



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

## Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention

Combined third and fourth periodic reports of States parties due in 2011

**Saudi Arabia**\* \*\*

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

\*\* Annexes can be consulted in the files of the secretariat.

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## Introduction

1. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is endeavouring to adopt the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and act upon the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and is concerned to monitor the progress achieved in the childhood sector. On 15 October 1998 it therefore submitted its first report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which discussed it at the 26th session on 19 January 2001. On 12 November 2004 it submitted its second report, which was discussed at the 41st session on 24 January 2006. In accordance with article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and on the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia submits its combined third and fourth periodic report for the period 2005–2011, which notes the progress made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with regard to measures taken, resources allocated, and regulations, policies, programmes and strategies introduced in implementation of the Convention, as well as the response to the concluding observations adopted by the Committee on the second periodic report.

## Preparation of the report

2. This report was prepared in accordance with the Treaty-specific guidelines regarding the form and content of periodic reports to be submitted by States parties under article 44, paragraph 1 (b), of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child at its fifty-fifth session (13 September-1 October 2010) (CRC/C/58/Rev.2).

3. After discussing the second report of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with the Committee on the Rights of the Child in January 2006 (CRC/C/SAU/CO/2), the National Commission for Childhood studied and discussed the recommendations and observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child with the relevant authorities, and circulated to them the observations for the purpose of following up implementation of the recommendations and observations concerning them contained in the Committee's report and notifying the secretariat of the National Commission for Childhood of measures concerning them. The general secretariat of the National Commission for Childhood set about supervising the preparation of the third and fourth periodic reports on measures taken to implement the Convention, forming a supervisory committee and three technical committees on information, follow-up, and drafting, composed of representatives of all the governmental and non-governmental agencies.

4. The committees tasked with preparing the report complied with the general guidelines regarding the form and content of periodic reports adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In order to achieve this, they held a series of workshops, which included discussions and consultations on multiple areas, and sought to involve all governmental and private bodies and the media, train a national team to prepare the report in accordance with the guidelines, and discuss the concluding observations of the international committee about the Kingdom's second report. Work then began with all the parties concerned to monitor and review developments and achievements in the childhood sector in accordance with the terms of the Convention and the concluding observations of the Committee.

5. The supervisory committee and its subcommittees ensured that the Kingdom's third and fourth periodic report was a continuation of the constructive dialogue with the international committee on the implementation of the Convention as follow-up and implementation in accordance with article 44, paragraph 3, of the Convention. Accordingly, duplication of information about the Kingdom already detailed in the first and second

reports was excluded, as in this report it is sufficient to refer to the information previously set forth in detail in addition to the developments that have taken place during the period covered by the report.

6. Preparation of the report focused on expanding participation to include all governmental and non-governmental experts and researchers in the field of child welfare. This approach added value beyond the mere preparation of the report by making institutions and individuals aware of the principles and concepts of the rights of the child. In order to achieve this inclusive approach, the steps taken in the preparation of the report included a quality stage of paramount importance considered an essential step in its preparation and completion whereby the draft report was sent to all the relevant national governmental and non-governmental bodies and several experts and professionals, who were asked to underline their views on the draft report. This had a clear impact in enriching the content of the report on the one hand and arousing these bodies' curiosity about, interest in and awareness of the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the one hand, and the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the other.

7. Despite the tireless efforts and painstaking follow-up to bring about the participation of all concerned, it should be noted that the report does not reflect all the efforts made on the ground in view of the limited space, nature and required brevity of the report, in addition to the poor correspondence between the classifications and content of the available databases and the issues or age groups of children equivalent to the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child or the concluding observations of the Committee, the poor documentation of all activities and programmes for children, the difficulty of providing certain data and indicators that show the extent of the State's commitment to acting upon its obligations to children under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the observations of the international committee on the second report of the Kingdom. Nonetheless, work is ongoing to develop monitoring and information mechanisms that will enable the challenges in this area to be overcome in the foreseeable future.

8. In view of the multiplicity of changes and the scope of developments that have occurred in the child welfare sector in the Kingdom since the previous report and in response to the Committee's wish for brevity, it has not been possible to detail the data, indicators, legislative documents and related studies, but the most important of these documents and materials have been referred to. It should be noted, however, that a precise understanding of the magnitude and scale of the developments in the child welfare sector in the Kingdom since the previous report requires reference to those texts, documents and data, especially the content of the Kingdom's first and second reports.

### **General information: general framework for the promotion and protection of human rights, including the rights of the child<sup>1</sup>**

9. Saudi Arabia is witnessing a systematic and steady process of internal reforms in various political, judicial, regulatory, social and economic fields, the effects of which are a positive reflection of the political stability and the economic boom the country is experiencing, in addition to achieving the development goals over the last years of the development plans, as illustrated by the indicators contained in table 1.

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<sup>1</sup> This part of the report provides general information updating the information contained in paragraphs 1 to 16 of the second periodic report.

10. The Eighth Development Plan, 1425-1430 A.H. (2005–2009) and the Ninth Development Plan 1430-1435 A.H. (2010–2015) addressed several issues, including: raising the standard of living and improving quality of life; qualitative and quantitative expansion of education and training, health and social services; balanced development of the regions of the Kingdom; and human resources development. It paid particular attention to increasing the participation of women, and consolidating the role of the family in society by upgrading the capabilities of Saudi women and removing constraints on their increased participation in economic and development activities. The operational plan of the State also included within its general objectives and policies preparing children between the ages of four and six for admission to general education and updating early childhood programmes and activities.

11. The general objectives, sectoral details and major themes of the Ninth Development Plan reflect the acceleration of the programmes and strategic projects that pay great attention to cultural, youth and development issues. The Plan allocated some 1,444.6 billion riyals to the development sectors, an increase of around 67 per cent over the allocation during the Eighth Development Plan. The human resources development sector attracted the largest share of the allocation, at 50.6 per cent of total approved allocations, with the social and health development sector in second place, with about 19 per cent of allocations.

12. Standards of living for children and other age groups have seen a significant improvement because of the quantitative and qualitative expansion in health, education and social services. Economic and social indicators also reflect these developments: average per capita income rose from \$US8,056 in 2000 to \$US14,809 dollars in 2009 and this growth in income was matched by a similar improvement in human development indicators, so that the Kingdom is currently ranked among the highest States in the human development index. It is expected that the next development period will see rapid positive developments in this area.

13. Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 show that Saudi Arabia exceeded the ceilings adopted for the achievement of several of the Millennium Development Goals ahead of deadline and that it was on the way to reaching the rest of them by the 2015 deadline.

14. Child welfare and protection is a subject of great interest to the country's leadership and members of society as they are a cornerstone of the overall development of the Saudi people and enable them to contribute effectively and constructively to the development process in all its dimensions. The State has therefore accorded the utmost importance to everything relating to child welfare and protection in accordance with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and has worked unstintingly to develop legislation, policies and programmes to achieve the best interests of children and strengthen the ability of the family to provide the best care and protection for their children. In the field of education the pre-school level has been integrated into the stages of formal education, and primary education made universal to ensure that all children are enrolled in primary education, as shown in table 2, which includes indicators for access of all children, boys and girls, to primary education. Work has also been done to eliminate gender disparities in primary, intermediate and secondary education, as shown in table 3.

15. In the area of child and maternal health, the quantitative and qualitative indicators reflect great achievements over the past two decades, for example: a decline in the mortality rate of children under five, table 4; improved reproductive health coupled with a fall in maternal mortality, table 5; and a reduction in the incidence of most infectious diseases as a result of high levels of vaccination coverage, table 6, which has led to polio-free certification of Saudi Arabia by the World Health Organization, reflecting the effectiveness of primary health care procedures for children and mothers.

16. In the area of social protection, the Kingdom has consistently provided comprehensive care for disadvantaged and vulnerable children by introducing regulations and legislation and implementing appropriate care plans and programmes for people with special needs at the governmental and non-governmental levels. In the area of environmental security, it has issued many rules and regulations and a number of agreements and conventions aimed at protecting the environment of children and protecting them from environmental hazards.

17. Despite these achievements, several expected future challenges could compromise the State's ability to ensure child welfare, including protecting children from possible negative repercussions resulting from the volatile political situation in the Middle East, and especially the potential environmental threats resulting from nuclear arms in the region, those generalized environmental threats resulting from environmental pollution, or the negative repercussions of global media innovations, such as satellite channels, the Internet and social media.

18. Overall achievements are still below the level of expectations and national commitments, and the State continues to improve primary health care, confront certain health conditions such as obesity and genetic disabilities, improve public education, raise pre-school enrolment rates and develop regulations and legislation on the social protection and welfare of children at risk and living in difficult social conditions. Future challenges to enhancing means of ensuring child welfare in the Kingdom include achieving comprehensive protection of children from environmental hazards, such as road accidents, and the safety of items and materials marketed for children in the Kingdom and abroad, improving cultural and media content and sources for children, promoting their right to adequate opportunities for play, recreation and cultural activity, strengthening civil society institutions in the private and voluntary sector, developing the qualifications of staff working with children and upgrading available resources.

## **I. General measures to implement the Convention (arts. 4, 42, and 44, para. 6)**

### **A. Legislative measures**

19. The Kingdom has made great efforts to respond to the concluding observations of the international committee on the second periodic report, and has taken additional measures that are no less important than those observations. The period since the second report has been marked by greater attention to putting into effect the rights of all children, in particular those most in need, and to embracing the basic issues concerning them, such as poverty reduction, street children who are fugitives from outside the Kingdom, the rehabilitation and reintegration of children with disabilities, the development of programmes and introduction of regulations to protect children exposed to violence and neglect, and other achievements that the report will address.

20. It should be noted that the Kingdom is going through an important phase in its modern history when Saudi society is experiencing a paradigm shift and comprehensive reform in every area of social, educational and rights development. Human rights in general have started to receive increasing attention, and this will have a positive impact on childhood issues in the Kingdom, contributing to a real change in society's attitude to child-related issues, establishing a regulatory and legislative framework that protects children and ensures their best interests from a human rights perspective. Serious measures are associated with this paradigm shift and comprehensive reform, such as the

Child Protection Act, the Protection from Abuse Act, the maintenance fund project, and other measures the report will discuss in some detail.

21. The results fall short of the ambitions because of cultural and regulatory conditions. For example, the possibility of child marriage occurring has not been completely eliminated, but efforts are being made to suppress it, such as launching awareness campaigns, educating parents, enacting regulations, and developing tools that will be mentioned later, which need time in order to bear fruit. This series of processes should be seen as a reflection of the positive move towards a sense of the existence of the problem, and thence to putting in place appropriate measures.

## **1. Progress concerning international conventions and instruments**

22. Saudi Arabia has sought to strengthen its interaction with regional and international organizations regarding joint action on child welfare and protection through the ratification of the relevant international and regional conventions and instruments, including the following:

(a) Saudi Arabia acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 24 December 2006, in August 2008.

(b) In response to the recommendation contained in the observations and recommendations issued following consideration of the second periodic report, Saudi Arabia has acceded to the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Royal Decree No. M/38 of 18/7/1431 A.H. (29 June 2010) approved the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and Royal Decree No. M/39 of 18/7/1431 A.H. (29 June 2010) approved accession to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

(c) Saudi Arabia has approved the Arab Charter on Human Rights,, adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States at summit level at its sixteenth session in Tunis, through adoption of Council of Ministers Decision No. 93 of 26/3/1430 A.H. (22 March 2009).

(d) Approval of accession of Saudi Arabia to the Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam, issued by the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Sanaa, through the adoption of Council of Ministers Decision No. 213 of 25/8/1427 A.H. (18 September 2006).

(e) Ratification of the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime by Royal Decree No. M/56 of 11/6/1428 A.H. (26 June 2007).

(f) Ratification of International Labour Organization Convention No. 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, 1973, by virtue of Royal Decree No. M/37 of 18/6/1434, noting that article 162, paragraph 1, of the Labour Act issued by Royal Decree No. M/51 of 23/8/1426 A.H. (27 September 2005) stipulates that, "No person under the age of fifteen years may be employed or allowed to enter a place of work. The Minister may, pursuant to a decision by him, raise this age limit in certain industries or areas or for certain categories of minors".

## **2. Reservation to the Convention**

23. In order to study the recommendation of the international committee concerning the Kingdom's general reservation concerning the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to consider withdrawing or narrowing it, a committee was formed of several relevant authorities. After discussions focussing on consideration of the feasibility and need to

withdraw or narrow the reservation, study of the prospects for its impact on enforcement of the Convention, and given the great importance the Kingdom attaches to laws and regulations complying with Islamic law, the Saudi Government reaffirms that it does not see the need to withdraw the reservation as it does not undermine the Convention or the ability of the State to meet its obligations towards the rights of the child, as detailed in this report.

### 3. Progress with regard to legislation

24. The National Commission for Childhood project to study national regulations and legislation and the extent of their compliance with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is ongoing and seeks to analyse regulations and legislation in order to align them with the principles and provisions of the Convention. It should be noted that the Kingdom is currently undergoing comprehensive qualitative development in the judicial and legislative field in general and in relation to children in particular. It has conducted a series of judicial reforms and legislative amendments. Those that demonstrate the State's efforts to harmonize national regulations with the principles and provisions of the Convention that will be mentioned in this report are as follows:

(a) The launching of the King Abdullah Project on the Development of the Judiciary, the Judiciary Act and the Act on the Office of the Ombudsman and their executive instruments were introduced under Royal Decree No. M/78 of 19/9/1428 A.H. (30 September 2007). The sum of seven billion riyals was approved to implement the development project. Its objective was to restructure the judicial institutions so that they could perform their duties effectively, ensure the rights of citizens and residents through improving performance in the Ministry of Justice, enhance the efficiency of judicial and administrative staff, provide technical and professional posts and equipment, and upgrade court buildings. The development project included overhauling the organizational structure of the judicial and documentation system, strengthening preventive justice functions and the Judicial Research Centre, studying, evaluating and reorganizing current administrative procedures and systems, promoting the judicial culture among staff, eliminating paperwork, and establishing women's offices in the Sharia courts and elsewhere to receive women and conclude their cases smoothly.

(b) Royal Decree No. M/51 of 23/8/1426 A.H. (27 September 2005) approving the Labour Act, which forbids the employment and entry into workplaces of any person under the age of fifteen.

(c) Council of Ministers Decision No 139 of 26/4/1425 A.H. (14 June 2004) making education compulsory for those between the ages of six and fifteen, and its implementing instruments.

(d) Promulgation of the Act on the General Commission for Guardianship over Property of Minors and Persons of Similar Status under Royal Decree No. M/17 of 13/3/1427 A.H. (12 April 2006) on the basis of Council of Ministers Decision No. 53 of 12/3/1427 A.H. (11 March 2006). This Act contains 41 articles divided into nine chapters and is designed to safeguard the property of those who have no parents or guardian, to manage their property, and to oversee the action of parents, guardians and those with custody.

(e) Council of Ministers Decision No. 169 of 19/6/1429 A.H. (23 June 2008) approving the new rules regulating the placement of juveniles in social surveillance centres.

(f) Promulgation of the Judiciary Act under Royal Decree No. M/78 of 19/9/1428 A.H. (1 October 2007), which included ensuring justice for juveniles through the establishment of chambers for juvenile cases in the criminal courts, each chamber consisting of a single judge or three judges. This is a significant step towards achieving the

guarantees of a fair and appropriate trial for juveniles, since before the introduction of this system Saudi Arabia had adopted a system of a single judge in juvenile cases.

(g) Council of Ministers Decision No. 366 of 3/12/1429 A.H. (2 December 2008) containing a set of instructions to take the necessary action to reduce the problem of domestic violence.

(h) Royal Decree No. M/40 of 21/7/1430 A.H. (14 July 2009) approving the law to combat trafficking in persons offences, and approving the formation by the Council of Ministers of a committee to combat trafficking in persons.

(i) Approval by the Shura Council of a draft Child Protection Act in Decision No. 145/74 of 13/2/1432 A.H. (12 August 2011), which upgraded the National Commission for Childhood as a measure to harmonize national regulations with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Act is a major asset for the rights of the child and a qualitative shift in the society's perception of child protection. Several authorities are currently examining procedures and mechanisms for implementing the provisions of the Act. Also worth mentioning is approval of the Prevention of Abuse Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/52 of 15/11/1434 A.H. (21 September 2013), which covers children and women. This Act (along with the Child Protection Act) will contribute to the establishment of comprehensive legislation to protect children and women from all forms of abuse.

(j) Amendment of the Citizenship Act under Royal Decree No. M/54 of 29/10/1425 A.H. (17 July 2004) and issuance of the implementing regulations on the amended Citizenship Act. In January 2012, articles 7 and 12 were amended to include and cover females by the decision to naturalize the children of Saudi women married to non-Saudis, so that males and females are covered alike.

(k) Approval by the Shura Council of Decision No. 170/71 of 25/1/1434 A.H. (9 December 2012) on the draft law on Prevention of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and the rights and duties of people living with it. It includes free treatment for all infected people and sets out procedures and policies to ensure the protection of children from HIV infection, such as screening of all pregnant women to prevent the spread of the disease to the foetus.

(l) The Council of Ministers is currently discussing a draft law on juvenile welfare in conjunction with the relevant authorities.

## **B. National plans and strategies**

25. In addition to the national strategies and plans that include children and adults generally, since the submission of the second report of the Kingdom on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2005, several national strategies directly concerning the rights of the child have been issued, as follows:

(a) The National Childhood Strategy. Preparation of this strategy was recently completed through the concerted efforts of the National Commission for Childhood and the Arab Gulf Programme for Development and after five years of joint work with a group of partners including all child-related governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as academics and experts working for and with children and with their parents (more than five thousand children and four thousand families). It is a strategy that includes all the child's needs through the development of a coherent set of legislation, policies and programmes for the next ten years dealing with the physical, cognitive, social and emotional aspects of the Saudi child ([www.ncc.gov.sa](http://www.ncc.gov.sa)).

(b) The National Drug Control Strategy and its approval by the Council of Ministers in Decision No. 332 of 12/11/1429 A.H. (31 October 2009).

(c) The National Youth Strategy, which has been finalized and is in process of adoption. This strategy comprises a number of key themes that include a range of issues relevant to young people in the Kingdom, such as: education, training, employment, health, culture, media, information and communications technology, recreation and investment in leisure time, good citizenship, community participation, and the family.

(d) Drawing attention to childhood issues in the goals of the eighth and ninth development plans, and long-term development trends. The Ninth Development Plan, 2010–2014, defined several goals, including the following: giving particular attention to those most in need, especially the poor and needy families; access of all children to primary education; the elimination of gender disparities in access to education; continued reduction in the under-five mortality rate; universal access to reproductive health services; reducing the maternal mortality ratio; reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS and universal access to the treatment of AIDS; and reducing the spread of malaria and other major diseases.

(e) It should also be noted that the Kingdom has achieved excellent results with regard to the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the United Nations, which include: the eradication of extreme poverty; reducing the proportion of people who suffer from hunger; guaranteeing all children — boys and girls — access to primary education; eliminating gender disparities in primary, intermediate, secondary and university education; reducing the mortality of children under 5 years of age; universal access to reproductive health services; reducing the maternal mortality ratio; reducing the spread of AIDS and universal access to treatment of the virus for all those who need it; and reducing the incidence of malaria and other major diseases. This is clear across the five reports, the latest of which was the fifth national report in 1431 A.H. (2010). The Kingdom not only achieved but exceeded a wide range of the goals set before their deadline and is well on the way to achieving the remaining goals before the 1436 A.H. (2015) deadline.

