



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under
article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms
of Discrimination against Women**

**Replies of the United Arab Emirates to the list of issues and
questions in relation to its fourth periodic report***

[Date received: 9 August 2021]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Legislative framework and definition of discrimination against women

1. With reference to the Committee's previous recommendations ([CEDAW/C/ARE/CO/2-3](#), paras. 12 and 14) and in the light of the structural advancement foreseen in the Vision 2030, please indicate steps taken to ensure the precedence of the Convention over national laws and concrete measures taken to accelerate the process of incorporating the Convention into the national legal system in order to make its provisions directly applicable in the national courts. Please inform the Committee about measures taken to incorporate the principle of equality of women and men into the Constitution and to prohibit and sanction all forms of direct and indirect discrimination against women. Please also inform the Committee about concrete steps taken to repeal all discriminatory provisions in the State party's legislation, such as of the concept of male guardianship and the obligation imposed on women to obey their husband (art. 56 of the Personal Status Law). Please indicate measures taken to combat all forms of discrimination, including intersecting discrimination, and build an inclusive society.

1.1. The United Arab Emirates has demonstrated an absolute commitment to international laws and conventions. It has clearly shown that it is committed to adopting best practices with a view to achieving gender balance and ensuring that all residents of the country, particularly women, can enjoy a dignified life on an equal footing. The United Arab Emirates is now one of the 25 leading countries in the world as regards gender balance and gender equality in decision-making roles.

1.2. The United Arab Emirates is committed to implementing and upholding the provisions of the Convention at the national level, including by considering the applicability of the provisions of the Convention and by ensuring that they are consistent with national laws in national courts.

1.3. With regard to measures taken to incorporate the principle of equality between women and men into the Constitution and to prohibit and sanction all forms of discrimination against women: the Constitution guarantees that men and women are equal in rights, and laws are in place to support women and their role in social development. The most significant recent amendments to national legislation with a view to empowering women include the adoption of Federal Decree-Law No. 8, which provides that capacity for marriage consists of being of sound mind and having reached maturity, and that the age of maturity is 18 for anyone who has not been legally deemed to have reached maturity before then.

- The law on countering discrimination and hatred has been amended to include discrimination based on sex and gender.
- With regard to article 56 of the Personal Status Law, Federal Decree Law No. 5 (2020) amends certain provisions of Federal Law No. 28 (2005) concerning personal status; article 56 has been amended and paragraph 1 on willing obedience has been removed.
- At the institutional level, the United Arab Emirates Gender Balance Council was established in February 2015 with the aim of bridging the gender divide in all Government sectors, consolidating the Government's position in global competitiveness reports on the gender divide, and achieving gender balance in decision-making positions. Significant initiatives implemented by the Council include the launch of the Gender Balance Guide, the first of its kind in the world. Its purpose is to support gender balance in the workplace, and it is a key reference for private and public institutions regarding ways to bridge the gender divide and support the United Arab Emirates Vision 2021 and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Withdrawal of reservations and ratification of the Optional Protocol

2. Please describe progress made by the State party towards withdrawing or narrowing the scope of its reservations to articles 2 (f), 9, 15 (2), 16 and 29 (1) of the Convention and ratifying the Optional Protocol.

2.1. A working group has been established, chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and comprising several relevant ministries, with a view to considering withdrawing some of the reservations of the United Arab Emirates to the aforementioned articles of the Convention.

Women's rights and gender equality in relation to the pandemic and recovery efforts

3. In line with the Committee's guidance note on the obligations of States parties to the Convention in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, issued on 22 April 2020, please indicate the measures implemented by the State party: to redress long-standing inequalities between women and men and to give a new impetus to the implementation of gender equality by placing women at the centre of recovery as a strategic priority for sustainable change, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals; to meet the needs and uphold the rights of women and girls, including those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups and women in situations of conflict or other humanitarian emergencies; and to ensure that, in the context of lockdown measures, whether partial or total, and in post-crisis recovery plans women and girls are not relegated to stereotypical gender roles. Please indicate the measures in place to ensure that all COVID-19 crisis responses and recovery efforts: effectively address and are aimed at preventing gender-based violence against women and girls; guarantee the equal participation of women and girls in political and public life, decision-making, economic empowerment and service delivery, particularly in the design and implementation of recovery programmes; and are designed so that women and girls benefit equally from stimulus packages, including financial support for unpaid care roles, that are aimed at mitigating the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic. Please explain how the State party is ensuring that measures taken to contain the pandemic, such as restrictions on freedom of movement or physical distancing, do not limit access by women and girls, including those from disadvantaged and marginalized groups, to justice, shelters, education, employment and health care, including sexual and reproductive health services.

3.1. In an effort to combat the pandemic and mitigate its effects, particularly on women, the Government of the United Arab Emirates has adopted a series of laws, regulations and decisions consistent with the recommendations and guiding principles issued by United Nations human rights bodies and by specialized international organizations. The most important are as follows:

- The General Women's Union has launched an initiative entitled "Be the bridge to safety" to promote women's physical and mental health in the pandemic. The aim of the initiative is to build women's capacity to address emerging societal trends. The initiative is based on three main components, namely women's physical and mental health; successful life management; and maintaining a safe home environment. For those purposes, capacity-building programmes have been introduced to ensure the best use of time, and guidelines on a safe home environment have been formulated. Experts have used social media platforms to publicize awareness-raising programmes, physical and mental health guidelines and other relevant content. Thus far, 24 videos have been published and four dialogue sessions have been held.

- Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the United Arab Emirates has allowed pregnant women and mothers with children in the ninth grade or lower to work remotely as an early preventative measure to protect them from contracting the virus.
- Protecting girls has been a special priority for the Government of the United Arab Emirates. The Fatima bint Mubarak programme, organized in cooperation with the General Women's Union, has introduced mobile telemedicine clinics for women and girls. The initiative is the first of its kind in the region. It includes a specialized clinic for women and children; clinical examination units for women and children; a unit for laboratory testing of glucose and lipid levels and kidney and liver disease; an electrocardiogram and cardiac stress test unit; and an awareness-raising unit, which provides specialized telemedicine services overseen by top-level volunteer doctors, particularly for women and children in quarantine or isolation with confirmed or suspected coronavirus infections, especially those with chronic diseases.
- The United Arab Emirates has provided access to laboratory analysis, tests and treatment for all coronavirus patients, without discriminating between nationals and residents. Top-quality drive-through test sites, staffed by qualified and trained medical and technical staff, have been established across the country, as part of the preventive and precautionary measures implemented by the Government to control the pandemic. A home testing programme has been introduced to focus on older persons, pregnant women and persons with disabilities.
- Since the pandemic began, the Ministry of Education and relevant actors in the country have introduced remote learning, which has had significant positive effect by allowing male and female pupils to continue their studies. The Ministry has taken several steps to secure positive knowledge outcomes in remote learning. A week of specialized training was provided to more than 25,000 teachers and administrators in Government schools and more than 9,200 teachers and principals in private schools. Training has focused on how teachers can hold virtual meetings that optimize the remote learning process.
- The United Arab Emirates has taken every measure to care for, empower and mainstream persons with disabilities (people of determination) by ensuring that they enjoy their full rights to education, work, housing and transport, and that they receive the highest standard of services in all institutions and facilities. Such persons have a pivotal role to play in building and developing the country; they are effective participants in national progress and stability. As a precautionary and preventive health and safety measure, the Government has launched a national home testing programme for national and resident people of determination. The programme is aimed at categories of people of determination who are not easily able to access test centres, particularly those who have difficulties in moving, expressing themselves or communicating with others. Some 650,000 tests have been administered to person with disabilities.
- During the pandemic, remote work has enabled women to support children of school age; created innovation opportunities for women entrepreneurs; helped them to promote their products and services, and encouraged greater numbers of women to enter the trade and manufacturing sectors, enhancing their contribution to sustainable development in the country.
- All public hospitals are committed to admitting and treating all emergency patients, even if they do not have a social insurance card or if it is not in date. Public hospitals cover 100 per cent of diagnosis and treatment costs for women who have contracted COVID-19.

