



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

Distr.: General
31 March 2020
English
Original: Arabic
Arabic, English, French and
Spanish only

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

**Information received from Oman on follow-up to the
concluding observations on the combined second and
third reports***

[Date received: 25 March 2020]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Steps taken to implement recommendations 10 (a), 16 (a), 24 (a) and 40 (b) contained in the concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Oman

Oman has been following up on the concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports concerning its implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women discussed on 3 November 2017 at its 1548th and 1549th meetings. Upon receiving the concluding observations, the Ministry of Social Development, working through the Committee to Monitor the Implementation of the Convention, developed an action plan to implement the recommendations contained in the concluding observations. The Ministry presented the action plan to the Cabinet, which discussed it at meeting 13/2018 held on 22 April 2018. The Cabinet reaffirmed that the Sultanate was committed to its undertakings with respect to the Convention and decided to circulate the concluding observations to the relevant units of the State administrative apparatus and to the judicial and legislative authorities, so that they can take the required measures in accordance with a specific timetable.

In 2018 and 2019, the Ministry of Social Development remained in contact with ministries and government agencies in order to monitor their implementation of the concluding observations and related recommendations. In that connection, the following actions were taken:

1. On 25 December 2017, the Ministry of Social Development and the Administrative Judicial Council organized a panel discussion on social and family issues in which the relevant authorities participated. The purpose of the panel discussion was to review and discuss the most significant challenges and topics related to family issues that had come up in the competent courts, and to develop a vision that is consistent with the laws in force in the Sultanate and the agreements to which it has acceded, most notably the Convention. In addition, the panellists discussed the most significant difficulties related to the implementation of certain judgements handed down by the competent courts and problems related to certain cases. Judges and judicial officials were briefed on the international conventions that are relevant to the work of the Ministry of Social Development (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). Judges, court registrars, representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Office of the Public Prosecutor and Royal Oman Police, specialists from several ministries and members of committees concerned with the aforementioned Conventions were among the 120 persons who attended the event.
2. On 22 December 2017, the Committee to Monitor the Implementation of the Convention held its third meeting and discussed the concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Oman, paying special attention to the recommendations that must be addressed within two years and the plan developed by the Committee in response to those recommendations. In that connection, the Committee decided to:
 - Transmit to the Cabinet the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, along with the plan developed to implement them.
 - Transmit the concluding observations to the Council of State and the Consultative Council, so that they can take the measures required to implement the recommendations contained therein, each within its respective competence and in accordance with its responsibility to monitor implementation of the

international agreements that the Sultanate has ratified or to which it has acceded.

- Have the members of the Committee to Monitor the Implementation of the Convention work with the agencies that they represent on the implementation those recommendations and to report on what has been done to that end.

3. On 22 January 2018, the Committee to Monitor the Implementation of the Convention held its first meeting of 2018, at which it reviewed the concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports and discussed how to monitor the implementation thereof.

4. In April 2018, the Ministry of Social Development, acting through the Women's Affairs Department and in cooperation with the United Nations Development Fund Subregional Office, organized a capacity-building training course for Ministry staff in all governorates who work in women's affairs on the subject of analyzing women's issues and addressing them through programmes and activities.

5. In May 2018, the Ministry of Social Development, acting through the Women's Affairs Department and in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), held a workshop for several governmental agencies and civil society organizations on the subject of integrating Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals into national strategies and plans.

6. The Committee to Monitor the Implementation of the Convention held its second meeting of 2018 on 11 October 2018, in order to follow up on the implementation of the Convention and give effect to the action plan developed by the Committee to implement the concluding observations and the recommendations contained therein. The Committee discussed the responses it had received from various authorities regarding the concluding observations, took stock of the recommendations arising from the workshop on integrating Sustainable Development Goal 5 into national policies and plans, and reviewed the updated common core document of Oman, which had been prepared in response to recommendation 76 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, adopted following its discussion of the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Oman on 12 and 13 January 2016.