## **C. Coordination**

26. With reference to the observation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the Kingdom's second periodic report contained in paragraphs 11 and 12 concerning coordination between central, regional and local authorities and its recommendation to strengthen the existing coordination mechanism by developing coordination and evaluation at all levels of the administration and providing adequate human, financial and technical resources, as noted in the two previous reports, all the bodies and institutions concerned with childhood are coordinated by the highest administrative body in the State, namely the Council of Ministers, which decides the general policies and procedures on children and other segments of society. The decisions of this Council are binding and generally call for the solidarity and cooperation of various sectors in their implementation. The National Commission for Childhood follows up and reviews the implementation of these decisions. The State recognizes the importance of effective coordination between the various multisectoral governmental and non-governmental bodies operating in the childhood sector as set out in the recommendations of the Committee and this is therefore the subject of ongoing debates in the regular meetings of members of the National Commission for Childhood and periodic and systematic follow-up with ministers and their representatives, and usually gives rise to joint programmes.

27. The National Commission for Childhood is the official body linking and coordinating all governmental, private and civil society institutions relating to childhood in the Kingdom. Through a number of mechanisms the Commission assumes responsibility for various forms of liaison and coordination of the work of governmental and private agencies for children, and provides advice from the childhood perspective to all ministries on many projects, decisions, and formal and technical issues. In spite of these efforts,

coordination remains a major organizational challenge, especially if we take into account the wide diversity of views on children. The Commission recognizes the importance of this coordinating approach and the need to continue to refine the existing mechanisms and develop other mechanisms to take into account this central role in order to bring about real and effective partnership between all sectors of society, including leaders, the family, youth, and children.

28. In order to strengthen linkage and coordination, the National Commission for Childhood relies upon several bodies, including the Family Safety Programme, which has launched a series of joint programmes, such as the annual protection workshop in which all governmental and private bodies participate, and the child rescue line that has a supervisory board and consists of fifteen governmental and non-governmental institutions, which will be described in detail under independent monitoring mechanisms.

29. The National Commission for Childhood has been restructured, its status enhanced and its material and human resources increased in order to enable it to coordinate the work of all childhood-related sectors and provide better care and protection to children. Council of Ministers Decision No. 238 of 14/9/1426 (17 October 2005) approved amendment of the regulatory statute of the Commission, enhanced its status, allocated an independent budget to it and approved functions commensurate with the tasks entrusted to it. It is chaired by the Minister of Education and its members include representatives of ministries and governmental institutions concerned with childhood issues, as follows: the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, and the General Presidency of Youth Welfare, as well as three experts in the childhood field from civil society institutions and academia with an interest and experience in this field. The capacities of the National Commission for Childhood have recently been enhanced by professional staff specialized in various child-related fields, its financial resources have been increased in order to strengthen linkage and coordination, and partnerships have been established with all governmental agencies, civil society institutions, international and regional organizations, and the private sector.

30. One of the most important programmes to emerge from linkage and coordination between governmental and private bodies and civil society institutions undertaken by the National Commission for Childhood during its preparation of the national strategy for childhood was a comprehensive analysis of the childhood sector in which all the governmental and private bodies participated and which included: analysis of the statutes, regulations, programmes and functions of child-related bodies, official Saudi reports and data on children, analysis of the social and economic development plans and strategies of the country and also of Arab and foreign documents, reports and strategies on children; four analysis and brainstorming sessions were held and workshops and interviews with representatives of ministries and departmental directors involving over thirty experts in child-related fields, as well as children and their families (mothers and fathers) through the views and aspirations they expressed through the family participation form, of which five thousand copies for children and four thousand for families were distributed. A series of programmes and projects grew out of this national project which will be detailed in the course of this report. Another example of the linkage and coordination programmes conducted by the National Commission for Childhood with and between governmental and private bodies and civil society institutions is a project on a comprehensive national handbook on procedures in neglect and abuse cases in which all the relevant governmental and non-governmental bodies participated (for a description of this project, see paragraph 230).

31. One of the programmes developed to optimize coordination between government agencies and NGOs active in the childhood sector is the joint programme between UNICEF and the National Commission for Children, supported by the Kingdom to the tune of

\$500,000 per year since 2007, which aims to bring together bodies working in child-related fields and coordinate all partners in the same field. A series of programmes has emerged from this, including: programmes to make members of society and professionals aware of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; a descriptive study to develop pre-schools in the Kingdom; a protection from child abuse programme in hospitals; a family and community awareness project on the effects and risks of child abuse; a school mental health programme; a life skills development project for children; a child accident and injury prevention project; and a teacher training programme on skills for the early detection of and intervention in abuse and neglect cases.

#### **D. Independent monitoring mechanisms**

32. We refer to the welcome by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, contained in paragraph 13 of its observations on the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia, of the establishment of the National Human Rights Association and its mandate to receive complaints about human rights violations, and its recommendation that it should be an independent oversight mechanism in accordance with the Paris Principles, be provided with adequate human and financial resources, and be easily accessible to children.

33. The National Human Rights Association is an oversight authority enjoying financial and administrative independence that is not subject to oversight by any governmental body. Thus Royal Decree No. M/605 of 22/1/1429 A.H. (31 January 2008) emphasized that its work, the exercise of its functions and the determination and timing of its procedures were independent. The Government of Saudi Arabia has endeavoured to develop monitoring mechanisms and receive complaints, whether in governmental agencies or independent non-governmental institutions, as set out in the recommendations of the Committee. It has removed all barriers and obstacles that reduce the independence of the National Human Rights Association to promote and monitor implementation of the Convention and to receive and investigate complaints from individuals, including children. The Association has independent mechanisms and means for receiving complaints directly from children and parents without the intervention of governmental agencies, and enjoys the respect and cooperation of government agencies in dealing with those complaints and seeing that justice is done to their authors.

34. The National Human Rights Association receives complaints from children aged 18 and under, and monitors communications received from relatives, neighbours, schools or parents, as indicated in the table 7, as well as monitoring cases of child rights violation across various media. In coordination with the Department of Social Protection, the Family Safety Programme and local authorities, the Association takes direct measures to follow up the situation until it stabilizes so as to ensure that such violations do not recur. It also conducts regular field visits to monitor places in which children are to be found, such as hospitals and social welfare homes, in order to seek out anything connected with violation of the rights of these children, and then seek to address the situation.

35. The National Family Safety Programme set up a child helpline (No. 116111) in 1429 A.H. (2008) in cooperation with 14 organizations in the Kingdom. It is a single, toll-free number to support children under the age of 18. The line was launched as a pilot in November 2010 and operates 12 hours a day, from 9 am to 9 pm. Its purpose is to receive complaints concerning children under 18, to provide advice and referrals to the relevant agencies to those who are exposed to any kind of abuse, neglect or exploitation, whether at home or school, in the neighbourhood or public places or governmental or private institutions, and the like. The line is connected to a modern, sophisticated communications centre complying with international quality standards. It offers immediate, specialized counselling to children and carers, in addition to receiving all reports of violence and abuse

to which children are exposed, transferring those requiring immediate and direct intervention to the authorities, and following up with those authorities in order to ensure that service are provided to the child in a timely manner. It receives communications and provides consulting services relating to children and adolescents, terms of reference for trainers in social and psychological services and qualifications to deal with the confidentiality of communications received by the child helpline in accordance with the standards adopted by Child Helpline International (CHI). The line has now obtained full membership of Child Helpline International.

36. Recently, a national register of child abuse and neglect cases in the Kingdom was established in the health sector. The register and its programmes are described in paragraph 51 (b). As a step towards ensuring the monitoring of cases of violence (and the protection of the abused), a ministerial decision has been issued requiring the reporting of cases of domestic violence and violence against children, Decision No. 84/108554 of 26/12/1428 A.H. (5 January 2008) in the health sector.

37. The establishment of the Human Rights Commission in 2004 was confirmation of the State's concern to protect and strengthen human rights. Its terms of reference include monitoring the practices of government agencies from the perspective of the human rights principles enshrined in Islamic law and international conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also receives complaints, suggestions and observations in the field of human rights protection, studies them and refers them to the relevant authorities. The Commission may, through its council, review existing regulations and propose amendments in accordance with statutory procedures. Members of the Commission may visit prisons and places of detention at any time without permission from the competent authority, and report to the Prime Minister, monitor the implementation by government agencies of the human rights-related regulations in force, disclose abuses violating the regulations in force in the Kingdom constituting a violation of human rights and take the necessary legal procedures. Government agencies are required to provide the Commission with the data and information related to their work that it requests in order to perform the tasks entrusted to it as stipulated in its statute. The Commission pays particular attention to the groups most vulnerable to violations, such as children, women, and people with disabilities, and has established special branches for these groups.

## **E. Allocation of resources**

38. In its observations on the second periodic report, the Committee on the Rights of the Child noted with appreciation the significant investment in social and health services and education, but was concerned that for other areas covered by the Convention, for example regarding special protection, the budgetary allocations were limited. It recommended allocating more resources for the implementation of special protection measures for vulnerable groups of children, and identifying the yearly budgetary amount and proportion spent on persons under 18 years of age.

39. It is difficult to state precisely what has been disbursed from the annual budget by age group of beneficiaries of these programmes as the approach taken in the preparation of the state budget is based on general items including all age groups, not programmes. This makes it difficult to identify spending allocations on childhood programmes and the segments most in need. Moreover, different age groups benefit from the same allocations to health, social and educational programmes and services, which adds to the difficulty of documenting those allocations precisely in terms of the real size of allocations to children, those most in need in particular. In any event, Saudi Arabia will discuss ways to employ appropriate and feasible methods of adequately stating the resources allocated to implementing the principles of the Convention and specifying expenditure from the annual

budget on those under 18 years of age. This report gives examples of steps taken by the State to increase financial allocations that focus on the most vulnerable groups of children and cover child protection programmes and measures, especially in the field of welfare and social protection.

40. Recognizing that tackling poverty and its negative implications for the family's ability to satisfy the child's right to life, development and education, to provide for basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, health care, further study, and the acquisition of reading and writing, the State has taken effective measures to eradicate poverty at all levels, preparing the National Social Development Strategy adopted by the Ministry of Social Affairs. In line with this strategy, substantial additional financial resources are allocated to provide a wide variety of welfare services and social and economic support to the poor and groups with special needs through programmes of the Ministry of Social Affairs and NGOs. The most important steps taken by the State to achieve this include the following:

(a) The introduction of the Supplementary Support Programme to bridge the gap between the actual income of families, individuals and the very poor and the poverty line, according to studies of the varying poverty lines officially adopted in the Kingdom. Support of up to 264 million riyals annually;

(b) Supporting the Social Welfare Fund to the tune of 300 million riyals annually to reduce poverty;

(c) Increased allocations for orphans and people in special circumstances and the like amounting to 82 million riyals annually, which covers foster family benefits, school benefits, end-of-fostering benefits, and benefits for those residing in orphanages;

(d) Establishment of an "emergency assistance" programme for families below the extreme poverty line who are in critical emergency situations causing increased suffering or exposure to problems, such as the death, imprisonment or illness of the breadwinner, illness of children, fire in the home or natural disasters and the like;

(e) Increase in allocations to charities, from 100 million to 450 million riyals annually;

(f) Allocation of 10 billion riyals to housing development programmes in the regions for the poor who do not own their own homes;

(g) Increased benefits allocated to the disabled, patients with kidney failure, cancer, blood fragmentation, and other crippling diseases, increasing to 2,851 million riyals in 2009 from the previous 570 million riyals;

(h) Increase in the upper limit for the allocation of social security pension for the family, from 16,000 riyals to 58,000 riyals per year, resulting in a rise in social security allowances to 13 billion riyal in 1430-1431 A.H. (2009-2010).

41. The State has also provided direct social care to the needy through a range of specialized institutions of the Ministry of Social Affairs, providing the following benefits:

(a) Services for people with disabilities benefitting 205,445 individuals with physical, sensory, mental and mobility disabilities. A total of two billion riyals was approved for these categories in 1431 A.H. (2009).

(b) Juvenile welfare and surveillance services for 15,893 beneficiaries in 1430-1431 A.H. (2009-2010).

(c) Social services homes, social education homes for girls, social education homes for boys, institutions for the care of paralyzed children, and social welfare homes for the elderly. The total number of beneficiaries of these services and programmes was 2,056 individuals in 1430-1431 A.H. (2009-2010).

42. The State has also provided social security benefits through a range of specialized institutions providing social security benefits. Total expenditure in 1430-1431 A.H. (2009–2010) reached around 15 billion riyals on pensions and aid and support programmes provided by Social Security as follows:

(a) Monthly security pensions paid to orphans, the elderly, those unable to work, women without support, families without support, and those of unknown parentage of 10,340 riyals per person per year, the pension being increased at the rate of 3,410 riyals for each additional person.

(b) The security assistance programme, which aims to improve the living conditions of those with low incomes.

(c) The satchel and school uniform programme, which provides for beneficiaries' children who are still pursuing their education in the general education stages and are no more than 18 years of age to help them to provide the necessities for study.

(d) A programme to pay part of the electricity bill. Social Security pays a part of the electricity bill according to the number of family members covered by the pension. Between 20 and 30 million riyals are expended each month.

(e) The mattresses and furniture programme, which aims to create the appropriate environment to provide a better life for family and children by improving the housing conditions of beneficiaries in cooperation with the relevant public and private sector social partnership bodies. In 2010, a comprehensive programme was approved amounting to 100 million riyals.

(f) The cash assistance for food programme, which is designed to assist beneficiaries in the provision of their food needs amounting to 100 million riyals per month.

(g) Supplementary support programme, which is designed to bridge the gap between the actual income of very poor families and individuals and the poverty line. Around 1,056 million riyals were allocated in 1430-1431 A.H. (2009–2010).

43. In the same context, we refer to publication of Council of Ministers Decision No. 237 of 23/9/1427 A.H. (15 October 2006) approving an increase in benefits to orphans, people in special circumstances and the like, including foster family benefits, school benefits, end-of-fostering benefits, marriage allowance, and benefits to those residing in orphanages, as follows:

(a) Adjusted monthly benefits for orphans, people in special circumstances and the like (boys and girls), people residing in foster homes, educational homes, orphanages, and model educational institutions are as follows: 200 riyals for those under school age, 500 riyals for students at the primary level, 700 riyals for students in middle schools and similar institutions, 900 riyals for students in secondary schools and similar institutions, and 1,200 riyals for university students and students in similar or higher institutions;

(b) Adjusted foster and alternative family benefits are 2,000 riyals for families that host orphans under school age, 3,000 riyals per month for families that host orphans attending school, including the schooling benefit;

(c) End-of-fostering benefit is 20,000 riyals, disbursed when fostering of the orphan has ended;

(d) The adjusted marriage benefit for orphans is 60,000 riyals.

44. The measures taken by the State to channel larger allocations to programmes for the neediest children include the social development centres and their supervisory committees

(to be detailed later) in all regions of the country. Table 8 sets out the amounts of funding allocated to the childhood programme targeting the neediest children.

45. Several ministries and governmental agencies other than the Ministry of Social Affairs provide benefits for the neediest children, for example: the Ministry of Education disburses annual allocations as benefits to the neediest categories of children as follows: children in remote villages, expatriates, children of deceased teachers, children with disabilities, and benefit for graduates of literacy eradication schools. Total additional allocations to such children in 1432-1433 A.H. (2011–2012) were 760,655,510 riyals. See table 9.

46. Civil society organizations play an important role in providing social support. Private charitable organizations play a fundamental and extensive role in the provision of welfare services and social support for the poor and groups with special needs. There was a total of 564 charities in 1430-1431 A.H. (2009–2010). Charities are spread throughout the country and their programmes cover wide and varied fields, including: maternal and child care; care for the elderly and infirm and those with special needs, such as orphans and people with disabilities; combatting illiteracy, rehabilitation of women with no profession; and selected activities. In areas that are not covered by the services of the social development centres supervised by the state services, local committees are formed to achieve local social goals. Data for 1430-1431 A.H. (2009–2010) indicate that there was a total of 357 grassroots committees.

47. The Kingdom is working on implementation of the National Social Development Strategy and has therefore recently established the Takaful Foundation with a budget of 500 million riyals. The work of the Foundation is confined to the welfare of the neediest students in more than 30,000 government and private schools for boys and girls throughout the country, helping them in their studies and mitigating the effects of poverty where the material and social conditions or health emergency situation of their family are an obstacle. Eligibility for the Takaful Foundation is determined by a committee in each school chaired by the head and with a membership of three teachers, a social worker, and an awareness and activities worker. The school may apply to any residents of the neighbourhood to help it to identify students in need. The provision of Takaful Foundation financial or in-kind assistance to students does not affect and is not an obstacle to the continuation of any other aid received by students or their families from any party whatsoever.

48. His Highness the President of the Board of Trustees of the Takaful Foundation approved the implementation of specialized programmes to meet the needs of those covered by its programmes, totalling 63,000 students, at a cost of 53,002,320 riyals to ensure the requirements of the uniform, satchel and meal programmes from the beginning of the 1433 A.H. (2012) school year. The Takaful Foundation enjoys significant support from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, who has allocated an annual budget of 476,000,000 riyals to support programmes and projects. The missions and programmes of the Takaful Foundation may be studied by following this link: [takaful.moe.gov.sa](http://takaful.moe.gov.sa).

49. The Ninth Development Plan 1431/32-1435/36 A.H. (2010–2014) contained specific targets for channelling greater attention to the neediest children, especially in the field of social welfare and the provision of social safety nets. Some of these objectives were as follows:

- (a) Continued payment of benefits to needy cases, namely: families with special needs, paralyzed children, and foster and alternative families;
- (b) Providing a satchel and school uniform to all students who are children of beneficiaries of social security every academic year;

(c) Providing essential personal care for those residing in existing subsidiary establishments who are unable to care for themselves, the disabled, paralyzed children, the elderly and children in social welfare homes;

(d) Providing the essential expansion in the provision of social welfare establishments in the regions of the country in need of such services: the creation of 14 social guidance homes, 12 establishments for the care of girls, 6 social surveillance centres, 8 villages for orphaned children, 4 social education homes for boys, 7 guest homes for girls, 5 social welfare homes for the elderly, 21 social protection (from domestic violence) units, 10 rehabilitation centres, 15 social security offices and 6 new development centres;

(e) Continued disbursement of local development subsidies and support to continue to provide local development activities and programmes;

(f) Encouraging the establishment of new cooperatives and supporting them;

(g) Encouraging the establishment of new charities and supporting them;

(h) Supporting the implementation of studies and research in the fields of social development and care.

50. Lastly, the services provided by the State, such as education, health care, and social development, are secured in all parts of the Kingdom through the relevant ministries linked organizationally by thirteen administrative regions, ensuring access by all the target groups and those needing the services. There are governmental and private monitoring mechanisms that look for anomalies and deficiencies and tackle those they discover. There are NGOs in all parts of the country that have well-developed institutional and organizational capabilities and play an essential role in providing support and care for the needy sections of society, their work complementing state-run centres and specialized institutions. As a result of these efforts, the data available to the National Social Development Strategy show that 1.63 per cent of Saudi families were living below the extreme poverty line (food poverty) in 1425 A.H. (2004), but by 1429 A.H. (2008) that had fallen to about 0.8 per cent, a decrease of 50 per cent.