Access to justice

4. Please describe measures taken to raise women's awareness of their rights and measures taken to raise men's awareness of women's rights, in particular in rural and remote areas, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice. Please provide information on the legal remedies available to women to complain about gender-based discrimination. Please also provide information on the situation of women human rights defenders and measures taken to ensure freedom of expression and respect for legal procedures in cases of arrest and detention, in line with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules). In the light of general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations and of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security, please indicate measures taken to ensure the protection of women against war crimes and violence and their effective participation in peace processes.

4.1. Women have access to justice on an equal footing with men in all cases. The Government has appointed a number of female judges to federal and local courts. Women are encouraged to work as lawyers or legal advisers. The Ministry of Justice has organized annual training sessions for female lawyers, legal advisers and law graduates. The training includes all civil, criminal and procedural laws related to litigation and human rights. The trend towards electronic judicial proceedings is improving women's access to justice throughout the country, whether in cities or in remote areas and villages. All court services and filing of claims take place through the websites of the court and of the Ministry of Justice. A specific link exists for receiving claims.

4.2. National laws have helped with prevention and with protecting the rights of victims of domestic abuse. Practical channels and courses of action are available to ensure that victims have easy access to justice and redress. The Ministry of the Interior has established a Human Rights Department with a branch responsible for protecting women and children, which monitors and reports on domestic and family violence. Other competent bodies include the Child Protection Centre of the Ministry of the Interior, the Department for the Protection of Women and Children under the General Department for Human Rights of the Dubai Police Command, the Human Rights Office at the Abu Dhabi General Police Command and the Federal Department of Social Support Centres, which is responsible for social support centres at the general command level and for police stations at the command level. Those bodies handle relevant cases and respond immediately and swiftly to requests for assistance.

4.3. The Ministry of the Interior has taken a number of measures to ensure that women are aware of their rights. Female inmates in penal and correctional institutions are provided with services and all forms of care. Conferences, workshops, seminars, lectures, events and training sessions are organized. The measures taken are as follows:

- Female inmates are entitled to specific conditions: the guards and service staff assigned to them are women, and facilities for women are overseen by a female social worker and a female psychologist. Custodial sentences may be deferred until three months after the birth. Pregnant inmates are entitled to exemption from work in the facility. They are given the health care they need, including food and sleep, and are taken to hospital once the due date is near. The child is kept until the age of two lunar years, or is handed over to a person chosen by the inmate who has custody rights. If there is nobody with custody rights, the child is taken into care; the mother is informed, and visits are facilitated for her.

The birth certificate does not state that the child was born in a penal institution or hospital, or that its mother was detained. Penal and correctional institutions provide the children of female inmates with all the necessary equipment and services. They take in children who arrived with their mothers and those who were born while their mothers were in custody. A female paediatrician provides them with all types of health care.

- The commission responsible for periodic inspections of penal and reform institutions ensures that they comply with the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and with the occupational health and safety rules for such institutions.
- The following conferences, workshops, seminars, lectures, events and training sessions have been organized:
 - Six conferences, colloquiums, workshops and gatherings have been held for a total of 173 participants and 50 employers, addressing issues involving women with disabilities and mechanisms for empowering women and eliminating racial discrimination, preventing violence against women, and ensuring that women know and enjoy their rights.
 - Seven lectures have been convened, for a total of 1,220 participants, tackling such issues as balancing home responsibilities and work pressures, and women’s rights in the Personal Status Law.
 - 14 training sessions have been organized, for a total of 408 participants, on the rights and responsibilities of working women, training female managers, and the positive empowerment of women.
 - 337 awareness-raising meetings have been held for 22,665 participants, covering the rights and responsibilities of working women and the role of Emirati women in maintaining the country’s safety and security.
 - Four events and festivals involving women have been organized, for a total of 2,066 participants, celebrating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Women’s Day and Emirati Women’s Day.
- The Ministry of the Interior has taken part in numerous visits to examine and apply best practices in the areas of labour, the empowerment of women and the protection of women’s rights. It took part in a workshop to raise awareness of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women, peace and security; a training session on gender in peace operations; and a dialogue session convened by the General Women’s Union in Abu Dhabi concerning the outcomes of a scoping study on the situation of women with disabilities in the United Arab Emirates.
- The Ministry has set up several free numbers, hotlines, electronic systems, applications and social media networks to receive complaints and communications. These are handled with absolute transparency and confidentiality. Communications involving domestic abuse are transmitted to investigators and specialists.
- Federal Decree Law-No. 10 (2019) on protection from domestic violence, which criminalizes violence against women, was issued at the end of 2019.

4.4. Empowering women and girls is one of the three priorities set out in the United Arab Emirates foreign assistance policy 2017–2021. It is also a strategic focus area of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates. The Government of the United Arab Emirates is convinced that women and girls, as drivers of positive change, have the capacity to develop their societies for the

better. Accordingly, it is committed to advancing the role of women across decision-making areas, particularly in the following ways:

- The United Arab Emirates supports the role of women in peacekeeping. It is a founding member of the network of the Women and Peace and Security Focal Points Network and participated in the adoption of Security Council resolution [2242 \(2015\)](#). It is also an international investor in that area, having invested \$2 billion in 113 States to put in place programmes to protect and empower women and girls.
- The foreign assistance strategy of the United Arab Emirates is focused on empowering women and girls at the global level through a strategy for that purpose. The United Arab Emirates is committed to increasing the foreign assistance allocated to the empowerment and protection of women and girls so that it accounts for a high proportion of the overall funds. The United Arab Emirates believes that that goal, which includes the realization of gender equality and the empowerment and protection of women and girls, is consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

National machinery for the advancement of women

5. With reference to the Committee's previous recommendations ([CEDAW/C/ARE/CO/2-3](#), para. 18 (a) to (c)), please provide detailed information on the mandate, status and authority of the General Women's Union and on its relationship with relevant ministries and women's institutions. Please also provide information on the human, technical and financial resources from the national budget allocated to the General Women's Union. Please describe the impact of the implementation of the national strategy for the empowerment of Emirati women for the period 2015–2021 on women's rights and the level of involvement of civil society in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of plans (para. 10), in line with target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals.¹ Please indicate whether gender-responsive budgeting is mandatory for all government departments and whether specific budgetary benchmarks have been defined. Please provide information on concrete steps taken to establish a national human rights institution in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).