7. A supplementary document to the combined second and third reports was prepared that incorporates the response of the Sultanate to the list of issues and questions, the speech that the Minister of Social Development delivered before the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee's concluding observations. In response to the request made by the Committee to disseminate its concluding observations (para. 60), the supplementary document was printed in Arabic and English and circulated to various governmental and civil institutions and other entities, and then it was posted on the website of the Ministry of Social Development.

8. In 2018, the Ministry of Social Development, the United Nations Population Fund and Sultan Qaboos University prepared a comparative study on the compatibility of Omani laws with the provisions of the Convention, in implementation of the concluding observations on the combined second and third report

9. In 2018, the Ministry of Social Development and the Higher Institute of Justice signed a memorandum concerning a cooperative training programme on the human rights conventions (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), with a view to implementing the recommendation concerning building the capacity of judges and providing them

training on the Convention. The duration of the programme is three years, with a possibility of extension.

10. In response to recommendation 57, in which the Committee encourages Oman “to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee,” Royal Decree 3/2019 accepting the amendment to article 20 paragraph (1) was promulgated.

Following are the responses of Oman to specific recommendations contained in the concluding observations.

The recommendation contained in paragraph 10

The Committee reminds the State party that its general reservation and reservation to article 16 are incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention and are thus impermissible under article 28 of the Convention (see the statement by the Committee on reservations, adopted at its nineteenth session, in 1998). The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Complete the steps for the withdrawal of its reservation to article 15 (4) of the Convention.

With regard to completing the steps for the withdrawal of the reservation to article 15 (4), it should be noted that the Sultan promulgated Royal Decree 3/2019 ratifying the amendment to the Convention and withdrawing certain reservations to the Convention. Pursuant to article 1 of that Decree, article 20 (1) is accepted as formulated in the decision of the States parties, and pursuant to article 2 the Sultanate withdraws its reservation to article 15 (4). Articles 3 and 4 of the Decree provide that the measures required to implement the two preceding articles must be taken. The Decree was published in issue No. 1276 of the *Official Gazette* and entered into force on 7 January 2019. A copy of that Decree is annexed to this report.

The Sultanate regularly conducts a comprehensive review of its general reservation and reservation to article 16, with a view to implementing all the human rights conventions to which it has acceded. It also reviews on a regular basis its reservations to the human rights conventions, with a view to narrowing or withdrawing them in accordance with the public interest.

The recommendation contained in paragraph 16

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Provide detailed information on the mandate, status and authority of the National Commission for Family Affairs and its relationship with relevant ministries and women’s non-governmental organizations to promote gender mainstreaming throughout all government bodies and participatory planning for the advancement of women; on the human, technical and financial resources allocated from the national budget to the Commission; and on the presence of the Commission at the governorate and local levels in order to enable the Committee to assess the effectiveness of the Commission as the national machinery for the advancement of women

With regard to the national machinery for the advancement of women, we indicated in our combined second and third reports that the role and functions of the National Commission for Family Affairs had been reviewed, and that it now served as a coordinating and supervisory body responsible for developing and monitoring the implementation of policies concerning the family, women and children. The decisions adopted by the National Commission are implemented by the executive arms of the various ministries and agencies in all governorates. The National

Commission carries out its functions pursuant to Royal Decree 12/2007 on the organization of the National Commission for Family Affairs, and pursuant to Ministry of Social Development decision 146/2012 on the implementing regulations for the National Commission for Family Affairs and decision 300/2012 on the establishment of its technical secretariat. This demonstrates the importance of the National Commission in overseeing and coordinating implementation of the international conventions on women, children and persons with disabilities.

The National Commission is chaired by the Minister of Social Development and its membership comprises representatives of following entities: the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, the Ministry of Justice, the Royal Oman Police, the Office of the Public Prosecutor and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The National Commission proposes social, health-care and cultural policies and programmes designed to promote family welfare and monitors their implementation in coordination with the relevant authorities; coordinates the efforts of official agencies and voluntary organizations that work in the area of family affairs; promotes studies and research on family affairs; provides its opinion on the relevant convention; and cooperates with other Arab and international family affairs committees, councils and organizations.