## **F. Data collection**

51. We refer to the observation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in paragraph 17 of its observations on the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia about the insufficient data regarding some categories of children covered by the provisions of the Convention and its recommendation that the system for collecting data be strengthened and supported by human and financial resources as a basis to assess progress achieved in the realization of the rights of children under 18 years of age and to help design policies to implement the Convention; that the data should be disaggregated by sex and by those groups of children in need of special protection. Recently awareness has grown of the importance of databases and some authorities have established specialized databases in specific fields, as follows:

(a) Creation of the National Information Centre in the Ministry of Education (2011), linked to the Minister's office.

(b) Creation of the Electronic Observatory in the Ministry of Health: This is the national register of child abuse and neglect cases in the Kingdom in the health sector. Through the register, demographic data, diagnostic and therapeutic interventions and referrals from peripheral child protection centres are directly entered through the Internet when cases of child abuse or neglect are observed and it is updated accordingly. Through the register, it is possible to publish annual statistics on much data that contributes to an

integrated vision on which to base child protection strategies in the Kingdom. Technical support for the register and training of data entry clerks, registrars and observers is provided by a team from the Research Centre at King Faisal Specialist Hospital. The Centre publishes annual multiple-purpose statistical data through the register. The annual reports for 2010 and 2011 can be examined at [nfsp.org.sa](http://nfsp.org.sa).

(c) Several national bodies are conducting research studies and surveys designed to analyse the situation of children and provide quality indicators in some childhood areas, especially on the most important issues or those that include the most needy children, such as: the study of violence against children in schools, "Study of abuse of students in schools at general education levels in Saudi Arabia: scale, forms and causes" 7/1431 A.H. (June 2009); and the efforts of the National Commission for Childhood to conduct diagnostic and analytical studies of the reality of childhood. Moreover, in coordination with UNICEF, the National Commission for Childhood is preparing to launch a study to analyse the situations of children in Saudi Arabia this year.

52. In spite of these efforts, the provision of data and information on childhood still needs to be improved, in particular accurate quantitative indicators, documentation of programmes and projects aimed at categories of children, and clarification of the extent of the State's commitment to implementing its obligations to children in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the observations of the international Committee on the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia. Information systems and monitoring mechanisms are the subject of ongoing developmental efforts that will enable more accurate data to be provided on childhood in the foreseeable future.

## **G. Dissemination of the Convention**

53. In paragraph 19 of its observations on the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia, the Committee on the Rights of the Child noted its appreciation of the State's efforts to disseminate the Convention, *inter alia*, through several programmes and activities of the National Commission for Childhood, and made several recommendations in support of those efforts. On the basis of that, the National Commission for Childhood has sought to take a number of steps to develop programmes to disseminate the principles and provisions of the Convention by adequate and appropriate means in application of article 42. The Commission has done so through cooperation with partners such as: the family safety programmes, the King Abdulaziz Public Library, the Human Rights Association, the Ministry of Education and UNICEF. This participatory approach has resulted in wider and more effective dissemination of the principles and provisions of the Convention, and included joint programmes producing various publications, some of them simplified versions of the Convention for children, others manuals for professionals or families. They have been distributed to all schools in the Kingdom, families, children's centres and primary health care centres.

54. Several government authorities have undertaken a raft of activities to make members of society aware of the values and principles of the Convention. These include the Ministry of Culture and Information, which has made systematic efforts by organizing seminars and radio and television debates. The Ministry plan for 1430 A.H. (2009) contained a national campaign to make the rights of the child known in cooperation with the relevant sectors, a variety of campaign programmes, include radio and television programmes and debates, seminars and meetings with groups of experts, specialists and stakeholders in several areas including, for example, the rights of children in general, the rights of children with special needs and their integration into society, a culture of dialogue and participation, gender equality, violence and abuse of children, child health care and early detection of disability.

These seminars and debates also focus on the role of parents and professionals working with children in putting into effect the rights of the child.

55. In accordance with articles 2 and 23 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the National Commission for Childhood has, in cooperation with a group of partners, employed innovative methods in this area, including the following:

(a) Formation of the “media workers friends of children group”, whose membership includes 50 media activists representing various audiovisual and print media, academic and professional institutions in the media field, and several media and civil society organizations. The National Commission for Childhood sought to qualify and train members of this group to disseminate the principles and culture of the rights of the child through a number of activities, for example, the organization of a three-day workshop in 2011 to give media workers background knowledge about the rights of the child and pressing issues, and the skills to use the media to protect and sponsor the rights of the child and include them in reports and programmes to raise the level of awareness of community members and officials of child-related issues, child welfare and protection of their rights. The workshop was attended by experts from Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia.

(b) Preparation of a reference guide for Friday sermons to define child issues through cooperation between the National Commission for Childhood and the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Da’wah and Guidance to use the positive impact of the Friday sermon to educate members of the community on the rights of the child. The guide contains 20 themes on children’s rights and issues from the perspective of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and aims to provide a frame of reference for Friday preachers to use in the preparation of Friday sermons. Once it has been finalized, the guide will be printed and widely distributed.

(c) Organization of a series of student sports, cultural, theatrical and scouting activities in schools to publicize the Convention on the Rights of the Child. For example, the Ministry of Education student activities committee put on a play for children themselves to make them aware of their rights.

(d) Production of short stories for children designed to make them aware of their rights according to the general theoretical framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This project arose from a National Commission for Childhood initiative in cooperation with UNICEF and the Ministry of Culture and Information. Seventeen thousand posters and 550,000 books have been printed and distributed to public and school libraries.

(e) Organization of an annual Festival of Childhood by the Ministry of Culture and Information, which includes educating participants on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and has been held regularly for the past four years. It generally includes seminars and lectures to make the Convention known; leaflets and pamphlets about it are distributed to visitors to the festival, and educational activities organized that are designed to give children complete freedom to choose the activities that they want to do.

(f) Formation of a childhood committee in the Ministry of Culture and Information, which includes experts and activists in the childhood field and is intended to support the Ministry in its work promoting awareness of childhood and organizing and improving cultural and media activities for children.

(g) The Family Safety Programme and the Human Rights Association organized the Ghosoun Mercy campaign in collaboration with the National Commission for Childhood and the Ministry of Education to educate the community about the harmfulness of domestic violence and violence against children.

56. The National Human Rights Association has made many efforts to make individuals aware of the rights of the child through the publication of booklets (Convention on the Rights of the Child in Islam), and a human rights magazine bearing the logo Know Your Rights and Colour Them, concerned with teaching children about their rights through drawing, colouring, expressive pictures, educational sentences and posters to attract children's attention and improve their knowledge of their rights. The Association also runs courses and awareness programmes for children and their parents in schools and courses and workshops to spread the culture of children's rights.

## **H. Cooperation with civil society**

57. In paragraph 21 of its observations on the second periodic report, the Committee on the Rights of the Child acknowledged the growing number of charitable civil society associations and activities, and was concerned that this growth should continue, that dialogue with civil society should be strengthened, in particular with NGOs working on children's rights issues, and a framework facilitated for the establishment of NGOs to support the promotion and implementation of the rights of the child. In line with the Committee's recommendation, the State has taken serious steps to promote the establishment of non-governmental institutions in all areas related to the rights of the child, including those that do not have philanthropic goals, and to strengthen developmental relations and partnership with these institutions. The following initiatives and measures are examples of this:

(a) The State has developed tools and opened multiple areas of dialogue and cooperation with civil society organizations. This is clear from the joint programmes by government agencies and NGOs. For example, it was and still is thanks to the efforts of charitable organizations that a range of child-related reform and legislative programmes have been launched, such as: the Protection from Abuse Act, which was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/52 of 15/11/1434 A.H. (21 September 2013); the Maintenance Fund project to reduce divorce and its effects, in the preparation of which the following five civil society organizations were involved: the King Khalid Foundation, the Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Foundation, the Charitable Love Society to Reduce Divorce and its Effects, the Women's Renaissance Society, and the National Family Safety Programme. It should be noted that this project is currently being studied by several authorities (the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA)).

(b) Council of Ministers Decision No. 45 of 27/2/1432 A.H. (1 February 2011) assigning to the Ministry of Social Affairs the task of supporting and supervising the private children's centres that provide care and leisure services to children, and private social research centres. This includes facilitating the issuance of the necessary licences, benefiting from existing means of support and funding and coordinating with the relevant authorities.

(c) The Ninth Development Plan, 1431/32-1435/36 A.H. (2010–2014) has various targets regarding encouraging the establishment and support of new private cooperatives and charities.

(d) The Ministry of Social Affairs offers generous financial support to civil society organizations and encourages and supports what is given by businessmen and the private sector from the perspective of social responsibility. Other governmental and private bodies provide technical and financial support through a series of courses aimed at increasing the capabilities and building the capacities of these organizations in the childhood field, as well as overseeing 232 pre-schools attended by about 16,000 children.

(e) The National Commission for Childhood is keen to establish and maintain strong partnerships with NGOs as those bodies participate in the implementation and funding of most of the programmes overseen by the Commission. Examples of this include three NGOs cooperating in the preparation and implementation of the personal safety programme, and four in the preparation and implementation of the teacher training programme on skills for the detection of and early intervention in cases of abuse and neglect.

(f) As a result of these efforts and reforms there has been a steady increase in the number and type of NGOs: the available data show that there are more than 671 such organizations in the Kingdom and that more than 500 of them either work in the childhood field or their activities are related to childhood. There is an evolution in the type of these organizations and the nature of the services they provide to children and their families, which include protection, development and regulation. For example, in 2010–2011, three charitable organizations were established: the Childhood Welfare Association, the Our Children Charity, and the Charitable Love Society. When the missions of these new organizations and the programmes they launch are examined, it can be seen that their activities cover a wide range of protective, developmental and research work in the childhood field.

## I. International cooperation

58. In paragraphs 23 and 24 of its concluding observations on Saud Arabia's second periodic report, the Committee on the Rights of the Child noted its satisfaction with the Kingdom's international cooperation and the support provided by Saudi civil society associations to children's welfare activities in some Muslim countries. The Committee recommended that the State party continue its activities in the area of international cooperation and increase its official development assistance to 7 per cent of its GDP, as recommended by the United Nations, with special focus on children's rights and welfare abroad in the spirit of the Convention. Accordingly, Saudi Arabia is a donor state, a prime partner in international development and foreign aid is an essential aspect of its foreign policy, indeed it is a major donor country. It has been eager to continue to provide support and assistance to many Moslem and non-Moslem countries and has done a great deal to develop international cooperation programmes and increase their financial capabilities in a manner that exceeds the aforementioned recommendation of the Committee and the recommendation of the United Nations.

59. This is evident from the significant momentum in the development assistance provided by the Kingdom in support of developing countries, total aid provided to developing countries in the period 1393-1431 A.H. (1973–2009) amounting to more than \$99.75 billion, exceeding the United Nations target for development aid of 0.7 per cent of GDP.

60. The Kingdom provides aid through various mechanisms, including soft loans, grants and relief assistance, and exemptions from outstanding debt, the country having waived more than \$6 billion of debt owed by poor countries.

61. Saudi Arabia has also provided aid to developing countries through the following channels:

(a) The Saudi Fund for Development: The Fund is an independent body with independent financial status and a capital of 31 billion Saudi riyals, the equivalent of about \$ 8.3 billion. It is the main channel for international cooperation for economic and social development and offers its contributions in the form of soft loans with no consideration of geographical location. It focuses its funding operations on priority development projects,

giving special priority to poor countries. Its cooperation has included non-refundable and non-restricted aid, and soft development loans, from which 95 developing countries in Asia, Africa and other regions of the world have benefited.

(b) Regional and international development institutions: Saudi Arabia contributes to several Arab, regional and international development institutions. It is, for example, a founder member of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and a member of the International Monetary Fund. It is the largest contributor to the capital of the Islamic Development Bank (26.56 per cent), the accumulated financing operations approved by the Bank up to 1430 A.H. (2009) being about \$63.9 billion. Saudi Arabia is also a major contributor to the OPEC Fund for International Development, which gives special priority to assisting poor countries; from its establishment up to the end of 1430/31 A.H. (2009), it had granted 1,264 loans amounting to \$8,703 million to assist 125 States, including 51 States in Africa, 42 in Asia, 28 in Latin America and the Caribbean and four in Europe.

(c) The governmental sectors: Saudi Arabia also gives assistance through certain specialized governmental bodies, for example, the Ministry of Health provides medical assistance and the Ministry of Agriculture food aid.

(d) The Saudi Red Crescent Society: The Saudi Red Crescent Society contributes with the competent governmental authorities to the delivery of emergency assistance and humanitarian aid to countries experiencing disasters and crises.

(e) Organized charitable activities: These include aid that is collected and provided under the auspices of the Government through committees formed for specific purposes. This is in response to specific circumstances and events, such as natural disasters and humanitarian crises resulting from armed conflict or famine. This assistance is typically non-refundable emergency grants linked to the event.

62. The Kingdom is also eager to provide humanitarian assistance to all who need it around the world and was among the first donors of relief assistance as follows:

(a) In his speech at the Kuwait Summit in 1430 A.H. (2009), the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques announced the provision of one billion dollars for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. In the same year, the Kingdom provided emergency relief totalling \$11.4 million to people affected by wars, earthquakes, floods, snow and drought in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Niger, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

(b) In 1429 A.H. (2008), the Kingdom contributed \$500 million to the World Food Programme in response to the Flash Appeal to address the embarrassing gap in programme funding in the wake of the sharp rise in food and fuel prices. It should be noted that Saudi Arabia allocates four thousand tons of dates to the Programme every year for distribution to needy countries.

(c) At the donors' conference held in London on 24/10/1427 A.H. (15 November 2006), Saudi Arabia announced the provision of \$1,000 million to Yemen through the Saudi Fund for Development and also provided additional financial assistance to Yemen to support its efforts to remove landmines from the governorate of Aden.

(d) Saudi Arabia provided a \$500 million dollar grant for the reconstruction of Lebanon, and a \$1,000 million deposit in 1427 A.H. (2006).

(e) In 1424 A.H. (2003), Saudi Arabia announced its willingness to provide \$1,000 million for the reconstruction of Iraq, including \$500 million to finance development projects through the Saudi Fund for Development, and \$500 million for programme financing and export guarantees for Iraq, in addition to the humanitarian aid

provided by Saudi Arabia in the form of food and medical supplies and a field hospital established in Baghdad. It also established ten water purification plants, and flew Iraqi patients to Saudi Arabia to receive specialist treatment.

63. Saudi Arabia has provided aid in the field of economic and social development on a bilateral basis and in the form of multilateral assistance, including aid to the childhood sector, one example of which is support for the establishment of an emergency children's centre and a burns centre in Kenya National Hospital. Such aid has been provided as follows:

(a) Bilateral aid in 1430/31 A.H. (2009): the Saudi Fund for Development signed 21 bilateral loan agreements with 19 developing countries in 1430/31 A.H. (2009) (11 in Africa, six in Asia, and two in different areas) totalling 1,984.5 million Saudi riyals, including contributions to the financing of 21 development projects. The Fund has continued its interest in the social infrastructure sector, funding five projects totalling 293.25 million Saudi riyals, i.e. 14.78 per cent of total funding in 1430/31 A.H. (2009).

(b) Multilateral aid: Saudi Arabia has contributed to the funding of 13 development projects in 12 developing countries with other financiers to the tune of about 1,135.25 million riyals.

(c) Between the start of activity of the Saudi Fund for Development in 1394/95 A.H. (1975) and the end of 1430/31 A.H. (2009), there were 451 soft loan agreements to finance 451 development projects and economic programmes amounting to 30.86 billion Saudi riyals. Seventy-five developing countries in different regions of the world benefited from this.

(d) There is currently cooperation between the Saudi Development fund and UNICEF for development for the benefit of children in Pakistan.

64. In addition to the above, the Kingdom's support for United Nations humanitarian and development organizations should be mentioned. It is, for example, a major donor country of public and private resources to UNICEF, contributing \$1,000,000 per year to its budget since 1976, in addition to ongoing provision of support to UNICEF programmes and projects throughout the world. The following are examples of the Kingdom's generous contributions in this area:

(a) In recognition of the humanitarian role played by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the Kingdom has traditionally provided an annual contribution to support its activity. It also made large exceptional donations during the first conference and financing conferences, and has donated large quantities of grain to help refugees in Africa, in particular in Somalia.

(b) With regard to Palestinian refugees, in particular, the Kingdom contributed to the establishment of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), established by the United Nations after Israel occupied Palestine. In recognition of the role played by this agency for more than one million Palestinian refugees, the Kingdom has contributed annually to its budget, and has repeatedly intervened to cover the deficit from which it suffers.

(c) In the humanitarian framework itself, Saudi Arabia has supported the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, always supporting its annual budget and has given exceptional assistance amounting to some \$80 million.

(d) In the field of human rights, in 2012, the Saudi Human Rights Commission and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights signed a memorandum of understanding on a large number of programmes to be implemented by the Office in

coordination with the Commission and the relevant governmental bodies in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.

65. Multiple private sector initiatives in the Kingdom should also be noted concerning the provision of international assistance usually targeting poor families in the affected countries. For example, the Saudi people donated more than \$100 million through charitable organizations and associations for the victims of the hurricane that hit several countries in South Asia. Strong partnerships have been formed between UNICEF and several childhood bodies in Saudi Arabia, which have over several years made large direct and indirect contributions for the benefit of UNICEF worldwide and are increasingly engaged in developing UNICEF resources for programmes and crisis intervention, led by the Saudi Committee for Relief in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Palestine under the chairmanship of His Highness the Minister of the Interior through the signing of several cooperation agreements to provide assistance to the children and women affected.

66. Also to be noted is the Arab Gulf Programme for Development (AGFUND) established by the Kingdom along with other Gulf countries in 1401 A.H. (1981) to support humanitarian and development organizations of the United Nations. Saudi Arabia alone provides about 78 per cent of the resources of the programme. It aims to support human development efforts, including the fight against poverty, and the promotion of education, health, infrastructure support and staff training, with greatest attention to the most vulnerable groups in developing countries, especially women and children. Since its creation, AGFUND has contributed to the establishment, support or financing of 1,264 projects in 132 countries, with no distinction on grounds of race, colour, sex, creed, or political affiliation, and has initiated the establishment of a number of major projects that have benefited children and families in the Arab region, such as: the Arab Open University, the Arab NGO Network, the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research, the Pan Arab Project for Family Health, banks for the poor, the Arab Council for Childhood and Development, and early childhood development projects in the Arab countries. Many other organizations have also benefited from AGFUND, such as the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, UNESCO, and the United Nations Population Fund.

67. Saudi Arabia has also provided help and assistance to international initiatives that are usually aimed at children in many fields, such as: support for the UNESCO dialogue programme to the tune of \$5 million, the establishment and funding of the Messengers of Peace programme to the tune of \$37 million over ten years, and the donation of \$20 million to the UNESCO Emergency Fund.

68. Lastly, it should be noted that, in accordance with the goals of the Ninth Development Plan 1431/32-1435/36 A.H. (2010–2014), Saudi Arabia will continue this collaborative approach in the areas of international cooperation and development to provide help and assistance to all who need them around the world, within the resources available and in the context of its humanitarian values and heritage.

## **II. Definition of the child (art. 1)**

69. The Committee on the Rights of the Child noted in paragraphs 25 and 26 of its observations on the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia that the definition of a child is in line with the requirements of article I of the Convention, noting however the flexibility available to the judge in determining the age of majority, and recommending that legislative measures be taken to prohibit any exception, and further recommending that the minimum age for marriage be set at the same internationally acceptable level for boys and girls.