5.1. With regard to the first part of the question, concerning the mandate, status and authority of the General Women's Union and on its relationship with relevant ministries and women's institutions:

- The General Women's Union was established on 27 August 1975 under Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak as the national mechanism for the advancement and empowerment of women in the United Arab Emirates. It is the official umbrella organization supporting the Government's efforts in the area of women's issues in local, regional and international forums with a view to empowering and supporting Emirati women, and increasing the involvement of Emirati women in the sustainable development process by all available means at the local, regional and international levels.
- The General Women's Union works continuously to put in place policies, plans, programmes and initiatives to help strengthen the role of women, build their capacities and remove obstacles to their participation in all areas of life. The aim is to ensure that women take their rightful place as trailblazers in all local, regional and international forums and achieve global standards of excellence through privileged partnerships, high skills and services based on best practices.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, paragraph numbers refer to fourth periodic report of the State party.

For that purpose, it works with all sectors of society, both individuals and institutions, to build capacities and involve them in supporting and empowering women. The General Women's Union takes a participative approach when working with its constituent governmental associations (Dubai Women's Association, the Sharjah Women's Union, the Umm Al Moumineen Association and Nahdah Women's Association). That approach underscores the importance of concerted efforts to strengthen the role of women in all areas.

- The United Arab Emirates National Strategy for the Advancement of Women was launched in 2002 and updated for the period 2015–2021. It provides a framework for federal and local governmental institutions, civil society institutions and the private sector to implement initiatives supporting women's empowerment. It consists of a national programme aimed at guaranteeing equal opportunities between men and women in Government institutions and ensuring the adoption of appropriate policies and mechanisms in order to advance women's rights and effectively mainstream women's development needs in Government plans and strategies. It has the following objectives:
 - To contribute to the formulation of policies related to women
 - To review public policies related to women; propose the necessary amendments with a view to empowering women; determine priorities, plans and initiatives; and participate in the formulation of national comprehensive sustainable development plans for each sector relevant to women's issues
 - To build women's capacities, develop their skills and empower them to participate effectively in sustainable development, and thereby to help integrate them in all areas and at all levels
 - To conduct research and studies on women's issues
 - To review and propose amendments to laws related to women
 - To represent the Government in regional and international forums related to women.
- With regard to the relationship of the General Women's Union with relevant ministries and women's institutions:
 - Since its establishment, the General Women's Union has worked with federal and local Government institutions and with civil society institutions to mainstream women's development needs through two strategic plans, the first covering the period 2002–2014 and the second 2015–2021. Those strategies are the most significant initiatives put forward by the General Women's Union. They provide a framework for federal and local governmental institutions, civil society institutions and the private sector to implement initiatives supporting women's empowerment. They consist of a national programme aimed at guaranteeing equal opportunities between men and women in Government institutions and ensuring the adoption of appropriate policies and mechanisms in order to advance women's rights and effectively mainstream women's development needs in Government plans and strategies. Women have acquired numerous rights and made gains that make them a model at the Arab and global levels.
- With regard to gender-responsive budgeting: the United Arab Emirates is working with the Ministry of Finance and the International Monetary Fund to ensure gender balance in the national budget. The aim is to strengthen gender balance at the global level by introducing and applying best global standards and practices.

5.2. In mid-December 2020, the Council of Ministers established the National Human Rights Authority in accordance with the Paris Principles. On 20 April 2021, the Federal National Council debated the draft law and approved it at its tenth session. Federal Law No. 12 (2021) on the National Human Rights Authority was then adopted and published in the *Official Gazette*.

Temporary special measures

6. Please indicate whether the State party has adopted temporary special measures, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, aimed at accelerating achievement of the substantive equality of women and men in all areas in which women are still underrepresented or disadvantaged, in particular in political and public life, education and employment.

6.1. Over the last five years, numerous decisions and decrees concerning women's empowerment have been adopted, including the following:

- A binding decision concerning a 50 per cent quota for women's representation in the Federal National Council (Parliament) and the right of women to vote and run for office
- A binding decision concerning the representation of women on boards of directors in financial markets and Government agencies
- Federal Decree Law No. 6 (2020) amending the Labour Law with the following text for article 32:
- "Women shall be given the same wages as men if they undertake the same work or work of equal value"; a decision concerning equal wages and salaries for men and women in the private sector;
- A decision of the Central Bank concerning equal access for men and women to loans, credit and all banking transactions
- A decision on the representation of women in the judiciary.

Discriminatory stereotypes and harmful practices

7. Please provide detailed information on measures taken to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society and their impact, including awareness-raising and educational programmes and media campaigns to convey positive images of women as active participants in economic, social and political life. Please indicate measures taken to address discriminatory gender stereotypes, negative portrayals of women and all forms of objectification of women in the media and advertisements and their results. Please also indicate measures taken to ensure the effective enforcement of the minimum age of marriage at 18 years, eliminate exceptions, including in religious marriages, and prohibit polygamy, in line with joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices.

7.1. The Family Status Law has been amended to ensure equality in marital roles and in family relationship rights, and to fix the age of marriage at 18 solar years.

7.2. On 9 November 2020, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) launched an initiative to expand the representation of women and men in non-traditional roles, empower women and strengthen gender equality. The initiative is the first of its kind in the Middle East, and the sixth in the world. It was launched in the United Arab Emirates with support

from the General Women's Union in cooperation with seven national and global companies, media makers in the United Arab Emirates, and the premier festival of creativity in the Middle East and North Africa region. Those actors came together to empower women of all backgrounds, ethnicities and cultures to build a world based on gender equality. The initiative, whose purpose is to change stereotypes in advertising, represents an intellectual and practical foundation for the elimination of harmful gender stereotypes on all media content platforms.

8. In line with joint general recommendation No. 31/general comment No. 18, please provide information on legislative and other measures adopted to eradicate harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, child marriage and polygamy, in the State party, including by promoting changes in attitude, in particular in rural areas.

8.1. With regard to legislative and other measures adopted to eradicate harmful practices: such procedures are not performed at medical centres or hospitals. They have not been reported among members of society, and no complaint to that effect has been received. That traditional practice has died as a result of sociocultural progress.

