to appoint more women judges and whether the State party had considered the introduction of a quota to boost women's participation in political life, including at the local level. She also wished to know whether it had any plans to use new technologies, such as electronic voting, to increase women's participation in electoral processes. She would like to hear how the delegation assessed the leadership empowerment programmes that had been mentioned by the head of delegation in her opening statement. She was curious to know whether the 60 women's organizations in the country did anything to assist women during elections. Were there any plans to increase the number of women ambassadors? Lastly, she wished to know whether women were included in peace negotiation teams and regional peace processes.

69. **Ms. Reddock** said that she would like to know the time frame for the implementation of the decree regarding the marriage of Omani citizens to foreigners. She would welcome information on the mechanisms in place to monitor and enforce the provisions of the decree to ensure that it was applied consistently and without discrimination. She wished to know whether there were any plans to grant Omani women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children and the acquisition, change and retention of their nationality and whether the State party would be willing to reconsider its reservations to article 9 (2). She would be grateful for an explanation of how the new Basic Law of the State was addressing the constitutional definition of discrimination and its applicability to both citizens and non-citizens. She wished to know whether it was true that labour recruitment offices in Oman offered different salaries based on nationality and discriminated against Africans.

70. **A representative of Oman** said that there was no legal requirement that judges must be men. On the contrary, the law stressed that all appointments to the judicial and prosecution services should be based on gender equality. The Supreme Judicial Council was amending its regulations to guarantee gender equality. As no one was allowed to have dual nationality, the foreign husband of an Omani woman could not pass on his nationality to his children. The restrictions placed on the access of children of an Omani mother and a non-Omani father to health and education services had been lifted. Omani women who were married to a foreigner were eligible to receive the statutory family allowance.

71. **A representative of Oman** said that no regulations had yet been passed to implement the decree regarding the marriage of Omani citizens to foreigners.

72. **A representative of Oman** said that labour recruitment offices were responsible for issuing employment contracts. The employer must pay the wages stipulated in the contract. The Ministry of Labour was currently examining the establishment of a minimum wage for domestic workers. The problem was that the cost of living varied from country to country. The recruitment offices would be informed of the minimum wage once it had been decided.

73. **A representative of Oman** said that, in addition to the 8 women ambassadors, there were 48 counsellors, a number of first secretaries, 65 second secretaries and 23 third secretaries in the diplomatic service who were working abroad. Women were also represented in local, regional and international committees.

74. **A representative of Oman** said that article 15 of the Basic Law of the State made it clear that the family was the bedrock of society. Men and women were equal when it came to caring for children, older persons and persons with disabilities. The Basic Law also set out the rights, freedoms and duties of all persons residing in Oman.

75. **A representative of Oman** said that article 18 of the Basic Law of the State stated that dignity was a right of all persons and was not based on being an Omani national. Article 38 of the Basic Law provided for the right of access to justice, freedom from torture and unlawful arrest of foreign nationals and Omani citizens alike.

76. **A representative of Oman** said that a committee had been set up to ensure that all domestic laws were aligned with the international conventions and treaties to which Oman was party. Thanks to the online voting application, which used artificial intelligence, women's participation in elections had increased. Women accounted for 48 per cent of the electorate to the Shura Council and 65 per cent of voters to the Higher Council and the Shura Council. The Electoral Commission was chaired by a woman. Women could stand as

candidates and vote in municipal elections and, in fact, had been elected to serve on 12 municipal councils.

77. **A representative of Oman** said that the Government was working with some 60 NGOs to increase women's political participation. Many women had been the directors of NGOs, charities and professional organizations.

78. **A representative of Oman** said that one of the strategic goals of the 2021–2025 five-year development plan was to empower women so as to achieve a cohesive, inclusive society. Laws had been adopted to secure the economic and social empowerment of women through a human rights approach. Family policy was designed to enable women to reconcile work and family. A policy on teleworking for both mothers and fathers had been adopted. Nurseries had been set up to care for the children of working mothers. Efforts had been made to ensure that the relevant programmes were implemented by all departments and local authorities throughout the country. The Ministry of Social Development was drawing up a strategic action plan to promote women's participation in peace and security activities.

79. **Ms. Al Najjar (Oman)** said that women had taken part in all stages of the election to the Shura Council. Efforts had been made to analyse why more women did not stand for election. Coordinated action was needed to change mindsets, since it was necessary to make it clear that men did not have a monopoly over skills. It was to be hoped that a programme to identify women who would be willing to stand for election would bear fruit. It was difficult to convince electors to vote for women, despite the fact that women members of the Shura Council had played a fundamental role in devising laws. Every effort would be made to implement the Convention.

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80. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she wished to know what steps were being taken to challenge stereotypes. It was not clear why the school dropout rate for girls was so high. She wondered why more girls did not study subjects that would prepare them for jobs in the gas and oil industry. It would be useful to have an account of the challenges in persuading more girls to opt for vocational training. She wished to know what kind of violence was seen in schools. She would also appreciate an explanation of the low number of girls enrolled in the academic integration programme for persons with disabilities compared with the total number of young people with disabilities.

81. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that she wished to know what plans there were to mitigate gender bias in algorithms that might influence financial decisions such as the granting of bank loans. Were women at the forefront of the country's economic renaissance? The Committee would like to receive actual numbers of women in decision-making positions and the percentages of the quota for women in the innovation economy.

82. She wished to know how the Convention and Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework would be used to mitigate any risks to gender equality when designing smart cities. Would rural women have any part to play in those cities?

83. She would be grateful for information about action to address the difficult economic situation of women in rural areas, women in agriculture and women with disabilities. She would like to hear whether the State party would consider introducing parental leave of the same length for both the mother and the father of a child, or leave for the care of older members of the family.

84. She wished to know whether the State party would consider establishing an accountability mechanism for sexual harassment in the workplace. Would the new labour law close some of the existing gaps in the law on the protection of women domestic workers? It was unclear how the repatriation and deportation processes of migrants in an irregular situation operated and whether such migrants had access to legal aid. Lastly, she wished to know whether the State party would consider ratification of ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.