70. Looking at the statutes adopted in Saudi Arabia, it is clear that the definition of the child in them is consistent with the requirements of article 1 of the Convention. The Child Protection Act defines the child as “any person under the age of eighteen”, as does the Act to combat crimes of trafficking in persons. Furthermore, the juvenile is defined in the criminal law regulations on arrest and the regulations on juvenile detention centres as any person who has not reached the age of eighteen. The age of legal capacity and legal responsibility is raised to 20 when it comes to the application, subject to particular conditions, of disciplinary measures against drug users. In the decision to establish the General Directorate for Social Protection as a specialized child welfare department in the Ministry of Social Affairs, the child is defined according to the age set by global social regulations.

71. It should also be pointed out that the flexibility available to the judge to make exceptions to the age of majority at 18 is not absolute in light of the judicial guarantees that require the judge to state the logic and merits of the exception and the fact that such decisions are subject to review and may be quashed through the judicial mechanisms and procedures in force in the State, the decisions of the judge being reviewed by two judicial levels, the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court.

72. With regard to the age of marriage, the regulations do not set an age for marriage, but in the case of those who marry under the age of 18 they require the approval of an advisory committee before a marriage document can be issued. The committee consists of a group of psychology and health specialists who conduct a thorough examination of each case and interview in private any girl under the age of 18 years without the presence of the parents. Moreover, the regulations require the consent of the bride, regardless of her age. With respect to actual practice, the officials authorized to perform marriages are often more rigorous regarding approval of marriage of those under eighteen, in addition to the safeguards available to prevent any excesses, as in cases where the National Human Rights Commission has intervened to block the marriage of minors. This reflects the State’s seriousness in dealing with this phenomenon. In any case, a commission of senior scientists is currently studying this matter, while the legislative organs are exerting unremitting efforts to determine the minimum age for marriage for boys and girls alike in such a way as to prevent the possibility of early marriage and its negative effects. Furthermore, several governmental and private bodies are organizing awareness and educational programmes for parents on the dangers of early marriage and this is paving the way for the work of the legislative bodies in determining the minimum age of marriage. The Ministry of Justice has recently required the ages of the two parties to be noted on the marriage contract in the marriage documents, which will contribute to subsequent determination of the form and prevalence of early marriage in the Kingdom and prepare the way for legislative measures based on precise knowledge about this phenomenon.

73. The Human Rights Commission and the National Human Rights Association have made repeated efforts to reduce underage marriage. The Association has sought to take several accompanying measures to educate individuals about the negative effects that result from it in terms of psychological, social, family, and economic harm. It has also called for the development of controls to prevent such marriages, and sent a circular to the officials authorized to perform marriages not to conclude any marriage of a girl who is a minor except with the authorization of the court in the jurisdiction of which their work falls in order to ensure the preservation of the rights of the child. The Association seeks to prevent the arbitrary use of guardianship powers, and is also working to create rules or controls to prevent underage marriage.

### III. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12)

#### A. Non-discrimination (art. 2)

74. With reference to the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia about the general principle of non-discrimination in domestic law contained in paragraphs 27, 28 and 29 and its recommendation to review relevant domestic laws, administrative systems and social norms in order to ensure that all children enjoy the rights set forth in the Convention, including girl children, children born out of wedlock, children of non-Saudi nationals (migrants), and child beggars. The Committee requested that specific information be included in the third and fourth periodic report on the relevant measures and programmes. Saudi Arabia has introduced measures and programmes to ensure respect for and enforcement of the principle of non-discrimination, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and taking into account the Committee's general comment No. 1 on article 29, paragraph 1, of the Convention.

75. With regard to girl children, several governmental and private bodies are involved in combatting discrimination against girls on the cultural, awareness, regulatory and procedural levels. On the educational level, several bodies have undertaken a series of public education campaigns to make individual members of society aware of the values of equality and equal opportunities for all children, with a focus on correcting existing stereotypical images and stating the parity of the rights of females with males. These bodies include the Ministry of Culture and Information, which makes regular efforts by organizing television and radio programmes and debates on gender equality. These programmes and debates also focus on the role of parents in instilling in children the values of equality and non-discrimination. These programmes and educational efforts are an effective and important means of promoting change in existing outlooks and paternalistic social and cultural traditions about girls, and countering discrimination in a manner supportive of the passage of legislation committing everyone to equality and preventing discrimination.

76. The achievement of equal educational opportunities for girls and boys is one of the most important themes reflecting legislative and regulatory efforts to achieve equality for all children. The text of the decision on compulsory education of 1425 A.H. (2004) covered all, with no distinction between male and female children. The Ministry of Education has made enormous efforts to fully, completely and comprehensively apply this decision and to expand and improve education for all without discrimination. As will be explained and detailed later in this report, the enrolment rates of girls have risen increasingly in various levels of education, the average annual rate of growth in total enrolment of girls in all levels of education reaching 6.17 per cent for the period 1395-1430 A.H. (1975-2009), while in the same period the increase for boys was 4.14 per cent. It was therefore possible to close the gap in enrolment indicators for the two sexes at the general education and university levels in 1430 A.H. (2009).

77. It should be noted that the net growth in the enrolment rates of boys and girls in the levels of education is the most appropriate means of measuring enrolment in the education system and the extent of absorption of age groups in educational institutions. It can be seen that between 1422 and 1430 A.H. (2001 and 2009) the net enrolment rates of boys in the primary level rose from 84 per cent to 96.3 per cent, while the corresponding rate for girls rose from 82 per cent to 94.3 per cent. This indicates the positive results of the country's policies on equality between boys and girls in the education system, and the improvement already made in educational institutions to accommodate parallel levels of education for boys and girls. Table 3 shows the reduced gender disparities in primary, intermediate and

secondary education at all levels, as well as the ratio of females to males who are literate members of the 5 > 24 year age group.

78. This achievement in empowering women to take advantage of educational opportunities was matched by progress in the empowerment of women with regard to health, as in 1430 A.H. (2009) average female life expectancy at birth reached 74.7 years, compared with 72.5 years for males.

79. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education are making systematic efforts to identify the economic and social conditions faced by certain categories of low-income families that may prevent the enrolment of their children in education or threaten the extent to which they benefit from the education available to them. This is being tackled through multiple programmes and financial allocations detailed above (section on allocation of resources, paras. 40 to 46). It should be noted that in Saudi Arabia education is provided free of charge to all at all levels.

80. Consideration should be given to the Takaful Foundation (see paragraphs 47 and 48 of this report) and what it does for the neediest children as one of the most outstanding measures taken by the State to confront the obstacles and difficulties that can interfere with tackling it and mitigating its severity in such a way as to prevent discrimination in the enjoyment by all children of their right to education. In addition to what the Takaful Foundation is doing, the Ministry of Education is extending programmes that target the neediest children and children in remote areas, providing support services to these children, such as school transport, which ensures that all children go to school, and motivating parents to enrol their children in school and keep them there through the large annual financial grants given to students, as shown in table 9.

81. With regard to the comment of the Committee about children born out of wedlock, such children enjoy the guarantees and privileges available to other children in the Kingdom as State regulations require all authorities to provide all the services and facilities that enable them to exercise their economic, social, health, educational and other rights. They are entitled to Saudi citizenship without exception or regulatory restrictions. The Saudi Citizenship Act also stipulates that “Anyone born in or outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to a Saudi father or to a Saudi mother and a stateless father or a father of unknown nationality, or born in the Kingdom to parents of unknown nationality, shall be a Saudi national. A foundling discovered in the Kingdom shall be deemed to have been born therein failing proof to the contrary”. Indeed, the State has made substantial financial allocations and established several welfare institutions to alleviate the negative effects of lack of a natural family to care for and support such children, raise them in a way that compensates them for that lack and promotes equal chances of a decent life, state and private institutions providing suitable care for children of unknown parentage and children deprived of proper care in the family or community through a network of welfare facilities and institutions (such as social education homes, model education homes, orphanages, alternative care programmes, social surveillance centres, temporary care homes and guesthouses for those with special circumstances), which will be detailed later in this report (paras. 122 to 137).

82. With regard to child beggars, please refer to paragraphs 303 to 306 of this report.

83. With regard to the Committee’s observation concerning children who do not have Saudi nationality, please refer to the reply to the Committee’s questions concerning refugee children and children of non-Saudi workers (art. 22), the right of the child to remain with his parents and family (art. 9), and family reunification (art. 10).

**B. Best interests of the child (art. 3)**

84. In its observations in paragraphs 30 and 31 of the report it issued after considering the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern about the general principle of the best interests of the child and the extent to which it was included in laws and practices concerning children, and recommended that it be incorporated into all legislation and practice concerning children, such as decisions on custody and alternative care. Accordingly, Saudi Arabia has taken serious steps to secure the respect and full realization of the general principle of the best interests of the child in all the actions relating to children undertaken by public and private social welfare institutions, and all the measures and decisions issued by the administrative authorities and the courts that concern children in the context of treatment of personal status issues (such as custody, guardianship and maintenance). Examples of developments in this field include:

(a) The National Commission for Childhood has organized workshops and educational campaigns addressing decision makers and members of the community about the centrality of the concept of the best interests of the child and taking into account the importance of this concept in all action taken regarding the child. The Commission organized a three-day workshop attended by 50 media workers on the importance of investigating the child's best interests in media investigations and programmes presented in audiovisual and print media outlets.

(b) The Child Protection Act approved by the Shura Council under Decision No. 74/145 of 13/2/1432 A.H. (18 January 2011) is based on several principles inspired by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular the best interests of the child, in that it contains additional provisions in accordance with the general framework of this concept. For example, it includes a basic provision requiring it to be ensured that the interests of the child prevail over the interests or considerations of adults.

(c) Furthermore, the current discussions between the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Finance and the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency about the maintenance fund project are based upon consideration of the best interests of the child prevailing over any other consideration. Despite the fact that in the event of divorce by the father child support is compulsorily directly deducted regardless of the reasons and circumstances of the divorce, the proposed system is based on the general concept of providing a fund that is able to ensure and regulate the child's obtaining such maintenance, while the fund continues to pursue the father, so that it would be the fund (and not women and their children) that would be the adversary of those who delay the payment of maintenance (please see paragraphs 175 and 176).

**C. The right to life, survival and development (art. 6)**

85. In its observations in paragraphs 32 and 33 of the report it issued after considering the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia, the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern about the imposition of the death sentence on children who have committed a crime and the discretionary power available to judges when presiding over criminal cases involving children to decide that a child has reached the age of majority before reaching the age of 18. Moreover, in paragraphs 34 and 35 of its report, it expressed concern about the fire at the girls' intermediate school in Mecca in 2002 and recommended taking all necessary measures to ensure that all school buildings and other institutions are safe for children.

86. Accordingly, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia guarantees the right to life, survival and the development of all children in the Kingdom without any discrimination, with special attention to children most in need, regardless of gender, colour, race or creed, such as orphaned children, the disabled, children of unknown parentage, children born out of wedlock, children deprived of the care of one or both parents or relatives owing to death, divorce, the ill-health of the mother or any other circumstance. This care is guided by legislation, regulations and the residential institutions and alternative families that were described in the second report and are supervised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the participation of several civil society and governmental agencies through the various institutions in the regions of the country where the children are to be found that provide children with social, health, educational, psychological and vocational services. These institutions offer children an alternative family environment, board and lodging and every comfort, including a monthly allowance and opportunities to pursue a hobby and learn useful crafts that will allow them to become productive members of society. The most important of these programmes include, for example, social education centres, model education institutions, orphanages, social surveillance centres, temporary care homes, guesthouses for those with special circumstances, vocational, social and health rehabilitation services for disabled persons, care for children with disabilities, day-care, alternative families under the foster care system, and the welfare programmes for normal and abnormal children run by 671 charities in the Kingdom (see paragraphs 122–137). It should be noted in this report that in recent years the State has worked unremittingly to increase the number of these institutions and programmes, to extend their reach and increase the efficiency of their staff and their financial allocations, as already detailed in this report.

87. With regard to the death penalty, the Kingdom has taken serious steps in this area through the juveniles system, which will be detailed later, with a focus on judicial measures and special programmes. The Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution work to follow up and investigate the circumstances of juveniles and ensure that human rights are respected in the application of the various punitive measures. Juveniles may not be punished under any Act other than the Act that applies specifically to them. As the observations and recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child mentioned here are similar to and intersect with those concerning the Committee's observations and recommendations on the periodic review of placement in institutions (art. 25), and with those on the juvenile justice system (arts. 37, 39 and 40), please refer to paragraphs 161 to 167 and paragraphs 316 to 322.

88. Regarding the Committee's question in paragraph 34 about the fire that broke out at the school in Mecca in 2002, we would like to report that Saudi Arabia has taken serious and expeditious measures that respond to the Committee's recommendation to protect all children from such painful incidents and ensure that all school buildings and other institutions are safe for children by employing the following procedures and measures:

(a) As a serious step to maintaining the safety and security of children, the General Directorate for School Safety and Security was set up in the Ministry by Decision of His Highness the Minister No. 3955837 of 2/6/1433 A.H. (25 April 2012). Under the decision, security and safety departments are to be established in every educational directorate. The department is given a building, implements the annual plan and the strategy for school safety and security, oversees evacuations and regular fire and rescue drills, and develops and follows up the application of the rules and regulations that lay down the safety and security conditions and norms that should be available in schools in order to ensure a safe environment.

(b) This new directorate has started to develop environmental standards to guarantee security and safety in schools and developed strict mechanisms for the

measurement of these standards at least twice each year. Measures have also been determined for dealing with any hazards in schools. The directorate is currently running training programmes for all staff and students on the implementation of security and safety measures in schools and events to raise awareness and develop a security and safety culture among children.

(c) Within the Ministry of Education project to improve the school environment and ensure its safety, the bulk of the financial and human energies have been allocated to the creation and construction of school buildings that comply with security and safety standards (see paragraph 245).

(d) A module has been set aside in all social and national studies subjects for all grades that includes a definition of safety procedures and methods to be followed in case of common dangers such as flood and fire. Teachers are usually assisted by civil defence officers in the conduct of practical lessons about safety, and there is ongoing cooperation between the Saudi Red Crescent and the Ministry of Health to provide first aid training for students and teachers.

(e) In the same context, and after a thorough study to make sure that it was possible to apply the fire safety programme in schools, on 12 March 2012, Saudi Aramco, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, launched the first phase of the fire prevention campaign in schools with the title “together for schools free from the fire”, which aims to protect and educate students in the Kingdom about fire risks in schools, reducing the incidence of fire, and the best methods and practices for dealing with fire if it breaks out. The campaign, during which there will be training in evacuation in case of fire and educational materials will be provided for teachers and students alike, will cover around 2,200 schools throughout the country. It includes a programme called “the path of the coach”, which is meant to qualify teachers, in addition to a large group of volunteers, to continue the campaign so that it covers all the schools that are not included in the first phase. It is noteworthy that the first phase of the campaign has given priority to schools in the girls’ education sector, benefitting 29,677 students, 794 teachers and 11,111 parents in 81 primary, middle and secondary schools. In the boys sector, 147,000 students and 14,500 teachers in 600 schools have been trained. The work of the campaign continues in order to achieve its goals and target the rest of the schools in the Kingdom.

(f) There was coordination between the Ministry of Education and the General Directorate of Civil Defence on the occasion of World Civil Defence on 1 March 2006, when, under the slogan “civil defence and the school”, an extensive awareness and education campaign about safety procedures and precautions in schools was launched including all the (boys’ and girls’) schools in the Kingdom. Civil defence branches in the cities, in coordination with the General Directorate of Student Activity, took part in organizing many events, exhibitions and lectures. The Directorate of Civil Defence also published an educational series aimed at children entitled “Saviour Child”; five issues were published and distributed to all school libraries. It also issued and distributed to schools a series of “Saviour” cartoons aimed at children under the age of 12. In the context of the same educational and awareness campaign, the slogan for 2011 was “civil defence and the role of the family”, when a comprehensive campaign was launched covering parents’ awareness of their role in safety.

(g) The Ministry of Education has also taken the initiative of launching a “school mobile” service. The Ministry covers all the material costs of the service, paying subscription fees to the service and communications and messaging costs, and distributes a budget to each school to cover the costs of the service, which aims to invest modern communications technology in strengthening communication with parents in case of emergency via SMS, and does so by assigning a mobile line to each school (boys’ and girls’) to facilitate communication with them in the many cases that require direct

communication, including in situations of potential danger (flooding, dust storms, tornadoes, any other emergencies).

#### **D. Respect for the views of the child (art. 12)**

89. In its observations following consideration of the second periodic report, the Committee on the Rights of the Child commended Saudi Arabia for its efforts to respect the right of the child to have his/her views heard, *inter alia*, through establishing children's councils, recreational activities and, notably, in judicial proceedings. However, it noted in paragraphs 36 and 37 of its report that traditional attitudes towards children in society, in particular towards girls, limit the right to express their views and to have them taken into account, especially within the family, at school and in the media. The Committee recommended that the State party continue to promote the right of children to express their views fully in all matters affecting them, undertake awareness-raising campaigns and educational programmes in order to inform children and others, including parents and legal professionals, of the rights of children to express their views and of the mechanisms and other opportunities that exist for this purpose.

90. The participation of Saudi children and those living in Saudi Arabia is manifest in many ways, including: participation in policies and programmes such as their participation in preparation of the National Strategy for Children; media participation in community awareness of childhood issues and priorities, such as participation in radio and television programmes aimed at adults on the issue of violence against children and child abuse; participation in founding the organizational structure of institutions concerned with children, such as the Family Safety Programme youth group, Saudi Children of Parliament, and the association *Kail*, founded in 2012 by a group of adolescents with the aim of raising the awareness of all children to the dangers of obesity and the importance and benefits of healthy nutrition. All of this in addition to the permanent organizational structures that provide a sustainable and appropriate environment for the implementation of the right of the child to participate, such as children's associations, science clubs, youth centres, student centres, schools, colleges, sports, cultural and literary clubs, and radio and the press inside and outside the school.

91. In addition to all this, the actions and measures taken in Saudi Arabia that were outlined in the previous report and commended by the Committee to promote respect for and the full realization of the right of the child to respect for his or her views in all matters affecting them are ongoing. In response to the Committee's recommendation about traditional attitudes towards children in society, several governmental and private bodies have been implementing a range of programmes and projects with a group of partners from the relevant authorities in the Kingdom for this purpose, including the family, schools, the media, administrative bodies, and society in general. Some of those programmes and projects are as follows:

(a) In 2008, a survey was conducted of over 5,000 children as part of the National Commission for Childhood project to prepare a national childhood strategy. This study led to a belief in children's ability to participate effectively and directly and the need for the strategy to reflect their aspirations, needs and views in relation to all the bodies concerned or required to be concerned with Saudi children. An instrument for child participation was therefore prepared for daily interaction with the various bodies (the school, the street, the home, the park, television, etc.) and to provide children with the opportunity to underscore their judgement and experience of life. The team was keen to make the children "masters of the situation", and to recount their experience and transmit their own judgment, not what they are supposed to say or what adults expect them to say. This means: accepting the child's response as it is and giving the child absolute freedom in

this participation, which should be according to the opinion and words of the child himself or herself, without criticizing, correcting or changing the child. This instrument was tested with 200 children and 200 parents in various parts of the country and then modified and improved before being tried out again in a school in Riyadh. The instrument has been applied in 13 education departments with the involvement of more than 5,000 children in all regions of the country. These contributions were then analysed and categorized and converted into input in diagnosing the facts, formulating a vision and the future strategy, and devising programmes and policies. The results of this analysis included two types of inputs that have been employed in the body of the strategy and are as follows:

1. Expressions: Sentences of the child himself or herself that are a distinct or important indication portraying the reality he or she experiences, his or her daily interaction with relevant authorities, or other things that enrich our understanding of the diagnosis of the facts or formulation of a vision or future strategy. These sentences have been deduced from the children's contributions.