Gender-based violence against women

9. In line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, please provide information on:

(a) Steps taken to repeal article 356 of the Penal Code and to promptly release women and girls convicted of zina offences, especially foreign women who are victims of sexual violence and abuse;

(b) The number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions and the sentences imposed under Federal Decree-Law No. 10 (2019) on protection against domestic violence (para. 42), disaggregated by age and relationship between the perpetrator and the victim;

(c) Measures taken to end all forms of gender-based violence against women, including physical, psychological and domestic violence, marital rape, honour crimes, online violence and sexual harassment;

(d) Measures taken to allocate sufficient human, financial and technical resources for prevention, investigation, punishment and reparation, as well as measures taken to stamp out impunity in cases of gender-based violence against women;

(e) Capacity-building programmes provided for the judiciary, police officers and other law enforcement officials on the implementation of Federal Decree-Law No. 10 (2019).

Re: 9 (a): Federal Decree-Law No. 15 (2020) amends certain provisions of the Penal Code promulgated in Law No. 3 (1987). One such provision is article 356. The offence of consensual indecent acts is repealed; the criminalization now covers only consensual indecent acts involving deceit, threat or coercion, or cases in which the victim is a child or a person unable to give consent owing to youth or lack of understanding caused by mental disability. Article 334 of the Penal Code, which allowed for leniency in cases of killing or physical assault connected with honour crimes, is also repealed. Article 359 makes it a criminal offence to subject women to any speech, or actions on a public road or in a well-frequented place, i.e. a place accessible to the public. That provision protects women from bullying and abuse through words or explicit gestures.

9 (b) The Government has issued Federal Law No. 10 (2019) concerning protection from family violence. The law provides measures on confronting family violence on

any member of the family, especially women and children, in any form (physical violence, sexual violence and economic violence).

9 (c) The Government of the United Arab Emirates has adopted a family protection policy aimed at strengthening a social fabric that can protect family members and safeguard the integrity and rights of the family, and thus strengthen the role of the family and its effective participation in social development. The policy specifies six forms of family violence, including sexual violence. Protection and intervention measures include a harmonized mechanism to submit and receive complaints, assess the impact and ensure a rapid response at the Government level; the formulation and application of a guide to standards and best practices for primary prevention; the creation and amendment of administrative structures within the competent bodies, such as courts, prosecutors' offices and hospitals, to include protection units staffed by protection specialists, i.e. social workers and psychologists; the establishment of a specialized centre to receive and shelter victims, provide the necessary services, and put in place an appropriate response plan to help each victim to resolve their problems.

9 (d) On 3 April 2001, the General Women's Union established a new Visitation Office, whose purpose is to create an appropriate environment for children to meet their relatives in families experiencing disputes or conflict. The office was established on instructions from Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, who is committed to ensuring that the people of the United Arab Emirates enjoy family and psychological stability and, hence, a good upbringing. Her Highness directed that the Headquarters of the General Women's Union should be the place where child visitations take place, in order to avoid the negative effects that occur when visitations take place in police stations or similar locations. This makes it easier for children to meet with their fathers and mothers, and for the competent offices to coordinate for that purpose. The office also provides family counselling. It now comprises four visitation centres for children in care. The centres are important in that they implement the decisions of family courts under the judicial circuit responsible for visitations of national and resident children in care. Their staff include experts and officers specialized in mitigating the negative effects on children in care and their mothers.

9 (e) The Ministry of the Interior has taken the following actions to build the capacities of staff who receive and interact with victims so that they can provide the best standards of care consistent with the circumstances and the need for privacy; strengthen the capacity of victims of family violence to confront challenges and social pressures when tackling their problems at each stage; providing counselling and supportive advisory services; and putting in place prevention and treatment programmes and awareness-raising initiatives:

- Organizing training sessions and a dialogue meeting for senior female police officers entitled "Stopping violence against women"
- Organizing various activities, in cooperation with civil society organizations, in connection with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
- Making available specific rooms for victims and female witnesses, and receiving all victims of family violence offences
- Continuing to train male and female investigators at police stations and social service centres on issues involving the investigation of family violence
- Concluding an agreement with the Department of Social Services for joint cooperation in solving problems involving violence against women

- Convening several courses to tackle social trends related to family violence, as follows:
 - A course on investigating offences involving violence or assault against children
 - A course on handling family violence issues
 - Two courses on safeguarding from violence
- Implementing awareness-raising initiatives for specialist social workers with a view to improving their skills in supporting victims and providing family and societal support. Examples include an initiative entitled “Supportive culture for a safe society” initiative, and one entitled “Informed youth and a safe nation”, whose purpose is to tackle violence-related social problems around the family
- Participating in a radio discussion for the *Aman ya baladi* programme on how the police can safeguard the victims of crime.

10. Please indicate whether acts of gender-based violence against women are subject to ex officio prosecution, including in cases of withdrawal of the complaint or the absence of testimony by the victim in court, and how the non-prosecution of the victim and the confidentiality of the proceedings are ensured. Please indicate measures taken to ensure that:

(a) Protection orders are issued immediately and are effectively monitored and enforced in domestic violence cases;

(b) An enabling environment is created to encourage victims to report incidents of domestic violence, and that victims are informed about the importance of obtaining a permanent protection order and of not withdrawing their complaint upon reconciliation with the perpetrator;

(c) Gender bias, discriminatory stereotypes, patriarchal attitudes and victim-blaming beliefs among the judiciary, police officers, religious and traditional leaders, teachers and health professionals are eliminated, and that those persons are made aware of the specific risks and protection needs of women heads of household, women and girls who are domestic workers, migrant women and girls and women and girls with disabilities;

(d) Support services, shelters, medical and legal assistance, psychosocial assistance and reparations are available to victims of gender-based violence against women;

(e) The levels of funding for victim support services in the State budget are sufficient, in particular in rural and remote areas.

10.1. The Ministry of the Interior has taken the following steps to protect the rights of family violence victims:

- Mechanisms have been put in place to receive complaints and statements regarding the rights of family violence victims, including the following:
 - Victims who cannot travel to the centre are helped by means of civilian vehicles and given access to social workers and psychologists
 - The council of victims initiative is being stepped up in cooperation with the Department of Councils of Victims in the Emirate of Sharjah so that victims can be received in the evening
 - Victims’ rights offices have been established in social service centres and police stations

The social service centres under the Ministry of the Interior focus on immediate mobilization, responding rapidly to requests for support, and staying with the victim to alleviate their panic. When interacting with family violence victims, the severity of the case is assessed: the scale of the abuse and wounds is evaluated, and treatment options are identified. At that stage, the victim is reassured and offered psychological and social support. Once they have stabilized and their panic has subsided, the necessary information is collected, and the situation is examined by meeting with the people involved, clearing up the facts of the case and gathering the necessary information. On that basis, the problem can be resolved and followed up or referred to legal agencies.