The Committee takes policies aimed at empowering women and translates them into plans and programmes that are implemented in cooperation with government and private entities and civil society organizations.

One of the most significant programmes that has been implemented in that connection is the family cohesion seminar series, which began in 2012. These seminars cover topics of significance to women, family, and children and address values that promote family cohesion. The most recent of those seminars was the seventh family cohesion seminar, which was organized in 2018. The focus of that seminar was the role of women in promoting family cohesion and the impact of social media on moral conduct.

With regard to the presence of the National Commission for Family Affairs at the governorate and local levels, the Family Development Offices follow up on implementation of the recommendations, decisions and policies of the National Commission, and they help to organize programmes, events and seminars in all governorates, in partnership and cooperation with the relevant State institutions and civil society organizations.

The National Commission attaches great importance to studying and analyzing social problems, with a view to developing plans to overcome them.

With regard to the human, technical and financial resources allocated to the National Commission, article 3 of Royal Decree 12/2007 provides that the National Commission shall have a budget that covers revenues and expenditure. The resources available to the National Commission are as follows:

- (a) Funds allocated for it in the general budget of the State;
- (b) Donations, grants and assistance approved by the relevant authorities;
- (c) Contributions from local bodies, agencies and institutions;
- (d) Revenue derived from its own activities.

The recommendation contained in paragraph 24

In the light of 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 (2014) on harmful practices, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Undertake a national study on the prevalence of harmful practices and continue to take measures to eliminate all harmful practices in the State party, including female genital mutilation and child and/or forced marriage, especially in rural areas;

Under article 20 of the Child Act, which was promulgated by Royal Decree 22/2014, no person, in particular doctors, nurses and parents, may perform, espouse or assist in performing traditional practices that are harmful to the health of the child.

Several practices that are harmful to the health of the child are set out in article 4 of the implementing regulations of the Child Act, which were promulgated by Ministry of Social Development decision 125/2019. Those practices include any form of female genital mutilation and any other traditional practices that are harmful to the child, with engaging in such practices being established by a report from the relevant authorities.

With regard to the question of conducting a national study on the prevalence of harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child and/or forced marriage, the Committee to Monitor the Implementation of the Convention addressed the subject of harmful practices at its first and second meetings of 2018 and recommended that a detailed report on the practice of female genital mutilation be prepared.

On 11 September 2019, the Committee held a meeting with the Committee to Monitor Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At that meeting, which was chaired by the Minister of Social Development and attended by several members of both Committees, the participants discussed practices that are harmful to the health of the child, including female genital mutilation. The Committees reviewed a medical report on female genital mutilation that addressed many aspects of that practice and its effects on health. Several recommendations emerged from the meeting and they are being implemented by the Committees. In addition, the participants reviewed the implementing regulations of the Child Act, which were promulgated by ministerial resolution 125/2019, and the protection mechanisms set out therein.

The Committees discussed the first voluntary national review of Oman, which was presented at the high-level political forum, what Oman had done in respect of empowering women and the country's Beijing Plus 25 national report, which was submitted to ESCWA.

Female genital mutilation it is not performed in state health institutions, and male circumcision has been added as a specific procedure on the licence that is issued to private institutions. Accordingly, female genital mutilation cannot be practised because it is not an authorized procedure.

With regard to child and/or forced marriage, in our combined second and third reports, we noted that article 7 of the Personal Status Law sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for males and females, while article 6 of the same law requires that marriages be recorded in an official register. However, the Personal Status Law provides an exemption whereby persons under the age of 18 are allowed to marry if authorized by a judge, who does so after having ascertained that it is in the interest of the parties. Thus, marriage of persons under 18 years is almost non-existent and not

a problem. The few such cases that exist were authorized by a judge, who does so after having ascertained that marriage is in the interest of the parties.