2. Policies and programmes: These policies and programmes were proposed by the children. The most urgent of them were extracted and identified on the basis of recording their replication across the repetition cards in the analytical tool.

(b) Launch of the Family Safety Programme youth safety initiative: This is an initiative of the Family Safety Programme aimed at young people of both sexes aged between 12 and 17 whereby a system of training programmes qualifies them to participate in the leadership of educational and awareness programmes, such as a communication and dialogue skills course, a logical thinking skills course, a problem-solving skills course, a skills completion course, a leadership skills course and a relationship-forming course. In mid-2012, a youth committee was formed in the National Family Safety Programme and a workshop was held entitled "The art of effective communication" to provide trainees with communication skills and the ability to build positive interactive social relationships with the surrounding community.

(c) On the occasion of World Day for Prevention of Violence and Abuse against Children, which falls on 19 November each year, the National Family Safety Programme launched an anti-bullying (violence between peers) campaign from 5 to 23/12/1432 A.H (1–19 November 2011). A group of members of the youth safety committee took part in the implementation of this educational campaign, the aim of which was to help children and adolescents to understand and renounce bullying in all its forms through running workshops and interactive activities in a group of middle and secondary schools in Riyadh, in addition to bringing into play the role of the extensive electronic social networking sites among young people and adolescents. The campaign concluded with events held in the Kingdom Centre shopping mall and the Ladies Kingdom in Riyadh in the presence of a number of public figures, artists, sponsors, and supporters.

(d) Introduction of innovative programmes to develop children's capacities and provide opportunities for them to participate and express an opinion, such as the National Commission for Childhood programme in 2011 to set up the Child and Adolescent Forum, in collaboration with the Arab Council for Childhood and the Ministry of Education, in order to provide a permanent institutional structure for children to express their views on issues affecting them, as well as the Aflatoun programme, launched by the Arab Urban Development Institute in 2012 as an initiative to protect children.

(e) Cooperation of the National Commission for Childhood with the King Abdulaziz Library to launch a project to write a collection of stories for children to make them aware of their right to express their opinions fully on all issues affecting them and their right to access to information and tools specific to them in order to exercise that right.

(f) Organization by the Family Safety Programme in 2009 of a high-level meeting between four ministries (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture and Information, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Health) and an elected group of children during which discussions took place between the children and the four ministries about their concerns and opinions.

(g) Organization of periodic programmes and activities by the Ministry of Education designed to engage children and provide ongoing educational and media outlets to transmit children's views and requests to officials and the authorities concerned with providing services and needs to categories of children.

(h) Organization of radio and television programmes by the Ministry of Culture and Information to raise awareness among children and others, including parents and professionals working with children, of the right of children to express their views and to provide information about the mechanisms and other opportunities available to this end.

(i) The establishment of the Children's Parliament through a private initiative sponsored by *Al-Hayat*, which included access to rich and frequent opportunities to promote children's participation in national events and occasions, periodic festivals, conferences and exhibitions, in addition to the output of educational and awareness programmes by the parliament children themselves to educate members of the community and officials about the principles and values of the rights of the child.

#### **IV. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8, 13–17, and 37 (a))**

##### **A. Name and nationality (arts. 7 and 8)**

92. In paragraph 8 of its report on the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia, the Committee on the Rights of the Child referred to discrimination against children on the grounds of nationality and recommended reviewing the legislation on nationality in order to ensure that it can be transmitted to children through both the maternal and paternal line without distinction.

93. In line with what is stated in Article 7, paragraph 2, of the Convention, following the amendment of the Citizenship Act by Royal Decree No. M/54 of 29/10/1425 A.H. (17 July 2004) and the issuance of the amended implementing regulations of the Citizenship Act, Saudi legislation is very clear in guaranteeing the right of the child to Saudi nationality, since article 7 of the Act provides that anyone born in or outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to a Saudi father or to a Saudi mother and a stateless father or a father of unknown nationality, or born in the Kingdom to parents of unknown nationality, shall be a Saudi national. A foundling discovered in the Kingdom shall be deemed to have been born therein failing proof to the contrary.

94. The implementing regulations of the Saudi Citizenship Act were further amended in January 2012. Article 7 of the regulations, which concerns article 8 of the Act regarding children born in Saudi Arabia to a foreign father and a Saudi mother, was amended, as was article 21, paragraph 6, of the implementing regulations concerning article 16 regarding a foreign woman married to a Saudi. Women were included and covered by a decision to naturalize the children of Saudi women married to non-Saudis so that the Act covered males and females alike in accordance with the amendment to the Act. Implementation of the decision began immediately after it had been approved, and the civil status offices in the regions were informed so that the new amendments could be implemented.

95. The Saudi Citizenship Act considers a child of unknown parents to be a Saudi national by virtue of birth within its territory. He or she therefore has the rights and

privileges Saudis have. The child is registered at birth or, in the case of a foundling, on discovery. A birth notification certificate is issued, the child is given an appropriate name, his/her date of birth is entered on the certificate as well as the name of the mother if she is known, or a pseudonym if she is unknown, and the child is issued with a Saudi registration certificate, a birth certificate, a passport, and an identity card when he/she reaches 15 years of age.

96. The State facilitates all the procedures and provides support to ensure immediate registration of birth, regardless of place of birth, sex, nationality of the parents, or the circumstances of birth for all births in Saudi Arabia and all Saudi births abroad, in accordance with Article 32 of the Civil Status Act. Moreover, to encourage the registration of births, state agencies do not collect fees for the registration process. The regulations also stipulate specific requirements in the selection of names, including the inadmissibility of registering names that are inconsistent with human dignity or undesirable. Many years ago, the civil status authorities established a fine for a parent who has not obtained a birth certificate for a child within six months of birth. In view of some of the some delays in issuing documents, it was decided to double the fine according to the number of years of delay in order to reduce such cases.

## **B. Freedom of thought and religion (art. 14)**

97. In its observations issued following consideration of the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia, the Committee on the Rights of the Child referred to the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and to religious and school speech about religious minorities. In paragraph 41 of its concluding observations, the Committee recommends promoting religious tolerance and dialogue in society.

98. It is important to make clear here that Saudi society is homogeneous in religion and language. Article 1 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates that: "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a fully sovereign Arab Islamic State. Its religion is Islam. Its Constitution is the Holy Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (the Prophet's sayings) and its language is Arabic." In spite of that, we would like to emphasize that the State respects the right of non-Muslim residents to their religious beliefs. It does not interfere in religious beliefs and rituals within the limits of personal practice that does not violate the rights of all members of Saudi society who profess Islam as a religion and belief. In accordance with this general framework, the State and Saudi families wish to bring up their children in the doctrine of the nation, with full freedom for non-Muslim families residing in the Kingdom to bring up their children according to their beliefs and religion.

99. The state authorities have made strenuous efforts to promote religious tolerance and dialogue in society in a manner consistent with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue is one of the tools for the reform and development that are taking place in the Kingdom. It is an independent national body that aims to promote and develop channels of communication and intellectual dialogue between members of the community, groups and institutions, and to consolidate and disseminate the culture and values of dialogue, such as moderation, tolerance, and coexistence with the other in order to achieve justice, equality and freedom of expression in society. It does this through the involvement of various intellectual and religious categories and tendencies through dialogue mechanisms, concepts and methods. The Centre has taken serious and intensive steps to run meetings and training programmes, and has trained some 3,000 trainers in various training programmes (leadership training, certified trainer, family dialogue counsellor, communication skills in dialogue, family dialogue, and educational dialogue), and more than a million citizens in these programmes. Some of these training programmes, meetings, dialogue programmes and educational publications are listed in the

annex to this report. For further details, please also visit the Centre website, which is in four languages: [www.kacnd.org](http://www.kacnd.org).

### **C. Protection from torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**

100. In paragraph 42 of the observations published after consideration of Saudi Arabia's second periodic report, the Committee on the Rights of the Child noted what the State was doing to protect children and adolescents from torture and corporal or degrading punishment, but asked about persons who commit offences when they are under 18 years of age and extrajudicial punishments. In order to avoid repetition, as the observations and recommendations of the Committee here are similar to and intersect with those that are dealt with in relation to its observations and recommendations on periodic review of placement of children in institutions (art. 25) in paragraphs 161–167, with the discussion of the Committee's observations and recommendations on the juvenile justice system (arts. 37, 39 and 40) in paragraphs 316–322, and also with the discussion of its observations and recommendations on abuse and exploitation (arts. 9 and 39) in paragraphs 138–160, kindly refer to what is detailed in those paragraphs.

### **D. Right of the child to protection of his privacy**

101. Saudi Arabia has taken significant and clear steps to harmonize its legislation with the right of the child to protection of his privacy as the regulations in force in the State prohibit any prejudice to the honour or reputation of the child, with particular attention to the situation of children in the event of conflict with the system, children exposed to actual or assumed harm by the AIDS pandemic and children in other particular situations. It also pays particular attention to the confidentiality of information regarding them, and has issued the safety regulations on the organization of camel races that were detailed in the second report. In addition to the means of protecting the child's privacy that are set out in this report and to avoid repetition, please refer to the first and second periodic reports in this area to ensure an adequate statement of the extent to which the State attends to the child's right to protection of his privacy.

## **V. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 9–11, 18, paras. 1 and 2, 19–21, 25, 27, para. 4, and 39)**

### **A. Parental responsibilities (arts. 5 and 18)**

102. In order to guarantee and promote the rights contained in this Convention, the Kingdom is doing a great deal to provide appropriate assistance to parents and other people legally responsible for children where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, and respect for their responsibilities, rights and duties through measures and awareness programmes for parents and family members so that they provide the child with appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights enshrined in the Convention. The regulations emphasize that parents are responsible for the upbringing of the child if they are capable and competent to form, guide, educate and nurture; they have priority in the care and education of their children in all areas, and are responsible for their education and support. The State is also doing its utmost to ensure the effectiveness of the principle of the shared responsibility of both parents for the upbringing and development of the child. Articles 9 and 10 of the Basic Law of

Governance stipulate that the family is one of the most important elements and the nucleus of Saudi society and that the State shall endeavour to strengthen family bonds, care for all its members and provide conditions conducive to the development of their talents and abilities. Please refer to the first and second reports in this area for the provisions of the Basic Law on this subject.

103. With regard to the Committee's observations about children resulting from marriages of convenience (*mesyar*), we should point out in this context that such marriages are by their nature legitimate marriages and, like other marriages, are divided into two types: the first is officially documented in an official contract but the parties to the marriage prefer not to disclose it; the second is a legal marriage with all the legal pillars, but it is not documented in an official contract by an authorized official certified by the competent authorities. If a child is (presumed to be) born of an undocumented marriage of convenience, the regulations on the documentation of children born in Saudi Arabia require an officially notarized marriage contract, and this requires the marriage to be documented if it is not already. Therefore children resulting from both kinds of *mesyar* marriage are officially registered and documented and such children enjoy all the rights guaranteed to them, just like other children. In any case, the talk of *mesyar* children is no more than hypothetical press stories and is not based on empirical evidence. We do not believe in the existence of such cases.

#### **1. Laws and regulations**

104. For parental guidance and to ensure the stability of the family, the State introduced supporting statutes to provide guarantees to facilitate means of family cohesion and interdependence as detailed in the first and second reports. It has continued to introduce statutes on parental responsibilities, and on the employment of women in the Labour Act, which emphasize the importance of mother and child as the mainstay of the family.

105. The Ministry of Justice continues efforts to address the contemporary problems of the Saudi family through the establishment of family courts, in implementation of Royal Decree No. M/78 of 19/9/1428 A.H. (30 September 2007), approving the Judiciary Act and the Act on the Office of the Ombudsman and their executive instruments in order to restructure the judicial institutions. The Act provided for the establishment of personal status courts, which will be competent to consider family cases in general and women's cases in particular, problems relating to maintenance, child care, and abandonment or separation. The family courts have defined their jurisdiction by issuing a set of legal rulings that regulate the relationships between individuals, including kinship, relationship by marriage, and the rights and duties arising from that relationship at all its stages, and have thus sought to improve legislation on wedlock and the affinity arising from it, parenthood, guardianship, custody, the reciprocal rights to dissolution entailing rights to maintenance, custody, the dowry, divorce, *khul*, widowhood, settlement of family disputes, and seeking to tackle and prevent them in order to ensure the rights bestowed and performance of the duties of each member of the family. The interest of the child is considered a duty with regard to guardianship, custody, visitation, the accommodation of children, the fitness of their guardian, their safeguarding and the safeguarding of their rights. These courts also hear domestic violence cases and here there are three sections: the dispute settlement office; the justice department, which hears cases filed by the parties to them requesting their examination, and cases reconciled in the family dispute settlement offices; cases referred by government agencies; and thirdly executive offices to follow up the rulings of these offices that communicate with the authorities that provide social and other assistance. It is to these offices that a user to whom a ruling has been handed down but not executed or not fully executed applies instead of going back to court. These offices have appropriate mechanisms to give everyone what is due to them financially by opening accounts or automatic deduction from the guardian's income to the person with custody of the child, and the right

of the divorced woman and the children to maintenance, indemnity, inheritance, compensation, or execution of a will.

## 2. Awareness, education and training

106. The Kingdom, represented by several bodies, works constantly to raise awareness among parents about their responsibilities to their children and to put pressure on decision makers to take positions on issues affecting the rights of the child in a way that complies with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The State has therefore witnessed educational and media campaigns designed to make parents aware of the rights of the child and educate them about these rights, taking into account the culture and local traditions that respect the rights of parents and the family in appropriate care and guidance of the child. This has taken place through state bodies, especially television and radio channels, and also educational institutions, for example: family education material in public education and similar curricula in university education aimed at raising the awareness of and educating the family. This was in addition to the work of the Human Rights Association, in cooperation with official and private bodies, to advance the implementation of the national plan to disseminate a human rights culture during the period 2010–2014.

107. The Ministry of Social Affairs has run several programmes and activities in the family development field, especially for families whose situations and circumstances require support and assistance because of health and social circumstances. Studies and research have been done and disseminated on the family, and candidates for marriage of both sexes are educated in the fundamentals of founding a family, dealing with family disputes, and working to address the problems of divorce and contributing to reduce them. These programmes aim to raise awareness of the influential role of the family with respect to their children, such as the stages of a child's development, his or her psychological, health, educational and social needs and the development of his or her personality and abilities and how parents deal with these needs. In 2012, there were 301 family development programmes involving 246,529 beneficiaries, the most important of them being: family development centres; family counselling; the model family; domestic reform; family skills development; family development courses. These programmes were provided through a network of family development centres and other Ministry of Social Affairs and private facilities throughout the country.

108. In the context of attention to and focus on those categories most in need, we refer to the efforts made by social services centres in urban areas, which, in cooperation with social development centres, provide educational and cultural services, and social, health, entertainment and residential services for children and other groups, such as, for example: the Buds of Development Club; children's theatre; children's library; environmental awareness for children; programmes for adjustment difficulties, learning difficulties and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; contaminated food awareness; building the child's personality; the light of insight for blind children; the child's development map; awareness of the effects of early marriage; the negative effects of marital disputes in front of children; the negative effects of domestic violence; prophetic guidance on child-rearing; and uncovering sexual harassment and abuse of children. As of 1429 A.H. (2008), there were seven centres involving 400 charitable governmental association, 88 charitable foundations, 160 cooperatives, and 245 private pre-schools, all of which receive government support.

109. Civil society organizations concerned with the rights of the child have played an active role in educating and counselling parents on sound parenting skills, with an emphasis on avoiding poor conduct in the parenting process, identifying the different problems their children face, and providing solutions through specific programmes. There are also several charities that aim to support the family and women in particular in the care and upbringing of children that give them access to modest soft financial loans.

110. For example, the Social Awareness and Training Programme has devised a family driving licence project, which is a training project for young people and young couples in all regions of the Kingdom to raise awareness among couples planning to marry, provide them with the knowledge and skills needed for a happy married life, and define the rules and skills of family leadership and the establishment of family relationships that support family bonding so as to provide them with material assistance conditional on attending a training course on certain family-related issues coordinated with a number of relevant government agencies. The project is training a broad and distinct group of trainers, and aims to initiate 100 trainers at the level of the regions of the Kingdom and run 30 training courses a year throughout the country to train 1,500 young men and women annually. The project is publicized through the media and at least one million families in Saudi Arabia benefit from it through print and audiovisual material accompanying the project. (<http://www.wa3i.org.sa>)

111. The King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue plays an active role in the promotion of a culture of dialogue in the family and the community and in highlighting its importance as a channel of communication between family members. It disseminates the culture of dialogue through the establishment of training programmes in which family members gain skills and the values of dialogue, such as a programme on parental dialogue with children and a programme on child dialogue with parents. A partnership is formed between the relevant family institutions, the official and charitable bodies and scientific research centres specialized in family affairs, as well as interested academics and stakeholders. The Centre began offering family dialogue training programmes in Riyadh in 2009.

112. In the past five years, the Centre has also sought to intensify its educational activities by writing and publishing several books, reference manuals and research studies, including, for example: “The etiquette and principles of dialogue and teaching them to children”; “The educational role of dialogue in protecting youth from intellectual terrorism”; “Dialogue education”; “The role of the Saudi family in the development of dialogue in their children”; “The status of dialogue and obstacles to it in the upbringing of children in the Saudi family”. The Centre has also written and published a series of 40-70-page booklets on dialogue for the family and its members in particular. Fourteen booklets have been published, including: Skills for communication with boys; Parental dialogue with children; and Effective dialogue with children.

## **B. Separation of the child from his parents and family reunification (arts. 9 and 10)**

113. The relevant authorities in the Kingdom examine in a positive and timely manner applications submitted by the child or one or both parents to enter or leave the country for the purposes of family unification and respect the right of the child whose parents reside in different countries to maintain on a regular basis direct relations and personal contact with both parents. Accordingly, the legislation and practices of the Kingdom in this area are in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

114. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia confirms that the statutes in force recognize these rights to Saudis and to non-Saudis who are legally resident, as it is permitted for their children to accompany and live with them or, if they are far away or abroad, to visit them. Furthermore, the procedures for the presence of the families of workers have been simplified to encourage and support family reunification. There is no statute depriving family members of the freedom to leave or return to the country for family reunification in accordance with the required procedures; indeed the Labour Act includes the purchase of tickets for non-Saudi children of workers legally residing in Saudi Arabia and the

procedures operate to facilitate children joining their families. As for low-income workers who are unable to be accompanied by their families in view of the high cost of living, they are granted paid leave to visit their families.

### **C. Illicit transfer and non-return of children abroad (art. 11)**

115. The Kingdom takes strict regulatory measures and actions to combat the illicit transfer of children abroad and their illicit non-return. It has concluded bilateral treaties to achieve this, such as the one reached with Yemen on child trafficking, and acceded to existing treaties, such as ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and of the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in addition to national legislation and measures that will be detailed later.