10.2. Centres for the recruitment and employment of domestic workers (Tadbeer) have an obligation to receive domestic workers who come to them after being subjected to violence or abuse by employers, and to provide the necessary support including shelter, food and alternative work opportunities, as needed. Tadbeer centres also have an obligation to organize awareness-raising training sessions for expatriate domestic workers as soon as they arrive in the country and before they start work, to inform them of their legal rights, including the right to protection from any form of discrimination or violence. Domestic workers are also made aware of the various channels provided by the Government to receive complaints and offer shelter, whether by telephone, electronic means or in person, and whether through the Ministry of Human Resources or other Government institutions. All those channels provide the necessary confidentiality in order to protect the victim. A guide has been compiled for all employers and workers in order to raise awareness of the rights and obligations of both parties, including with regard to discrimination and harassment. The guide is available at all Tadbeer centres, which have an obligation to show or give a copy to employers when they hire a domestic worker.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

11. Please provide information on measures taken to protect women and girls who have been trafficked and to amend any legislation that may treat victims as women having consensual sex outside of marriage, which is punishable with detention in the State party. Please indicate the number of women and girls identified as victims of trafficking and the rehabilitation and reintegration services provided to them, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration. Please specify measures taken to dismantle sex tourism networks and investigate reports of trafficking in organs affecting women and girls. Please provide information on ongoing progress and steps taken with a view to dismantling the kafalah system and ensuring that migrant workers can enter, reside in and leave the country and change employers without being dependent on an individual employer or company. Please provide information on steps taken to combat trafficking into forced labour and provide data on the number of related prosecutions and convictions in the past two years.

11.1. Measures taken by the Office of the Public Prosecutor to protect women and girls who have been victims of human trafficking:

- Specific places are made available for women's statements to be taken by the Office of the Public Prosecutor in order to protect their privacy. Play areas are available in the event that the victim is a child or has come with a child.
- The victim's statement is taken down only if she is prepared for that to happen.
- The following measures are taken by the police when gathering evidence, the prosecutor when investigating and the courts when conducting a trial:

- Victims are to be informed of their legal rights in a language they can understand and granted an opportunity to express their legal and social needs;
- If it becomes clear that she needs it, the victim is taken to any medical facility to receive psychiatric or physical treatment and placed in a medical or psychiatric rehabilitation centre if necessary;
- The victim is sheltered at the Abu Dhabi Shelter and Humanitarian Care Centre;
- The victim is allowed to stay in the country if the investigation or trial so require;
- The court may appoint a lawyer to represent her at her request, and it pays the lawyers' fees;
 - Human trafficking victims are exempt from fees associated with civil claims for compensation for harm owing to exploitation in human trafficking offences.

11.2. With regard to consensual sexual relations outside marriage:

Federal Decree-Law No. 14 (2020) of 27 September 2020 has been adopted and published in issue No. 687 of the *Official Gazette*, dated 30 September 2020. One amendment is that, further to the new changes, the law no longer criminalizes consensual sexual activity. The Law still criminalizes consensual sexual activity if the victim, whether male or female, is under the age of 14; if the victim cannot consent owing to young age, insanity or mental disability; if the perpetrator is close being a first-degree relative of the victim, or is responsible for their education or regular care, or has authority over a victim who is a minor. The courts have returned a not-guilty verdict for all women against whom a claim had been filed in that connection before the Penal Code was amended. The verdicts were returned in accordance with the principle of the more favourable law enshrined in article 13 of the Penal Code, which provides as follows: "If, after an offence has occurred but before a judgment has been handed down, a law more favourable to the defendant is adopted, that law shall be applied to the exclusion of other laws (...)". When a final sentence has been handed down, its enforcement is suspended and any legal effect arising therefrom is rescinded, in accordance with the following provision of article 13 of the Penal Code: "If, after a final judgment is handed down, a law is adopted decriminalizing the act or omission of which the defendant was found guilty, the sentence shall be suspended and its effects shall be rescinded".

11.3. The Government has established centres and institutes in which care and shelter are provided in a professional manner. They are as follows: the Abu Dhabi Centre for Shelter and Humanitarian Care, the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children, and the Aman Shelter for Women and Children. Those entities house all victims of human trafficking across the country. They implement several programmes designed to provide all necessary forms of support for victims promptly and fairly, without discrimination on the grounds of race or gender. From the time when they are taken into care up until their departure, human trafficking victims receive a package of services from their countries' embassies and from places of worship, either directly or through law enforcement agencies. One significant initiative to support victims is the Human Trafficking Victims Support Fund, which was established pursuant to National Committee decision No. 32/7 (2014). In 2020, the National Committee was able to spend 143,500 United Arab Emirates dirhams for human trafficking victims in the centres and institutes run by the Government of the United Arab Emirates that

provide them with care and shelter. The total value of assistance provided by the Fund since its establishment thus comes to 1,113,700 dirhams, or more than \$300,000.

11.4. Decisions No. 765 (2015) and No. 766 (2015) of the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation address the issue of the restrictions on the freedom of male and female workers when transferring from one entity to another. They allow labourers to end their work relationship and transfer to a new entity in accordance with specific parameters, and set out measures for labourers to receive a new work permit for the new employer, once the contractual relationship between the two parties has come to an end. By virtue of those decisions, labourers now have the right to end their work relationship and leave the country whenever they wish.

11.5. Federal Law No. 1 (2015) amends certain provisions of Federal Law No. 51 (2006) concerning the prevention of human trafficking. Most of the amendments are intended to provide additional guarantees for the victims, in accordance with article 1 *bis*. By virtue of the amendments, victims cannot be held accountable under criminal or civil law for any of the offences set forth in the Federal Law concerning the prevention of human trafficking when those offences result from or are directly connected with the fact that the person is the victim of a crime. That principle is set out in article 11, 1 *bis* of Federal Law No. 1 (2015) amending certain provisions of Federal Law No. 51 (2006). Because it is enshrined in federal law, that provision must be implemented effectively: it is binding on all agencies and authorities that deal with victims in the country, including law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices, the judiciary and other actors. The provision states that nobody shall be held criminally or civilly accountable who was forced to perform unlawful activities. An example would be a victim who was instructed, against their will, to oversee and manage the location where the crime of human trafficking was committed. Even though that act is a component of the offence of human trafficking, the legal provision requires that the person not be held criminally or civilly accountable. Similarly, nobody shall be held civilly or criminally accountable who performed an unlawful act as a direct result of being a victim of human trafficking. An example would be someone who has committed the offence of prostitution, which is punishable under national legislation, if that act was directly connected to their being a victim of crime.

12. Please clarify whether women in prostitution in the State party are subjected to administrative fines and/or criminal penalties. Please describe measures taken to:

- (a) Discourage the demand for prostitution;
- (b) Ensure access to health care, including HIV testing and treatment, and modern contraceptives, including condoms, for women in prostitution and provide exit programmes and alternative income opportunities to enable them to leave prostitution;
- (c) Address the root causes of the exploitation of women in prostitution and their stigmatization.

Participation in political and public life

13. Please provide updated data on the extension of increased representation of women in the political sphere to all public sectors, in particular the judiciary, including the Constitutional Court, the police, public services and the security sector. Please indicate measures taken to address factors that deter women from participating in political and public life, including their limited representation in decision-making positions.