With regard to the minimum age of marriage, it should be noted that early marriage is not a problem in Oman. According to statistics provided by the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the median age at marriage has risen and now stands at 28 years for males and 26 years for females.

Statistics from the 1993 and 2010 censuses and statistical reports for 2008, 2017 and 2018 show a marked decrease in the proportion of married Omanis in the 15–19 age group, from 10.8 per cent to 2.5 per cent. In addition, data provided by the Ministry of Health indicates that the birth rate for mothers under the age of 18 has fallen by more than half.

Birth rate per 1,000 women in the 14 to 17 age group

<i>Year</i>	<i>Omani</i>	<i>Non-Omani</i>	<i>Total</i>
2008	2.7	1.0	2.6
2017	1.6	2.2	1.6
2018	1.1	1.4	1.1

Source: Department of Statistics and Information of the Ministry of Health

The recommendation contained in paragraph 40

The Committee, in line with its general recommendation No. 26 (2008) on women migrant workers, recommends that the State party:

(b) Extend the application of the Labour Law to domestic workers and adopt a specific law regulating domestic employment, with adequate sanctions for employers engaging in abusive practices.

Owing to the special nature of the relationship between domestic workers and their employers and the nature of the work that they do in the home, the law considers them to be family members. These workers are therefore not subject to the provisions of the Labour Code. The Ministry of Manpower is currently drafting a bill to regulate the work of domestic workers and those performing similar functions, taking into account the above-mentioned considerations.

The Ministry of Manpower is developing pamphlets and handbooks in 22 languages that will provide non-Omani workers, including domestic workers, with general guidance upon their arrival in Oman. Those publications will be distributed to expatriate workers in Oman, in order to provide them with adequate information about their rights and access to care and protection, as well as advice on compliance with labour contracts and the law, so as to protect them from being abused and trafficked. In addition, they will be told how they can contact the competent authorities in the event of any violation of their rights.

The Ministry of Manpower offers an electronic labour complaint system in order to make the process easier for female workers who cannot present themselves at the Ministry.

Awareness-raising services are available to workers and employers. In the period 2017 to 2019, the Ministry of Manpower conducted several awareness-raising programmes.

Individual and group awareness-raising programmes organized by the Ministry of Manpower in 2017

<i>Individual awareness-raising</i>	<i>Individual awareness-raising</i>		<i>Group awareness-raising</i>		
	<i>Participants</i>		<i>Group awareness-raising</i>	<i>Participants</i>	
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>		<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
1,054	855	199	31	402	198

6,100 text messages were sent.

Source: Directorate General of Labour Welfare, Ministry of Manpower

Individual and group awareness-raising programmes organized by the Ministry of Manpower in 2018

<i>Individual awareness-raising</i>	<i>Individual awareness-raising</i>		<i>Group awareness-raising</i>		
	<i>Participants</i>		<i>Group awareness-raising</i>	<i>Participants</i>	
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>		<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
1,100	821	279	28	430	173

Source: Directorate General of Labour Welfare, Ministry of Manpower

Individual and group awareness-raising programmes organized by the Ministry of Manpower from January to June 2019

<i>Individual awareness-raising</i>	<i>Individual awareness-raising</i>		<i>Group awareness-raising</i>		
	<i>Participants</i>		<i>Group awareness-raising</i>	<i>Participants</i>	
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>		<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
695	548	147	55	584	210

Source: Directorate General of Labour Welfare, Ministry of Manpower

A committee consisting of several specialists from the Ministry and specialists from the relevant government agencies has been formed. This committee holds regular meetings with the embassies of countries that are sources of migrant labour, with a view to ensuring that the rights and duties of workers are understood and appropriate solutions that preserve their rights are developed.

On 16 October 2017, the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking launched the Ihsan campaign to spread awareness about the position of the law vis-à-vis human trafficking. This three-month campaign aimed at educating workers about their rights was marked by awareness-raising announcements in several foreign languages.