116. It should be noted that the problem of child trafficking is prevalent in the southern regions of the country located along the border with the Yemen Arab Republic, where children are commonly smuggled into Saudi Arabia for the purpose of the exercise of illegal acts, such as begging. The organs of State make unremitting efforts to search for them, take care of them and reunite them with their families in their countries in collaboration with the security agencies of those countries. Work is also under way on the adoption of appropriate legislation and implementation of a set of preventive programmes and procedural measures that are outlined in the presentation dealing with articles 32 (economic exploitation) and 34 (sexual exploitation and trafficking). Kindly refer to that part of the report in order to avoid repetition (paras. 299 to 315).

### **D. Children deprived of family care, and adoption (arts. 20 and 21)**

117. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia guarantees alternative family protection and care for children deprived of their family environment. The State, represented by the Ministry of Social Affairs, has developed public policies to care for orphaned children and the like and social groups with special circumstances of unknown parentage and include them in care, education and rehabilitation through residential institutions or follow-up care in *kafalah* or friendly families. The Ministry provides care and rehabilitation services for families and individuals through a network of facilities. In 2009, there were 16 residential facilities for the care of male and female orphans.

118. The Ministry of Social Affairs also supports the activities of charities working with this category of children by providing technical, financial and in-kind assistance to them. Orphans benefit from these services. A total of some 200 million riyals was spent on home care for foster and alternative families caring for orphan children with special circumstances, benefiting 6,100 cases. Total subsidies to charitable associations increased from 4 million riyals in 1395/96 A.H. (1975) to about 328.7 million riyals in 1430/31 A.H. (2009).

119. In response to the observation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and its questions about the *kafalah* system and the quality of services to ensure the full enjoyment of all rights provided by the Convention, in particular articles 20 and 21, we present the most prominent features of the services provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs through the General Directorate for the Care of Orphans, which includes two specialized professional departments: the residential care department, and the orphan welfare (*kafalah*) department. Services are provided through programmes and activities, including those mentioned in the following paragraphs.

## 1. Residential care department

120. It works to create family stability for children in residential care in a welfare home, social education establishment or model education establishment, as described in the following paragraphs.

### *Welfare homes*

121. This is the first phase of care and aims to provide comprehensive care to small children from birth to the age of six, those with special circumstances of unknown parentage, cases of family breakdown, the death of the person with custody of the child, or if that person is suffering from an intractable mental, nervous or physical illness, and the like for whom appropriate care is not available in the family or natural community. There are four welfare homes, in Riyadh, Ar-Rass, Dammam and Jeddah, that provide, health, social and psychological care to girls and boys, as well as full accommodation, compensating as far as possible for the lack of a natural family. Tables 10, 11, 12 and 13 show the distribution of cases in welfare homes by sex and number, reason for placement and length of stay for the fiscal year 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010). These homes also provide comprehensive care in the form of programmes and activities for the development of the child, improving their social and cultural skills inside the establishment or in the outside community under the supervision of the administrative and technical organs.

### *Social education homes*

122. These establishments are designed to house orphans, children of unknown parentage and the like of both sexes, to create an appropriate atmosphere as a trustworthy alternative to the natural family, and provide comprehensive care to such children through social education homes for boys and social education homes for girls. They take in orphans and other boys and girls in special circumstances, children one or both of whose parents has died, or one or both of whose parents is unable to care for them because of loss of capacity or inability to give them a sound socialized upbringing in their natural family. These establishments were created to house, care for and raise them in a manner as close as possible to the natural family home. They take in children from the age of six; boys stay until the age of twelve, and are then taken in by model educational institutions, while girls remain in the social education home for girls to acquire life skills to enable them to create a decent family life.

123. Every student in a social education home is given an allowance according to academic level: the allowance of students at the elementary level is 500 riyals per month, the allowance of intermediate level students in social education homes or model educational institutions is 700 riyals per month, while the allowance of secondary students in social education homes or model educational institutions is 900 riyals per month. University students have an allowance of 1,200 riyals per month. Twelve social education homes have so far been established spread throughout the regions of the country. Tables 14, 15, 16 and 17 show the distribution of cases in social welfare homes by sex, numbers, reason for placement and age group in the fiscal year 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010).

### *Model educational institutions*

124. This is the following stage of care for male orphans who have graduated from the social education home after obtaining the elementary certificate. The aim of these establishments, in Riyadh and Jeddah, is to accommodate and care for them, provide intermediate and secondary education opportunities, social, cultural and sports activities, useful leisure time hobbies, organization of revision periods, and so on. The social department of the institution oversees all activities and programmes within and outside the institution.

125. Social education home students who are orphans and the like or with special circumstances receive a marriage grant for girls from the homes. Council of Ministers Decision No. 237 increased allocations for orphans and included a marriage grant of up to 60,000 riyals to be paid as of 1/1/1428 A.H. (19 January 2007).

## 2. Alternative care

126. The alternative care programme is for children with special circumstances such as those with no family provider or who have been deprived of parental care, or any similar reason. These children are cared for in one the following ways:

- (a) Placement in an appropriate social education home (see above).
- (b) They are handed over to a family that has indicated their wish to care for them within the family. Such families are divided into:
  - (1) Foster families take on the care of children with no family provider; the child remains in their care for an indefinite period;
  - (2) Alternative families take on the care of the remaining cases. These families receive a monthly payment of 1,000 riyals for children under the age of six and 1,200 riyals for children over the age of six. Every academic year 2,400 riyals is paid for children over the age of six who attend school, and when the child ceases to reside with the family, 5,000 riyals is paid as support in exchange for child care.

### *Interim care homes*

127. This programme takes care of the children of inmates of women's prisons and the inmates care for the girls. Children of prisoners of different nationalities live in these homes until their mothers are released. They are provided with full care, including accommodation, subsistence and clothing. The children are divided into "families" according to age group and category. A search is made for relatives able to receive and care for the child. If this is not possible, they are placed temporarily in the interim care home for the children of inmates according to the approved admission and registration procedures. Tables 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 show the distribution of cases of beneficiaries of interim care by gender, nationality, length of stay, reason for placement, period of stay of inmates, reason for end of confinement in the fiscal year 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010).

### *Guesthouses (for those with special circumstances)*

128. The houses aim to provide temporary residential care for people with special circumstances until the difficulties they face cease and to rehabilitate and prepare them to adapt socially and psychologically, provided they are transferred to an appropriate social branch or handed over to their relatives after they have been stabilized and their social conditions have improved. The houses have 12 "families", each with an independent housing unit and no more than six children between the ages of 2 and 12 years for males and until marriage for females. Younger children stay with their parents. Each "family" includes the early childhood, late childhood and adolescence phases. Specialized social workers in each "family" play the roles of "alternative mother, alternative aunt and big sister". Each of them has specific functions and tasks, and they form a series of links that complement each other to serve the interests of the children, and give them specialized social and psychological supervision. The house is careful to create a family atmosphere that simulates the social bonds of the natural family.

129. The social workers and psychologists focus on cooperation with the alternative "mother" and support for the development of family ties and relationships between children, as well as the individual personal development of the child, his or her gradual

definition of his or her social reality, and support for the sense of self and acceptance of this situation. The social workers and psychologists also have a role with the older girls in preparing them for their future life as wives and mothers. This requires expertise and skills in how to deal with others, and consolidating her bonds with her sisters in the family. The specialists also coordinate purposeful and planned internal and external recreational and cultural programmes and activities.

130. A guest department has also been established in homes for the care of children with disabilities in order to receive some girls leaving education homes, certain age groups with adjustment difficulties living with alternative families, those whose foster mother has died and children suffering from certain problems. Also received are cases of family breakdown and cases transferred from an institution for the care of girls when they have finished their sentences in the institution. They are taken in, rehabilitated and undergo psychological readjustment according to plans and programmes for each individual case. In 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010), 73 cases benefited from these services.

#### *Care of orphans (kafalah)*

131. The natural family is the first choice: it provides an appropriate nurturing environment for the care of orphan children. Another solution is to place children in one of the types of residential care, although this is considered a last resort when the social investigation proves there to be no family environment with any relatives and no *kafalah* family. In order to achieve this purpose, the *Kafalah* Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs oversees the provision of alternatives as follows:

(a) The *kafalah* families programme: The *kafalah* families programme focuses on complete and permanent alternative family care of orphans in order to obtain for them psychological security and emotional satisfaction by providing them with a family atmosphere that may not be available to them in a welfare home.

(b) The friendly family programme: This programme is designed to cater for orphans for whom no opportunity for a foster family has arisen and who are instead looked after on a part-time basis by natural families wishing to undertake such care. The family is coupled with one or more orphans living in a welfare home supervised by the Social Welfare and Development Agency and takes the orphan into its home as a guest for a set period of time, such as for holidays (feast days, weekends or summer holidays). After the holiday or set period ends, the child returns to the home or institution where he or she lives.

132. *Kafalah* families and friendly families are selected by the Ministry of Social Affairs according to the desirable parenting standards within them, and there is ongoing supervision and follow-up of such families by the Ministry. *Kafalah* families are paid 2,000 riyals per month for each child under the age of six and 3,000 riyals per month for each child over the age of six. At the end of the period of *kafalah* the family is paid 20,000 riyals for each child whose period of stay has ended, by virtue of Council of Ministers Decision No. 237 of 23/9/1427 A.H. (15 October 2006), which increased allocations to orphans, including monthly grants to families and the end-of-stay bonus. It should be noted that there are hundreds of families who take in such children without accepting these payments. Table 23 contains the number of beneficiaries of *kafalah* family and alternative family grants and bonuses, marriage grants and disbursements for 1431 A.H. (2010).

#### *Orphanages*

133. Several charities look after and accommodate a number of orphans “of unknown parentage or unknown father” under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs, with provision of a monthly subsidy to pay for such care according to the regulations issued on

children in need of care. Girls stay in such accommodation from the age of six until they reach marriageable age.

134. It should be noted that the Ministry of Social Affairs has extended services for orphans up to the age of 28 instead of 18 through the services of charitable institutions caring for orphans affiliated to the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Ministry is the alternative legal guardian of girls who are orphaned and the like, providing services that include helping them to marry once they are 19. This is done by completing two-part marriage questionnaires. The first part is about the applicant for marriage and includes all health and social data and documents. The applicant is interviewed by specialists to investigate his competence and ability to marry. The second section covers information about the girl, the view of her sponsor and other documents about her wish to enter married life, and the applicant's acceptance of her. The orphan welfare (*kafalah*) department receives requests from orphan girls in social homes and establishments.

135. The Ministry of Social Affairs has set up the Reconciliation Committee with the task of speeding up the treatment of problems that arise for girls in the Ministry's care, finding appropriate solutions before the problem develops and trying to reconcile the couple. It should be noted that the programme began its services at the start of the financial year 1395/1396 A.H. (1975–1976). The grant for each girl increased gradually from 5,000 riyals to 10,000 riyals in 1398 A.H. (1978), then to 20,000 riyals in 1401 A.H. (1981). The cumulative number of girls benefiting during the period 1402/1422 A.H. (1982–2001) was 1,070, and total grants disbursed to them during the same period amounted to 12,230,000 riyals.

136. The Charitable Society for the Care of Orphans in Riyadh (INSAN) provides all aspects of physical, moral, psychological, health and educational care to more than 40,000 orphans and widows in the Riyadh area through its 12 branches, spending more than 200,000,000 riyals per year on them. INSAN also makes multiple efforts to define the rights and issues of orphans in society, and to conduct research and studies on orphans, such as establishing the INSAN Chair for Orphan Studies and Research at King Saud University, organizing the first Saudi Conference on Orphan Welfare in 2011, and vocational training for orphans, having contributed to the training and employment of more than 1,600 young men and women in the past five years.

137. On 6/7/1427 A.H. (1 August 2006), the Council of Ministers issued Decision No. 162 approving the draft social security law and its proposed draft executive regulations replacing the Act currently in force. The Ministry of Social Affairs reviews the Act periodically, at least every seven years. The new Act covers the family of the beneficiary of the pension, and of security assistance and has added the non-Saudi woman married to a Saudi to the allocated pension, if it has matured and, if he dies, his non-Saudi wife is covered as a widow. It also includes other categories, such as the Saudi widow of a foreign husband, the disabled and widows who are known to be orphans. The Act authorizes continued payment for sons of beneficiaries over 18, if they continue their education and one of them has not started to work, until they reach the age of 26 or graduate, whichever comes first. Payment for girls continues until their marriage or until they start to work. The system also continues to pay the family whose breadwinner is permanently resident in any accommodation, treatment or charitable centre. The ceiling of entitlement by the individual beneficiary was raised by royal decree to 9,400 riyals, increasing by 3,100 riyals for each additional individual up to eight individuals, with a maximum of 31,000 riyals. The Council of Ministers then issued Decision No. 11 of 19/1/1429 A.H. (28 January 2008) increasing social security benefits by 10 per cent, making the upper limit 34,210 riyals. Table 24 shows the total number of social security beneficiaries and the number of cases broken down by region for the fiscal year 1431 A.H. (2010).

## **E. Abuse and exploitation, physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of the child (arts. 9 and 39)**

### **1. Research into domestic violence and violence against children**

138. Despite its being a social phenomenon that is hidden, the Kingdom is keen to investigate cases of domestic violence and violence against children and to monitor the phenomenon through the establishment of a sustainable national mechanism, as detailed among the independent monitoring mechanisms in this report (paras. 32 to 37), especially providing means of reporting and ensuring confidentiality.

139. This falls within the framework of what several governmental and charitable bodies are doing, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education (representing Saudi universities), the National Family Safety Programme, and other private institutions conducting comprehensive field studies in different environments in order to establish the prevalence of child abuse and understand its multiple forms. These include, for example, the study “Domestic violence: between confrontation and cover-up” conducted in 2008 by the Vision Centre for Social Studies. This was a field study based on the social survey and case study methods; 50 experts in various regions of the country took part in the study of 1,900 families from different parts of the country. It focused on the forms, causes and consequences of domestic violence, the factors leading up to it and victims of violence.

140. The Ministry of Education has conducted a comprehensive study entitled “Abuse of students in public education schools in Saudi Arabia: scale, forms and causes, 2009”, which sought to identify the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the phenomenon of abuse of male and female students in schools in Saudi Arabia with a view to arriving at a view of the mechanisms and responses needed to reduce it and address the effects at the individual and community levels. It was a large-scale study with a sample of 9,771 educational leaders, school principals, teachers, counsellors, parents, and students themselves, in addition to the study of 55 cases of students subject to abuse at school. This study included a comprehensive range of psychometric studies, case studies, and focus groups. It revealed a detailed picture of the extent and forms of abuse and neglect suffered by students, and also proposed a national integrated programme to curb the abuse of students in Saudi schools.

141. The National Family Safety Programme has conducted several surveys in order to discover the prevalence of child abuse and understand the various forms of abuse, including the following:

(a) A study of the prevalence of violence against children and adolescents in Saudi Arabia using the search tool ICAST-CH, in which 17,000 students participated in the various parts of the country. The data analysis operations are now under way. It should be noted that the real value of this study lies in helping us to determine the scale and types of children’s exposure to abuse in Saudi Arabia.

(b) A study of bad childhood experiences and their relationship to chronic illnesses affecting adults in Saudi Arabia (ACE). This study measures the long-term effects resulting from violence and poor relations within the family during childhood in the incidence of a range of chronic health problems in adult life. The initial study has been completed and the findings presented at several local and international conferences.

142. A national child abuse and neglect register has recently been established in the health sector. It is a central electronic register issuing multi-purpose statistical data annually, contributing to the preparation of an integrated view by the drafters of child protection strategies in the Kingdom. Please refer to the description of the register and its programmes in paragraph 5 (b).

143. The results of these studies, which together revealed the extent and forms of domestic violence and child abuse, explain the significant increase in attention to the issue of abuse and maltreatment of children in recent years, especially with the growing interest in children's rights at the local level. This has led the State and civil society institutions to take a series of legislative measures in response to this phenomenon, although there is still room to do more. These measures include those indicated in the following paragraphs.

## **2. Legislative and regulatory measures to reduce domestic violence and violence against children**

144. According to what was revealed by the aforementioned studies and in the interest of harmonizing national regulations with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Saudi Arabia has adopted appropriate legislative, administrative, social and training measures to protect the child from all forms of violence, neglect and exploitation. These measures include those indicated in the following paragraphs.

145. The Council of Ministers issued Decision No. 366 of 3/12/1429 A.H. (1 December 2008) containing a set of decisions that would do what was necessary to curb the problem of domestic violence, including:

(a) Speeding up the opening of social protection units in the regions and provinces in coordination with the relevant authorities and supporting them with appropriate qualified staff;

(b) Supporting charities with the opening of social protection units in the regions and provinces that do not have them;

(c) Preparation of media awareness plans that focus on the preventive programmes needed through specialized media organizations in conjunction with the relevant authorities;

(d) Organization of training courses and workshops for specialists and other workers handling domestic violence cases, in addition to establishing courses and workshops for groups approaching marriage, with the participation of the relevant authorities, and benefitting from the experiences of charities and civil society institutions;

(e) Benefiting from the Ministry of Education's efforts to monitor the problem of violence and in particular school violence. The Ministry has included in curricula clear concepts urging tolerance and non-violence;

(f) Preparation of a comprehensive national strategy to tackle the problem of domestic violence at all levels; estimation of the necessary budget, increasing it according to regulatory procedures.

146. The National Commission for Childhood has supported the various bodies working in this field. It prepared the Child Protection Act and submitted it to the legislative authorities for their decision. The Act is based on the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and is a great asset to those rights and a qualitative shift in society's view of the draft law for the protection of children from violence issued by the Shura Council decision approving it, Decision No. 74/145 of 13/2/1432 A.H. (12 August 2011). The National Commission for Childhood, with several bodies, is currently studying mechanisms and procedures for implementing the provisions of the Act.

147. Moreover, in cooperation with several bodies, the National Commission for Childhood is preparing and implementing a series of preventive, educational and training programmes in the field of protection of children from abuse. These programmes are part of a joint project between the National Commission for Childhood and UNICEF with support from the State of \$500,000. The following programmes are examples:

- (a) Programme to disseminate to workers and make them aware of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (National Commission for Childhood);
- (b) Protection from child abuse in hospitals programme (Ministry of Health);
- (c) Awareness of the dangers of domestic abuse of children project (Ministry of Social Affairs);
- (d) Improve and promote public awareness of the rights of the child through the media (Ministry of Culture and Information);
- (e) Family and community awareness of the effects and dangers of child abuse (Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts).