13.1. In the most recent ministerial reshuffle in the United Arab Emirates, in 2020, the number of women in ministerial posts rose to nine, or 28 per cent. Those women are in charge of new and important portfolios. In recent years, a woman served as

Speaker of the Federal National Council. Emirati women hold diplomatic posts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. As at 2019, 234 women were members of the diplomatic and consular service at Ministry headquarters, and 42 worked in the diplomatic service in foreign missions for the United Arab Emirates. There are seven female ambassadors in the diplomatic service in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. In the Federal National Council, there is 50–50 parity between men and women. Female nationals account for 51.35 per cent of employees in the Government sector and 57 per cent in the private sector. Women account for 24 per cent of judges in the United Arab Emirates and 46 per cent of youth representatives on boards of directors of federal authorities. In 2019, 92 per cent of education sector staff were women. In the health sector, women accounted for 81 per cent of doctors and assistant doctors. Women accounted for 65 per cent of staff in the information and culture sector; 60 per cent in managerial and assistant-managerial roles; 51 per cent of staff in engineering and engineering-related professions; and 34 per cent of scientists working on the Hope probe.

Nationality

14. With reference to the Committee's previous recommendations ([CEDAW/C/ARE/CO/2-3](#), para. 36), please provide information on concrete steps taken to continue to adapt national legislation to grant Emirati women the same rights as Emirati men to acquire, change and retain their nationality and to confer it on their children and foreign spouse. Please inform the Committee about measures taken to regularize the situation of stateless families, including Bedouin communities, and ensure their right to a nationality without discrimination. Please update the Committee on steps taken to ratify the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto, the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

14.1. By virtue of Federal Decree-Law No. 16 (2017), the Government has amended Federal Law No. 17 (1972) concerning nationality and passports. A new article 10 *bis* has been added, reading as follows: "Nationality may be conferred on the male and female children of a female national married to a foreign man after a period of no less than six years has elapsed from the date of birth, provided that the woman has enjoyed nationality from the time of the birth up until the time of the application for citizenship, in accordance with conditions to be defined in the implementing regulation".

Education

15. Please describe measures, including temporary special measures, taken to increase school enrolment and completion rates among girls, including migrant girls and girls with disabilities, at all levels of education, in particular in rural and remote areas. Please provide information on measures taken to continue to enhance access by women and girls to non-traditional fields of study and careers, in particular science, technology, engineering and mathematics and information and communications technology, and to the Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence. Please also indicate measures taken to eliminate discriminatory gender stereotypes in school curricula. Please provide updated information on progress made in introducing inclusive education for women and girls with disabilities at all levels of the education system. Please provide information on specific measures to increase the enrolment and literacy rates of women and girls at all levels of the education system. Please indicate school dropout rates, disaggregated by sex, race, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status and geographical location, and measures being taken to address the problem. Please provide information on the delivery of comprehensive and age-appropriate sexuality education at all levels of the education system.

15.1. In order to ensure the right to integrated education, including for girls with disabilities, the Ministry of Community Development has been able to mainstream male and female pupils with hearing disabilities in general schools. That action was taken in the conviction that such children have a right to receive an integrated education, alongside their peers. Government and private rehabilitation centres for people of determination have stopped enrolling males and females with hearing disabilities. Instead, those children are directly enrolled in general education. That step completes previous integration measures undertaken for persons with physical and visual disabilities.

15.2. Females now account for 56 per cent of graduates specializing in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and innovation in Government universities. Women account for 55 per cent of bachelor's degree holders, 41 per cent of master's degree holders and 48 per cent of doctoral degree holders.

15.3. Federal Law No. 29 (2006) on the rights of persons with disabilities, as amended by Federal Law No. 14 (2009), provides as follows: "the State shall guarantee for persons with special needs equal opportunities for education in all educational establishments, professional training, and adult and continuing education, whether in regular or special classes. The curriculum shall be made available in sign language, Braille or any other medium, as necessary". The Ministry of Education manages several training programmes and facilities aimed at meeting the needs of children with determination, their guardians and kindergarten teachers. The programmes include guidance on interacting with persons with auditive and visual disabilities; talent-mapping programmes; learning sign language; and children with language disorders. The Ministry has established support programmes to monitor and assess the progress made by children with determination before and after they are mainstreamed at school. The centres provide various services, including personalized diagnosis of pupils with disabilities or learning difficulties. They offer advice and assistance for guardians to handle the child's condition, and show them where they can access services appropriate for that condition.

15.4. Please provide information on specific measures to increase the enrolment and literacy rates of women and girls at all levels of the education system. The following statistics on student enrolment for 2020 show that there are more female than male students in every Emirate of the country. They also show female enrolment rates in higher education, non-traditional fields and technology.

School Category 2020

<i>Applied</i>		<i>Continuing</i>		<i>Private</i>		<i>Public</i>		<i>Tertiary education</i>		<i>Grand Total</i>
<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	
3 782	4 553	10 910	13 695	58 952	54 865	168 455	158 524	86 521	51 680	611 937

Employment

16. Please describe measures taken to reduce unemployment among women and enhance their access to formal employment, address occupational segregation and close the gender pay gap. Please indicate measures taken to extend labour and social protection to women working in the informal economy. Please provide information on measures taken to encourage women to seek employment in traditionally male-dominated professions such as science, technology, artificial intelligence and engineering and in management positions, and provide relevant statistical data. Please also provide information on steps taken to incorporate a comprehensive definition of sexual harassment into the State party's labour legislation applicable to both the private and public sectors and to provide for access to effective remedies. Please

provide information on the number and outcomes of complaints by women about discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace and the effectiveness of labour inspections and other oversight mechanisms in the State party. Please indicate reforms that the State party is undertaking to ensure compliance with legislation on domestic workers (paras. 86–88), including the number of labour inspections of private households and the fines imposed on abusive employers. Please provide information about measures taken to ratify the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), of the International Labour Organization. Please provide information on measures taken to enable young mothers to return to work, including by promoting flexible working arrangements, equal sharing of family responsibilities by women and men, adequate childcare facilities and incentives for employers.

16.1. As regards closing the gender wage gap, Federal Decree-Law No. 6 (2020) has been adopted amending Federal Law No. 8 (1980) regulating labour relations. Article 1 of the Decree-Law provides that article 23 of the Law shall be replaced with the following text: “Women shall have the same remuneration as men for the same work or work of equal value. Standards for assessing work of equal value shall be set out in a decision of the Council of Ministers further to a recommendation of the Minister”.