148. In this context, and as a practical step towards implementation of the Child Protection Act, the National Commission for Childhood, in cooperation with all relevant governmental and charitable bodies and UNICEF, is preparing to launch draft comprehensive national procedures for neglect and abuse cases in order to prepare a comprehensive manual on internal procedures in each of the bodies concerned with abuse and neglect cases and interface procedures between them in cases of children at risk of abuse in Saudi Arabia, in order to achieve complementarity in the performance of institutions and provide appropriate preventive, security, regulatory, rehabilitative and health services for children according to their case and need. The detailed objectives of this project are as follows:

- (a) To study and analyse the procedures and practice of each institution individually and their relationship with other institutions.
- (b) To determine the precise responsibilities and powers of each body on the basis of the systems and legislation approved in Saudi Arabia.
- (c) To survey the needs and requirements of abused children for preventive, security, regulatory, rehabilitative and health services according to a human rights framework and in a comprehensive manner according to what has been approved in scientific studies and similar international models.
- (d) To document, analyse and improve the internal procedures for child abuse cases in each separate institution according to tasks, specialization and needs.
- (e) To document, analyse and improve interface procedures in relation to child abuse cases between institutions according to tasks, specialization and needs.
- (f) To survey and analyse the regulations and royal and ministerial decisions in force in Saudi Arabia relating to addressing child abuse cases in order to determine precisely the responsibilities and powers of each authority and transform them in order to improve input into the aforementioned internal procedures and/or interfaces.
- (g) To identify regulatory gaps and legislative shortcomings in existing legislation, and propose amendments to it or the development of new legislation in accordance with the input data and the previous items, taking into account the draft child protection law, and the Protection from Abuse Act. To prepare and develop a comprehensive manual on national procedures in child abuse and neglect cases, including the internal and interface procedures described above, on the basis of the systems and legislation approved in Saudi Arabia, taking into account the Child Protection Act and the Protection from Abuse Act, anticipating their approval by His Majesty the King.
- (h) To develop a comprehensive reference manual on procedures for organizations that provide services to abused children and to children and their families.

149. Approval of the Protection from Abuse Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/52 of 15/11/1434 A.H. (21 September 2013), which is a comprehensive Act to tackle domestic violence and abuse in order to provide statutory protection of women and children from abuse in Saudi Arabia. The team has accomplished this with the help of experts well versed in this regard. Along with the Child Protection Act, it will contribute to the establishment of a comprehensive legislative system to protect children and women from all forms of abuse.

150. At the organizational and administrative level, in 2005 the Ministry of Social Affairs established the General Directorate for Social Protection as the specialized directorate providing children and women with protection from abuse. Its functions include: following up national policies and procedures; reducing the problem of domestic violence; raising awareness in society; establishing a national register to monitor cases of violence and abuse against women and children; and developing preventive and therapeutic means in cooperation with the relevant authorities. This directorate takes care of children according to the age set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 18 years and under, and women of any age. Its operational mechanism includes rapid intervention in abuse cases and immediate coordination with the relevant authorities (governmental and private), such as the provinces, the Islamic courts and police stations.

151. The services of this directorate include the provision of social, psychological, educational and legal advice through its social counselling unit on the toll-free number 8001245005, which operates between 6 and 9 pm every day except Friday. The directorate also has a centre to receive reports of all cases of abuse and violence against women and children and direct them to the nearest agency to receive the necessary assistance in any area of the country by calling the toll-free number 1919, which operates from 8 am to 10 pm every day of the week, or that are reported through the General Directorate for Social Protection website at [www.hemayah.org](http://www.hemayah.org).

152. Moreover, social protection committees have been set up in the regions and provinces and work directly with cases of exposure to violence. There are 17 committees, each of which has a working group drawn from all the relevant authorities: the regional government, the regional police, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, the Ministry of Justice, the Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution, the Drug Control Directorate, and Hope Hospital (mental health). The committees receive reports from children, women and vulnerable groups, investigate their authenticity, devise appropriate plans for dealing with them, coordinate with the General Directorate for Social Protection to provide accommodation and a safe place for the case, if necessary, and provide social and psychological rehabilitation.

153. Protection House also offers educational activities, including the publication of a handbook for social protection workers, a series of publications on social protection Nos. 1 and 2, and a pamphlet about the centre receiving reports (1919). It holds workshops to raise awareness of the effects of domestic violence, and launched a campaign to raise awareness of domestic violence in cooperation with the French Bank covered by all the media (television channels, the press, magazines and websites) for forty days in late 1430 A.H. (2009). The protection website is at: [www.hemayah.org](http://www.hemayah.org). Moreover, the Ministry of Social Affairs has signed a memorandum of cooperation with King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology to implement the national strategy to tackle manifestations of domestic violence.

#### *National Family Safety Programme*

154. In addition to what is being done by the Human Rights Association, the General Directorate for Social Protection and the Human Rights Society to receive reports of cases of violence, refer them to the competent authorities and follow them up until their

conclusion, the National Family Safety Programme was founded by King Abdulaziz Medical City in National Guard Health Affairs by Order No. M.B./11471 of 6/10/1426 A.H. (18 November 2005) as a national programme to protect the family from violence, a centre of excellence on domestic violence, and to provide support for battered women and abused children. The programme is responsible for carrying out various studies on this subject, plays an active role in the defence of the rights of the child and women, and provides continuing training in dealing with cases of violence and abuse against children. It offers a series of basic and advanced training courses for professionals who deal with domestic violence and child abuse cases, targeting multiple sectors including doctors, mental health specialists, security officers, investigators, judges and social workers. More than 2,000 professionals have been trained since 2007 in the following vocational training programmes:

- (a) Criminal procedure in child abuse cases;
- (b) Course on basic skills for social workers working with domestic violence cases;
- (c) Interdisciplinary course for professionals dealing with child abuse and neglect cases;
- (d) Advanced course for physicians on skills for dealing with child abuse and neglect cases;
- (e) Specialized course for security officers in legal proceedings and litigation in cases of violence against children;
- (f) Course on prevention of violence against children for decision makers.

155. The National Family Safety Programme has also played a leading role in spreading awareness and enhancing education of the community on violence cases and how to deal with them and building professional partnerships with specialized governmental and private institutions and international organizations, as well as holding forums and periodic conferences in the same area, such as the Third Arab Regional Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, held in Riyadh from 1-4/3/1430 A.H. (1-4 March 2009). The Programme organizes annual expert meetings on domestic violence with the participation of all public and private bodies to highlight the latest developments and current challenges in the field of domestic violence and ways to address them within a common national framework. Usually the meeting concludes with a set of recommendations of a practical nature, implementation of which is followed up by the Programme. The periodic awareness programmes offered by the Programme include the following:

- (a) An awareness programme for mothers on shaken baby syndrome;
- (b) An awareness programme for children and parents on sexual safety and the prevention of sexual harassment;
- (c) An awareness programme on the rights of the child, and other programmes.

156. The Ministry of Health has established 41 child protection centres in all the health sectors in the Kingdom. They are supported by an independent budget and the establishment of a national health committee under Ministerial Decision No. 84/18053 of 30/2/1429 A.H. (9 March 2008). An interdisciplinary team works in each centre. The work of the centres is supervised by the Health Services Council, which is the highest health council and includes all the health sectors in the Kingdom. In addition, the Minister of Health issued a decision on compulsory reporting of cases of domestic violence and violence against children in the health sector in Decision No. 84/108554 of 26/12/1428 A.H. (5 January 2008), which has contributed to the rise in the number of cases of violence in the national register (see paragraph 51 (b)).

157. The Ministry of Education regulations include clear provisions to prohibit beatings and ill-treatment of children at all levels of general education, regardless of students' behaviour, and legislation provides penalties for any type of beating or ill-treatment of children by teachers. The Ministry also issues periodic circulars recalling the prohibition on beatings and ill-treatment of children and the penalties designed to deter teachers from committing such acts. The state authorities, represented by the Ministry of Culture and Information and the Ministry of Education, and also civil society institutions, conduct periodic educational and awareness campaigns aimed at raising awareness of sound modes of upbringing and positive educational methods to address and correct behavioural problems, and explaining the negative effects of corporal punishment of children.

158. The Ministry of Education has also issued regulations on behaviour and attendance to students on the basis of which students' behaviour is evaluated on an ongoing basis. This is designed to provide a disciplinary reference determining the rules, standards and procedures to be applied to achieve a safe educational environment free from violence and threats to students in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Ministry reminded principals and teachers in the Kingdom's schools of the definition of the school community (students and teachers) in the regulations and the need to ensure compliance therewith, in order not to allow the door to open to interpretations by members of teaching staff proposing methods of punishment conflicting with the regulations applied by the Ministry. The regulations require cases of violence inside or outside school to be documented and the recommendations adopted by the specialized committees of the Ministry in this regard to be implemented, as well as taking advantage of the parents' council to define violence.

159. The Ministry of Education has developed student counselling in schools, in 2011 adopting as a priority a new counselling service plan, the Executive Plan of Action for School Counselling, aimed at curbing child abuse, dealing with underachievement and changing behaviour. Under the plan, a working group is formed in each school and brings into play the roles of all involved in student counselling in the school by defining the roles of the school principal, the deputy and the teacher in student counselling, especially the student counsellor and his role in preventive work with the child, providing a safe and healthy learning environment, including application of the practical concept of complementary counselling among the teaching staff in the school environment. The mechanisms used include bringing into play the counselling work of the educational institution (child abuse reduction and protection programme), which aims to enlighten the educational community about the risks of the physical, moral and psychological abuse to which students may be exposed, appropriate methods for curbing child maltreatment and neglect, and informing teachers, parents and students of how to treat children and protect them from abuse of all kinds.

160. Finally, the Ministry of Education, which is home to over five million children in its schools, has, in cooperation with several national authorities, prepared and implemented a series of programmes and legislative, administrative, social and educational projects in the field of protecting the child from all forms of physical and mental abuse and neglect within the school or that occur in the child's home. These programmes include:

(a) Participation with the National Commission for Childhood in preparing the launch of the second phase of the teacher training programme on skills for the early detection of and intervention in abuse and neglect cases, which aims to train teachers in Ministry of Education schools to detect and intervene in abuse and neglect cases as a precautionary and preventive measure and an early warning signal before cases of abuse, which are usually discovered late, deteriorate. The National Commission for Childhood has completed the preparation of the integrated training portfolio prepared by highly qualified and professional experts and trained 56 trainers from all regions of the country (13 school

districts) in an intensive six-day course focusing on the two aspects — identification and practice — to take over the training of primary school staff in those skills.

(b) Organization of the Branches of Mercy Campaign in cooperation with the Human Rights Association, the Family Safety Programme, several civil society institutions and governmental sectors, including the National Commission for Childhood, to educate society about the damage caused by domestic violence and violence against children.

(c) The Kindness to Children Campaign, which aims to define the child in terms of the position of Islam on violence, raise awareness of children's right to protection from all forms of physical, verbal and psychological violence and teach them the skills for dealing with critical situations.

(d) The Personal Protection Programme, which aims to make pre-school children aware of the types of abuse they may be exposed to and develop their cognitive and behavioural skills in order to protect themselves.

## **F. Periodic review of placement of children in institutions (art. 25)**

161. In the framework of Saudi Arabia's endeavours with regard to the periodic review of placement of children in social institutions in accordance with Article 25 in order to guarantee the right of a child who is placed by the competent authorities for the purposes of care, protection, or treatment of his physical or mental health to periodic review of the treatment provided to him or her and all other circumstances relevant to his or her placement, and in addition to what will be detailed when the juvenile justice system is discussed, the State has taken a series of measures described in the following paragraphs.

162. Issuance of Council of Ministers Decision No. 169 of 19/6/1429 A.H. (23 June 2008) approving the regulations governing the placement of juveniles in supervised residential institutions. These regulations, which are detailed in paragraph 320, focus on treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration into society in a manner inspired by the general guidance in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Several government agencies are examining the juvenile welfare law in order to improve it and address the shortcomings of the system now in place, the draft including the establishment of juvenile courts. The National Commission for Childhood has studied and reviewed the draft of this proposed law, made appropriate adjustments in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the second report of Saudi Arabia, and provided these authorities with the Convention and the Committee's observations so that they may be taken into account during the drafting of the final version of the law.

163. Issuance of Shura Council Decision No. 61/76 of 27/12/1425 A.H. (6 February 2005) amending article 1 of the Regulations on supervised residential institutions to raise the age of admission to 12 years instead of 7 years, as in Council of Ministers Decision No. 611 of 23 May 1975, to read as follows: "The purpose of supervised residential institutions is to care for juveniles who are no less than twelve and no more than eighteen years old, except as decided by the judge or if the investigating agency considers it of interest to detain the juvenile in a supervised residential institution." The Decision also stresses "conducting a study on the authority in charge of juvenile delinquents; evaluation of the procedures followed concerning them; programmes and welfare aspects provided to them in the institutions and establishments charged with caring for them; developing a comprehensive plan dealing with the preventive and curative aspects, including the determination of welfare, rehabilitation and social reintegration programmes, and mechanisms for their implementation; and the role of the relevant authorities in dealing with juveniles vulnerable to delinquency and male and female juvenile delinquents".

164. Shura Council Decision No. 49/67 of 2/11/1426 A.H. (3 December 2005) falls within the same framework, as will be detailed below in paragraph 306 on children of unknown identity placed in a supervised residential institution.

165. Certain amendments relating to juvenile cases and means of dealing with them were approved in Decision No. 57/84 of 20/11/1427 A.H. (10 December 2006) approving the draft measures in cases of juveniles and girls when there is a need to detain them in areas where there is no social surveillance institution or institution for the care of girls. One of its most important provisions is: "If during the trial the judge orders the detention of a juvenile or girl, the head of the criminal investigation authority shall immediately transfer him or her to the social surveillance institution or institution for the care of girls, if he considers the interest so requires. In all cases that call for the transfer of a juvenile or girl, the transfer shall take place in the company of the juvenile's or girl's parent (or accompanied by a security escort if possible) and in the company of a representative of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. The transfer shall take place by plane if there is a nearby airport."

166. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Interior have combined efforts to develop juvenile judicial care, educational and corrective programmes through the following:

(a) Changing the goals of care of juveniles in conflict with the law or at risk of being so from punishing them and holding them accountable to reforming them, correcting their behaviour, and addressing the difficulties and obstacles they face;

(b) Amending the name of the establishments that care for juveniles of both sexes in conflict with the law or at risk of so being to social surveillance centre and social guidance centre, in addition to the institution for the care of girls;

(c) The establishment of the Juvenile Welfare Directorate to supervise those institutions and work towards achieving the bases for guidance, reform, correction and social rehabilitation of juveniles of both sexes in conflict with the law or at risk of being so;

(d) Separation of juveniles from adults in special institutions, given the potential negative consequences of placing them in prisons where they mix with adult prisoners, some of whom have previous convictions;

(e) Conducting investigation and trial procedures within the surveillance centre and in appropriate social and psychological conditions;

(f) Study of the causes of juvenile delinquents' problems and finding appropriate solutions to them, the plans of centres and institutions focusing on the therapeutic side through targeted programmes and various activities to meet their needs and understand their problems, study their nonconformity and diagnose their behavioural problems in order to provide help and support, and to care for them, modify some of their misconceptions, and enable them to return to society conforming socially and psychologically, and useful to themselves, their families, and society.

#### *Social guidance centres*

167. These institutions are concerned with laying the foundations of education, reform and rehabilitation of the categories of juveniles aged from 7 to 18 years who have difficulties with the law or their families or who are homeless as a result of their families' situation and are isolated. Such juveniles are removed from the active factors that may be a major cause of conflicts and difficulties. These institutions rely upon a set of preventive and therapeutic measures and programmes and provide the appropriate climate and environment for juveniles to guide their behaviour and rehabilitate them in order to adapt to society. They have in-house primary and secondary schools. In order to access the services of these

institutions, the juvenile's parent submits an application for admission in accordance with the legal procedures along with supporting materials, which include a comprehensive social, psychological and medical study, in the light of which the appropriateness of his admission to the institution is decided or an alternative solution proposed so that admission to the institution is the last resort. Social guidance centres have been established in Riyadh, Medina, Dammam, Barida and Ta'if. Tables 25 to 31 contain the numbers of beneficiaries of social guidance centres according to reason for placement, age group, length of stay, reason for end of confinement and educational status in 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010).

#### *Social surveillance centre*

168. Social surveillance centres are government institutions specialized in providing health and educational guidance and care to juveniles who commit acts punishable by law or who are detained pending investigation or on trial, who are at least 12 years old and no more than 18 years old and have been arrested by the security authorities for committing offences requiring rehabilitation. However, in view of their youth, they are regarded as juveniles in conflict with the law because of environmental, social or psychological circumstances and in need of assistance and treatment. The juvenile remains in the centre for the period decided by the judge and which he deems sufficient to treat him in the light of the outcome of the social investigation. Intensive efforts are made during the time the juvenile stays in the centre to assess, treat and rehabilitate him through educational programmes for learners, including the primary, middle and secondary levels of education, conducted through a Ministry of Education mechanism. Moreover, opportunities are available for those who are not learners to engage in vocational rehabilitation to help to develop their hobbies, occupy their spare time and gain some manual and technical vocational experience. The centre also provides them with social, art and sports programmes. In accordance with this perspective, the Ministry of Social Affairs has established 14 social surveillance centres in several cities in the Kingdom. Tables 32 to 37 show the number of beneficiaries of social surveillance centres according to reason for placement, age group, reason for end of confinement and educational status in 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010).

#### *Institutions for the care of girls*

169. Institutions for the care of girls aim to provide social adaptation, health care, education and training to girls who are under a detention order or who are detained on remand or on trial, who are under 30 years old. Those under 15 are separated in a special department within the institution. These institutions are secure social welfare homes; they care for the young women, investigate their cases, take note of their problems, get to know the causes of the problems that led to the disorder of their situation, treat the causes and rehabilitate and train the girls in a manner similar to the social surveillance centres for boys. All the investigation and trial proceedings take place within the institution and in appropriate social and psychological conditions. Primary, middle and secondary education continues under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Social and psychological guidance programmes and technical activities are provided that occupy their free time and help them train for an occupation or suitable trade that will benefit them after they are discharged. There are currently four institutions for the care of girls, in Riyadh, Mecca, Al-Ahsa and Abha. Tables 38 to 46 show the number of beneficiaries according to reason for placement, age group, length of stay, reason for end of confinement and educational status in 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010).

## G. Recovery of maintenance for the child (art. 27, para. 4)

170. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has several measures and regulatory procedures to guarantee the right of children to recover the maintenance assessed to guarantee them a decent life in accordance with the Sharia Procedure Act, issued under Royal Decree No. M/1 of 22/1/1435 A.H., the Confiscation Act and article 11 (4) (a) of its implementing regulations, and articles 74, 78 and 92 of the Act itself, whether they are in Saudi Arabia or abroad. Procedures are in place to ensure the right of children at home and abroad as indicated in the following paragraphs.

171. As part of the reforms taking place in the Saudi judicial system, Royal Decree No. M/78 issued on 19/9/1428 A.H. (30 September 2007) approving the Judiciary Act and the Act on the Office of the Ombudsman and their executive instruments in order to restructure judicial institutions so that they perform their duties effectively, ensure the rights of citizens and residents, included the establishment of personal status courts the jurisdiction of which will include examining family cases and, specifically, maintenance and child care cases.

172. In the context of Saudi Arabia's endeavour to ensure children's right to maintenance and to secure a decent life for them, the Ministry of Justice is currently developing the draft divorce documents, including proposed measures to enhance the guarantee of children obtaining the right to maintenance. We mention here only the proposed measures on the collection of child support, as follows:

(a) There will be two types of document, the first to establish the fact of divorce, and a final comprehensive document after the end of the disputed divorce case and the decision setting out the provisions on custody, guardianship, maintenance, visitation, housing and joint rights.

(b) The divorce document will contain the amount of maintenance for the divorced wife and the children (including unborn children) and methods of collection.

(c) The divorce document will contain a clear provision on the settlement of the situation of children in relation to their identification papers. In addition to the divorce document, each party will receive a national identity card after their information has been updated by deleting the other party and adding the children. The father will receive the family record (the family book) after the information has been updated, and the mother who has custody will receive an original copy of the family record giving her power to extract the necessary documents for her children.