16.2. With regard to measures taken to extend labour protection for women and enhance their access to employment:

- Labour laws and the Penal Code have been developed in the following ways in order to guarantee the elimination of workplace discrimination against women and gender-based violence, particularly sexual harassment:
- By virtue of Federal Decree-Law No. 6 (2019), a new article 7 *bis* was added to the Labour Law prohibiting any discrimination between individuals that would weaken equal opportunities or undermine employment access and retention and the enjoyment of employment rights. Discrimination between individuals is also prohibited in jobs that entail the same employment duties.
- A new article 30 *bis* was added prohibiting employers from ending the service of working women or giving them a redundancy notice owing to pregnancy or during that period. Termination of the work relationship in such instances is deemed arbitrary.
- The Decree-Law abrogates all the legal provisions that prohibited women from working at night or in jobs detrimental to health or morals. The Minister of Labour has been tasked with issuing a ministerial decision regulating women’s employment without discrimination while granting them the necessary protection.
- With regard to sexual harassment, the Federal Penal Code was amended by virtue of Decree No. 4 (2019). A new article 359 *bis* was added defining sexual harassment as any repeated and insistent annoyance of others through acts, words or gestures such as would offend their modesty with a view to eliciting a response to the sexual desires of the perpetrator or another person.
- The Decree provides that sexual harassment is an offence for which the prescribed penalty must be imposed if the perpetrator has employment authority over the victim. That penalty ranges from imprisonment for no less than one year, in ordinary cases, to a period of no less than two years if the perpetrator has employment authority over the victim, and/or a fine of no less than 50,000 dirhams, as opposed to 10,000 dirhams in other cases.

- Similarly, Federal Law No. 10 (2017) concerning domestic work prohibits any form of discrimination against domestic workers on the basis of race, colour, gender, religion, political opinion or national or social origin, and prohibits subjecting them to sexual harassment.
- As regards the division of roles and responsibilities between men and women, Decree-Law No. 6 (2020) grants male employees five working days' paid paternity leave to care for their infant child. Those days may be taken until the child reaches the age of six months.
- With regard to labour market policies: the Government has adopted a package of active labour market policies aimed at increasing women's participation in the labour market. A section has been established within the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation to address the employment of male and female nationals. A virtual labour market has been launched to make it easier for non-national jobseekers to find work.
- In order to create opportunities for women freelancers and improve their access to funding for projects, the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation has launched a one-stop portal for skilled male and female nationals, who are the least represented category in the private-sector labour market. The national skills portal is connected to various programmes and services. It makes it possible to coordinate with public and private sector companies and draw on their expertise for training purposes. The portal also includes a package of incentives for companies which use it to find domestic talent.
- The Government has also adopted the lifelong learning strategy, an integrated ecosystem shared and developed by federal and local government authorities to put in place continuing education aimed at boosting capacities in the labour market and ensuring that workforce skills are in lockstep with future labour market needs. The Ministry's labour market systems are used to analyse supply and demand for female labour over the coming period and to direct women jobseekers to opportunities for training and employment in those sectors or professions.
- The Government of the United Arab Emirates endeavours to curb gender segregation in the labour market. It has a policy of supporting women who seek employment in traditionally male-dominated professions and tackling social and cultural beliefs that could hinder their progress. It is a testament to that approach that more than 150 women female engineers, experts and technicians – 34 per cent of the total number – are working on the country's Hope probe to Mars.

16.3. With regard to reforms that the State party is undertaking to ensure compliance with legislation on domestic workers: Council of Ministers decision No. 22 (2019) of 5 March 2019 contains the implementing regulation for Federal Law No. 10 (2017) concerning domestic workers. The regulation enshrines licensing requirements for recruitment offices and providers of bank guarantees and insurance. It sets forth the recruitment office's obligations before the worker arrives in the country and regulates working hours and professional health and safety standards. Through a public-private partnership, the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation has established Tadbeer centres to provide integrated services for members of the public who wish to recruit and employ domestic workers.

Health care

17. Please indicate measures taken to enhance access by women and girls to health care, including sexual and reproductive health services, in particular in rural and remote areas. With reference to the Committee's previous recommendations

(CEDAW/C/ARE/CO/2-3, para. 42 (a) and (b)), please indicate whether abortion is legal, at least in cases of rape, incest, threats to the life or health of the pregnant woman or severe fetal impairment, and decriminalized in all other cases in the State party. Please provide information on measures taken to ensure that women and adolescent girls have access to safe abortion and post-abortion services. Please provide information on the availability of age-appropriate sexuality education at all levels of the education system, including in rural and remote areas.

18. Please indicate the percentage of women and girls without health insurance in the State party, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Please indicate measures in place to ensure that women and girls with disabilities are not placed in mental health institutions and that no medical interventions are performed on them without their free, full and informed consent.

18.1. There are health centres in all remote areas. Female patients are transferred to specialized clinics for care if they so request. Article 10 of the Public Health Code (Law No. 13 (2020)) states that the Ministry and health authorities shall provide family health services, including reproductive health services and maternal care, particularly during pregnancy, childbirth, post-childbirth and breastfeeding. Health-care services in the country are provided to all residents without distinction based on gender or place of residence. By virtue of Law No. 4 (2016) concerning medical responsibility, doctors cannot perform an abortion or prescribe an abortifacient, except in the following cases:

1. If continuing the pregnancy would endanger the life of the pregnant woman, and if the following conditions are met:

(a) The abortion is the only way to save the pregnant woman's life;

(b) The abortion should be performed with the knowledge of an obstetrician-gynaecologist and with the agreement of the doctor treating the disorder that justifies the abortion.

(c) A record should be drawn up, with the knowledge of the doctors concerned, stating that a natural birth was not possible and specifying the reason for the abortion. It should be signed, in such a manner to indicate agreement to the abortion, by the pregnant woman and by her husband or guardian if her consent cannot be obtained. Each of the parties concerned shall keep a copy of the record. Their agreement shall not be required in emergency situations that require an immediate surgical intervention.

2. If the fetus is shown to have an abnormality, subject to the following conditions:

(a) The abortion should be performed upon the written request of the two spouses.

(b) No more than 120 days should have passed since the start of the pregnancy.

(c) The abnormality should be documented in a report of a medical committee comprising consultants specializing in obstetrics, gynaecology and radiology.

(d) The committee's report should be based on medical examinations and the use of scientifically recognized technologies.

(e) The fetus should have a severe and incurable abnormality such that, if the child were born alive, it would have a poor quality of life, causing pain to it and to its family.

18.2. All public hospitals are committed to admitting and treating all emergency patients, even if they do not have a social insurance card or if it is not in date. Public hospitals cover 100 per cent of diagnosis and treatment costs for women who have contracted COVID-19.

Economic empowerment and social benefits

19. Please provide information on access by women to loans and financial credit without the requirement of collateral and, therefore, on the promotion of inclusiveness in society and support for families. Please indicate measures taken to repeal discriminatory provisions regarding access by women to land and other property. Please indicate the percentage of businesses run by women and measures taken to promote their entrepreneurship in order to consolidate existing significant progress and the availability of social security provisions.

19.1. The Government of the United Arab Emirates has adopted numerous laws and policies to support the economic role of women. By virtue of a Council of Ministers decision of 2012, the Government enacted binding legislation setting a 20 per cent quota for female representation on all boards of directors of publicly listed companies. International studies have shown that the effect on the companies' performance has been positive. The Government is therefore working to develop a gender-responsive budget and a national policy on Emirati women's entrepreneurship. Such action would highlight the role of women as a main stakeholder in development and, in particular, in economic life, as the country moves forward and determines its future course. With regard to financial independence, the Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates issued a directive in September 2019 concerning gender equality, non-discrimination in financial transactions and access to credit. It instructed banks and financial institutions to provide services to their personal and business clients of either gender on an equal basis, without discrimination.

19.2. With regard to financial transactions, a directive has been circulated to all banks, financing companies and exchange bureaus active in the country concerning gender equality, non-discrimination in banking transactions and access to credit. With regard to the percentage of businesses run by women: according to 2020 statistics, there are some 25,000 businesswomen, and they handle investments worth over 60 billion dirhams in the country.

Rural woman

20. Please provide information on measures taken to combat poverty among and improve data collection with regard to rural women. Please also provide information on the participation of rural women in the design and development of policies, including on economic diversification and climate change, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and in accordance with the Committee's general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women. Please provide updated information on measures taken to implement legal, financial, media and information literacy programmes for rural women.

20.1. The question regarding the term "rural women" is not applicable to the situation in the country owing to the environmental and geographic conditions, as the concept of

women working in rural areas² means that most of them depend on natural resources and agriculture to earn their living.

Women with disabilities

21. Please indicate new strategies and concrete measures put in place to ensure inclusive access to education, employment, health care and information on family planning and the right to enter into marriage for women with disabilities. Please also provide information on measures taken by the State party to include women and girls with disabilities in all policies and strategies intended to promote equal opportunities for women and men, in particular with regard to access to justice, protection against violence and access to poverty reduction programmes. Please also indicate how free and informed consent is ensured for women with disabilities prior to any medical treatment, as well as any existing exceptions to this universal right.

21.1. Care is taken to uphold equality between men and women when giving granting social care and determining eligibility conditions for people of determination. The amount disbursed is the same for disabled persons below the age of 18. Social protection and family empowerment constitute a component of the national strategy to empower people of determination. The aim is to ensure that their rights are not violated and that they are protected from exploitation and abuse. The Ministry of Community Development has put in place training programmes for women with disabilities. These consist of specific training and rehabilitation programmes aimed at protecting them from exploitation and abuse. As part of the Government's accelerator programme, the Ministry of Community Development has worked with several authorities to tackle the challenge of cases of abuse of persons with determination. A sustainable approach has thus been formulated to provide support in such cases. That approach was based on a study of cases of abuse, including a tool for identifying the types of abuse to which persons with disabilities, particularly women, had been subjected. Further to that study, a series of training workshops on self-empowerment was held for women and girls with disabilities, and also for their guardians, with a view to raising awareness of potential forms of abuse.

21.2. In 2019, the Council of Ministers approved a policy to protect people of determination from abuse. It includes a component on early detection of abuse, which includes an initiative to protect women and girls of determination. The aim is to provide an oversight regime for service providers and hence to ensure the early detection of cases of abuse of persons with determination across institutions and facilities. A range of Government and local authorities and non-profit associations are working together towards that goal.

21.3. In 2021, the Government launched a national strategy on autism entitled "United for persons with autism". It comprises five main components, namely diagnosis, health care, educational mainstreaming, human resources, and societal awareness and empowerment. It consists of initiatives intended to improve services provided to persons with autism of either gender. Those initiatives will help consolidate the rights of persons with autism, including girls, with regard to mainstreaming in general education, receiving high-quality health care, and enrolling in appropriate professional training and employment programmes.

21.4. In order to promote the access of women and girls with disabilities to appropriate work opportunities, the Ministry of Community Development launched

² With regard to the definition and characteristics of rural areas, the United Nations and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have established a number of criteria entailing that economic activity is the main source of production. The most significant criteria adopted by OECD to classify rural areas are population density, workforce participation in agricultural activity and administrative divisions within the area.

the Mashaghel project by virtue of Ministerial Decision No. 396 (2019). The aim is to promote the employment of young women with mental disabilities aged over 18. The project is part of the national strategy to empower people of determination. Mashaghel gives young women with disabilities an opportunity to transition into integrated employment through specific employment projects. Mashaghel is divided into a set of professions and workshops, such as making jewellery from damaged banknotes, manufacturing chocolate and people-of-determination bracelets, and other individual projects. New electronic stores have been created to market those products and provide the young women with an income and economic independence. Mashaghel is distinctive in that it empowers young women to take control of themselves in accordance with their own wishes and capacities. Women who have the capacity to do so can thus manage their own projects. Through that form of self-employment, they can leave centres for people with determination and be mainstreamed into the workforce.

Marriage and family relations

22. Please provide information on measures taken to repeal discriminatory provisions relating to marriage, divorce, custody and legal guardianship of children, division of property and inheritance. Please provide information on steps taken to repeal or amend all sex-discriminatory legislation, including article 334 of the Personal Status Law, which currently allows de jure and de facto discrimination in inheritance. Please also update the Committee on measures taken to address the stigmatization of single mothers and provide support to them, including through social protection and child support schemes, paternity recognition procedures and the enforcement of alimony and maintenance obligations of ex-husbands and fathers of their children.

22.1. The Family Status Law in the United Arab Emirates regulates all matters of personal status, marriage, divorce, alimony, custody and inheritance. The Islamic sharia is the primary reference in such provisions. The disparity in the shares of male and female heirs in Islam is not, however, a function of being male or female. Rather, it is governed by three main criteria, namely the degree of kinship between the heir, whether male or female, and the deceased; the position of the heirs in the sequence of generations; and the financial burden which the Islamic sharia requires the heir to bear and fulfil for others. That is the only criterion that results in a disparity between male and female; but it is a disparity that does not cause women any injustice or unfair treatment. In fact, one could even say that the opposite is true. If the heirs have same degree of kinship and the same place in the sequence of generations, e.g. if they are children of the deceased, male or female, the different financial burden explains the different shares of the inheritance. The rationale for the difference is that the male is responsible for supporting his wife and their children. When a female heir is the sister of a male heir, the latter has a duty to support her and her children. Despite the shortfall in her inheritance as compared to that of her brother, whose inheritance is double, she is in a more fortunate and privileged position in that her inheritance is free from obligatory expenses; it is net and can be saved in order to protect her from threats or adversity.

22.2. With regard to the recognition of paternity, Federal Law No. 1 (2012) concerning care for persons of unknown parentage includes the following points:

1. It regulates care for persons of unknown parentage in the country through the establishment and development of care homes and by providing for foster families that can offer medical, psychological, educational and recreational care.

2. The rights, civil liberty and confidentiality of persons of unknown personage are all guaranteed, as is their right to personal security and the need to safeguard the paramount interests of the child.
 3. Persons of unknown parentage are protected from abuse, inhumane treatment and neglect.
 4. They are provided with the social and living conditions necessary for their natural development.
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