(d) The divorce document will determine housing and alternatives to it.

(e) The divorce document will record the fate of common property and obligations.

(f) The divorce document will contain the number of children or unborn children, in addition to personal information, employer and identification number.

173. The Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with government agencies and civil society institutions, is currently considering the establishment of units connecting governmental and non-governmental bodies electronically to the judiciary in all personal status courts under the supervision of the execution judge in order to achieve a set of objectives. We mention here only those relating to the collection of child maintenance, as follows:

(a) To speed up access to the necessary information and data on which to base judicial rulings, to assist judges in determining the amount of maintenance and the most suitable party to have custody and guardianship, and other necessary information;

(b) To reduce litigation time, activate and implement procedures in personal status cases, in particular in cases of divorce and abandonment and their consequences (such as the collection of child support);

(c) Cooperation with the confiscation department (or office) and implementation in court to contribute to the execution of judgements issued by the judge against those who are slow or fail to implement judicial decisions decided by the judiciary (e.g. the collection of child support);

(d) Set up a database on personal status cases, especially divorce cases and their consequences (e.g. the collection of child support), by linking the court to the Ministry of Justice;

(e) The adoption of email and modern means of communication to speed up operations to obtain information and the execution of judicial decisions (that cannot be postponed or put off, such as the collection of child support).

174. Lastly, and in line with the best interests of the child, the Ministry of Justice is currently working on the establishment of a fund to provide maintenance to those entitled to it if it is difficult to obtain it directly from the person financially responsible for the child. Despite the fact that in the event of divorce, maintenance from the father is deducted directly and compulsorily regardless of the justifications for and conditions of the divorce, the general idea of the project is to provide a fund able to guarantee and regulate the child's obtaining such maintenance, especially in exceptional cases of omission or delay by the husband or divorcee to fulfil his financial obligations towards the wife or divorcee and their children, making difficult the immediate and direct deduction of maintenance for the benefit of children. In this case, the fund will pay maintenance to the woman regularly, regardless of the husband's ability or wish. At the same time the Fund will continue to pursue the husband, so that it is the Fund (and not women and their children) that is the adversary of those who delay payment of maintenance.

175. The project also includes a precise method of estimating the amount of maintenance, taking into account the economic and social circumstances of the family, as well as reviewing and revising it when there are changes in the economic situation of the husband or changes arise in the family such as illness of one of the children.

176. His Excellency the Minister of Justice and head of the Supreme Judicial Council announced at the close of the Forum on Family Issues in Sharia Courts, organized by the Ministry of Justice in cooperation with the Saudi Society for Social Studies in Riyadh from 15 to 1/5/1433 A.H. (7-9 April 2010), the near completion of the study of organizational conditions for the divorced women's maintenance fund by three government agencies, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA). Work is currently under way to explore what those agencies have in the way of working mechanisms for the fund in the event of start of its application, including depositing maintenance directly in beneficiaries' bank accounts without going to court. It should be noted that the maintenance fund project is supported by five of the largest civil society organizations in Saudi Arabia, and aims to provide solutions, mechanisms and procedures that will contribute significantly and effectively to the collection of maintenance for divorced women and children. It will also enable divorced women and their children to enjoy many of their rights established by Sharia.

## **VI. Health and welfare (arts. 6, 18, para. 3, 23, 24, 26, and 27, paras. 1–3)**

177. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia attaches great importance to the health of children, as detailed in the first and second reports. The Committee on the Rights of the Child in their observations issued following consideration of the second periodic report commended the measures taken to improve the health situation of children, including by adopting the Health Act and its implementing regulations and by allocating significant budgetary resources to the health sector, and the progress achieved by Saudi Arabia in the elimination and prevention of infectious diseases and breaking the silence around HIV/AIDS. This part of the report contains the measures, policies and programmes developed or adopted or to be adopted in Saudi Arabia concerning the issues and sub-items described in the following paragraphs.

### **A. Survival and development (art. 6, para. 2)**

178. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ensures the survival and development of children without discrimination. The Ministry of Health strategy 2010–2020 sets out the approach to be promoted by the health services at all levels. The first strategic objective includes the adoption of integrated and comprehensive health care with an emphasis on the research and educational aspect and the promotion of primary health care. The National Strategic Plan for Health adopted by His Majesty in 1430 A.H. (2008) for a period of 20 years included child care and maternity care, including prevention and treatment at the various stages of growth and development of the child from the beginning of the embryonic stage until growth and maturity is complete. This report sets out below the most important strategies adopted recently in the framework of the National Strategic Plan for Health.

179. The Primary Health Care Strategy 2010–2020 has been adopted, its first strategic objective including improving child health, improving maternal health, reproductive health, and the health of people with disabilities.

180. The National Reproductive Health Strategy was adopted by the Saudi Minister of Health in 2011 and included health interventions for teenagers focusing on reproductive education, the physiological changes the sexes undergo at this age and diseases transmitted through incorrect sexual practices. In this context, between 26/5/1432 A.H. and 7/7/1432 A.H. (30 April and 9 June 2010), four three-day introductory courses were held in the regions of the country, in Jeddah, Dammam, Al-Baha, and Tabuk. One hundred primary and reproductive health care doctors were trained.

181. The National Strategy for Adolescents and Youth was adopted in 2011. It is concerned with children from the age of ten up to the end of the youth stage at 24. In this context manuals were prepared on the adolescent and youth stage, sexual changes and development, the prevention of smoking and addiction, psychological and physical rehabilitation. The Ministry of Health prepared and organized the Gulf Conference for Youth and Adolescent Health in Jeddah from 8 to 10 April 2012, with the theme “strengthening community partnership for youth health”. The aim of the conference was to strengthen community partnership for youth health and highlight the health, social, psychological, and behavioural problems and risks faced by adolescents and young people and how to tackle them. In addition, an executive committee for adolescent and youth health was formed by the Ministry of Health in 2011 including all the health ministry departments relevant to adolescent health to implement, follow up and evaluate adolescent health activities.

182. The National Strategy for Childhood was adopted. Its goals include: reduce the mortality rates of children under five, infants and at birth, and maintain high levels of immunization coverage by vaccinating children in the Expanded Programme on Immunization in order to keep Saudi Arabia free of polio, eliminate measles, mumps and rubella, and fight against other diseases; promote complete breastfeeding until the end of the sixth month; reduce levels of iodine and vitamin A deficiency disorders and anaemia; improve basic health services for all children; provide help for children with mental illnesses; provide health and rehabilitative care for children with disabilities; develop and support school health units; expand the application of the early screening of newborns programme and the early pre-marriage screening programme; reduce the incidence of hearing disorders and deafness and prevent the hearing disabilities of all newborns; and prevent poor eyesight and blindness in children.

183. The National Strategy for Health and the Environment was adopted under Council of Ministers Decision No. 292 of 22/9/1429 A.H. (1 September 2010). It includes preventing, reducing the risk of and combating environmental pollution through several programmes and activities that have an impact on child health, survival and growth. The strategy has twelve components, including air quality, food safety, radioactive contamination, noise pollution, and the development and conservation of renewable natural resources. This strategy also includes an implementation mechanism to activate and put policies in place to ensure the expected benefits of this strategy.

184. The Ministry of Education is pursuing a reproductive education strategy in schools as an introduction to sex education. Study of the reproductive system and functions of the male and female has been introduced into the curriculum for middle and high school students, showing how to protect themselves at this critical stage from communicable diseases spread via the genital apparatus through harmful and unlawful practices. The National Strategy for Reproductive Health is also interested in this aspect and focuses on sex education for young people and young couples through awareness messages and interviews with those responsible for the provision of reproductive health services in health centres.

*Development of all health status indicators*

185. The health programmes and initiatives in Saudi Arabia over the past decade have had a positive impact on various aspects of health. Health services have seen progress that is reflected in the evolution of all health status indicators, including child care indicators. For example: tables 47 to 51 show the declining incidence of diarrhoea, malaria and schistosomiasis and tuberculosis among children in 2010. The under-five mortality rate improved from 43 per thousand in 1990 to 21 per thousand in 2008, then to 19.5 per thousand in 2010 (see under-five mortality rates and under-five mortality by disease in table 4). At the same time, the infant mortality rate improved from 34 per thousand in 1990 to 18 in 2008, and then to 16.9 in 2010. The fall in child mortality rates is attributable to the application of several programmes, such as early screening for newborns, the Expanded Programme on Immunization, the integrated care for the sick child programme, safe motherhood and breastfeeding programmes, and the programme for early detection of disability.

186. There is no doubt that the Kingdom has made significant progress in environmental sanitation, especially regarding sewage and drinking water, which has had a positive impact on children's health. The Environment Act was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/34 of 28/7/1422 A.H. It contained many aspects of environmental protection, created a specialized body for the care and protection of the environment, and imposed on public bodies, corporations, institutions, and individuals clear duties towards the environment. The rates of gastroenteritis and mortality as a result of drought and malnutrition in children

under two have therefore fallen significantly since 2001. Moreover, the State's efforts to keep the air in cities free from the pollutants that cause many acute respiratory infections has had a great impact in lower incidence of acute respiratory infections among the under-fives, in addition to the role played by environmental sanitation in the low prevalence rates of malaria and schistosomiasis among children. Table 52 shows the environmental health activities in 1432 A.H. (2011) that contributed to the decline in the rate of spread of certain communicable diseases.

## **B. Children with disabilities (art. 23)**

187. In the observations it issued following consideration of the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia, the Committee on the Rights of the Child commended the State for its efforts to ensure that children with disabilities have better opportunities in society by integrating them with their peers into schools and cultural and sporting events, but also mentioned the de facto discrimination they face in their everyday lives, and was concerned about the approach currently used, noting that such children have rights and that national programmes and policies for them lacked the rights-based approach.

188. On the basis of article 23 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 24 December 2006, published by Royal Decree No. M/28 of 22/5/1429 A.H. and ratified by Saudi Arabia in August 2008, and in response to the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child that the State take into account the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and mainstream the rights-based approach to all national policies and programmes for children with disabilities, and the Committee's further recommendation that the necessary measures be taken to prevent de facto discrimination against children with disabilities and integrate them into society, including education and cultural activities, taking into account their dignity and by promoting their independence, in addition to what is detailed in paragraph 275, the State has adopted a series of measures, policies and programmes enhancing the rights of children with disabilities to achieve the objectives set forth in the following paragraphs.

### **1. Guarantee the right of children with disabilities to enjoy a decent life in conditions that ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the individual's active participation in the community**

189. The Kingdom attaches great importance to the welfare, education, rehabilitation and training of children with disabilities and the Ministry of Social Affairs offers several rehabilitation programmes and provides prosthetic devices for the different types of disabilities (see paragraphs 41, 46 and 275). Recent years have seen a growth in the role of the private sector in advocacy for and defence of the rights of people with disabilities, especially children, and that has contributed, for example, to the adoption of the national project to deal with children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in Council of Ministers Decision No. 4 of 8/1/1430 A.H. (15 January 2009), published in the *Official Gazette* No. 4238 of 4/2/1430 A.H. (31 January 2009).

190. The private sector has set up a charity for children with disabilities. The association's services include six centres: The King Fahd Centre in Riyadh, with a daily capacity of more than 400 children; the King Abdulaziz Centre in Jeddah, with a daily capacity of 300 children; the Prince Sultan Centre in Medina, with a daily capacity of 200 children; the Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Centre in Ha'il, with a daily capacity of 150 children; the Mecca Centre, with a daily capacity of 150 children; and the Al-Jouf Centre, with a daily capacity of 100 children.

191. The association also has projects under construction, including the Asir region centre, which will have an area of 10,000 square metres and a daily capacity of 2,000 children, the South Riyadh Centre for about 100 children, and the Al-Baha and Ar-Rass centres.

192. At the level of disability prevention, the Ministry of Health is studying the application of the mechanism of the national programme to prevent hearing impairment and deafness on the basis of Minister of Health Decision No. 26/20/140921 of 29/8/1425 A.H. (14 October 2004) to develop a plan to implement the programme and establish specialized centres in some major hospitals for this purpose, securing the necessary human resources.

193. The Ministry of Health is also implementing a programme for the detection of genetic metabolic diseases, and cases of hypothyroidism in newborns in all regions and governorates of the country. This programme has had an impact on early detection and reducing disability rates among newborns. Genetic metabolic diseases that are detected early are being addressed, especially through the provision of adequate food and milk, as well as through the provision of early intervention services for the rehabilitation of children under the age of four in many specialized centres set up by NGOs.

194. Because marriage is an important event and requires the protection of the parties and progeny from genetic and infectious diseases, the Ministry of Health has introduced the concept of the healthy marriage, a state of genetic compatibility of the spouses. The healthy marriage concept includes compulsory medical examination of the couple planning to marry in order to identify the presence of illness, such as certain genetic blood diseases (sickle cell anaemia, thalassaemia) and infectious diseases (hepatitis B, C, HIV/AIDS), so that medical advice can be given as to the possibility of transmitting them to the other partner in the marriage or to children in the future, the couple can be given options and alternatives in order to help them to plan properly for family health, avoid social and psychological problems and reduce the financial burden resulting from the treatment of people living with the family and community, and the pressure on health institutions and blood banks can be reduced. The Healthy Marriage Programme is an awareness and prevention programme requiring couples to undergo examination before marriage, leaving the decision to them. The programme focuses on screening couples planning to marry for five diseases: thalassaemia blood disorder, sickle cell disease, HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C. There are 130 centres providing the pre-marriage screening service and 91 laboratories. Since the programme began an average of 250,000 people planning to marry have been screened annually.

## **2. Ensuring the right of children with disabilities to vocational training and rehabilitation**

195. The Ministry of Health provides rehabilitation services to children with disabilities through medical rehabilitation centres run by the ministry, in addition to medical rehabilitation centres run by other government agencies. Table 53 shows cases attending Ministry of Health medical rehabilitation centres in 2010, while table 54 shows cases attending medical rehabilitation centres run by other government agencies in 2010.

196. Several government and charitable agencies provide initiatives in the field of training and rehabilitation of children with disabilities and enabling them to lead a normal life. One example of this is the Centre for the Care and Rehabilitation of Children with Disabilities in Riyadh, which plays an active role in the health and social rehabilitation of disabled children and enabling them to perform normal everyday activities. Table 55 shows the age and number of children cared for by the centre in 2010 and the number of therapy sessions per child.

197. Also to be noted are the new services for the disabled provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs by giving more than four thousand disabled people cars equipped with the latest devices that help them meet their daily needs. This was the first stage and will be followed by the inclusion of the remaining disabled people in this service. These cases include children with disabilities.

## **C. Health and health services**

198. In its observations issued after considering the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia, the Committee on the Rights of the Child commended the State on the measures taken in the field of health and health services for children, but noted with concern that certain new lifestyle factors affect children's health causing, *inter alia*, obesity, while malnutrition rates were relatively high in comparison to the high gross national income (GNI) per capita levels. The Committee recommended that the State improve the nutritional status of infants and children, paying particular attention to children in rural areas, and simultaneously continue and strengthen its special programmes to address the issue of child obesity and promote a healthy lifestyle among children and their parents. It also recommended that it continue its efforts to prevent HIV/AIDS.

199. On the basis of the above, and in addition to the various national strategies and measures outlined previously, the State has adopted a series of measures, policies and programmes to achieve the objectives set forth in the following paragraphs.

### **1. Increasing the number and distribution of health centres**

200. The density of primary health care facilities has increased in recent years. The number of health centres has risen, and the establishment of health centres according to the needs of populations has been introduced. The number of health centres increased between 1423 and 1431 A.H. (2002 and 2012). The number of health centres rose from 1,119 in 1404 A.H. to 2,086 in 1430/1431 A.H. The number of beds and hospitals is constantly increasing.

### **2. Provision of mobile care in remote areas that are difficult to access and sparsely populated areas**

201. In line with the requirements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and especially the achievement of equality between all children regardless of the financial means of their families and focusing on the children most in need, an expanded programme is currently being prepared for application of mobile primary health care services in various regions of the country to cover the basic health needs of people in remote areas that are difficult to access and sparsely populated areas that are more than 30 kilometres from the nearest health service or from which it takes more than 30 minutes to reach a health service. Vehicles have been equipped carrying mobile clinics with a doctor, a nurse and a driver, essential medical supplies for examinations, in addition to basic essential medicines to provide primary health care and child-related services, such as monitoring the growth and development of children, vaccinations and health education for mothers about child health and proper nutrition.

### **3. Increased provision of primary health care facilities**

202. The state is keen to adopt the primary health care approach in accordance with the recommendations of the World Health Organization with four components: (1) the provision of services; (2) universal coverage; (3) leadership; and (4) public policy. Primary health care services include basic environmental sanitation and the supply of clean drinking water, so the health centres monitor the city or village water in cooperation with the

Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs. Coverage by clean or drinking water is 85 per cent. As for sewerage, around 78 per cent of the population use modern bathrooms.

#### **4. The Expanded Immunization Programme**

203. The average percentage of immunized children has risen to 98 per cent through the Expanded Immunization Programme. Vaccination is the right of every child and a duty of the family and society. Every child is vaccinated with the compulsory vaccinations during the first year of life against diseases targeted by vaccination, with a booster during the second year of life, according to a timetable and up to starting school, in accordance with the National Expanded Immunization Programme of Saudi Arabia, which continues its strong beginning. The infection rates of some diseases targeted by immunization have fallen as a result of achieving high coverage of more than ninety per cent since the beginning of this decade. The success of the Expanded Immunization Programme has led to a lower incidence of the targeted diseases and the final eradication of polio in Saudi Arabia. Table 56 shows the coverage rate, immunizations and type of vaccines in Saudi Arabia.

#### **5. Diarrhoeal disease control**

204. The diarrhoeal disease control programmes enable cases of diarrhoea in children to be followed up early and the results bode well for achieving the desired objective of a decline in deaths from this phenomenon:

(a) 91.6 per cent of the cases of diarrhoea recorded concerned Saudi children, while 8.4 per cent concerned non-Saudi children;

(b) 53.2 per cent of the cases of diarrhoea recorded concerned male children, compared to 46.8 per cent in girls;

(c) Most cases of diarrhoea improved as a result of taking oral rehydration treatment in health care centres; these account for 88.1 per cent of the total number of cases;

(d) Only 4.4 per cent of the total number of cases of diarrhoea were admitted to hospital for treatment in intensive care.

205. Table 47 shows cases of diarrhoea in children by region and treatment outcome in 2010. The table indicates that only 3.95 per cent of the total number of cases were admitted to hospital for treatment and that most cases of diarrhoea improved as a result of taking oral rehydration treatment in primary health care centres. The case fatality rate from diarrhoea was 28.1 deaths per 100,000 cases.

#### **6. The mother and child health passport**

206. The mother and child health passport services were introduced and applied in accordance with the updated mother and child health care programme and included within the health services at all Health Ministry health centres and hospitals in the Kingdom to integrate child care and maternity services that will ensure comprehensive and integrated health care for mother and child. Maternal and child care enjoy attention in the provision of basic health care services for mothers before and during pregnancy and after childbirth, and preventive and therapeutic child care in all the physical, psychological and social aspects, in addition to proper nutrition, breastfeeding, and health and nutrition awareness at the various stages of pregnancy and for children from birth to 5 years.

207. Four centralized training courses on how to use the health passport have been held for coordinators of the Kingdom's motherhood and childhood programmes in primary health care in hospitals, at which 160 doctors were trained. Then the programme coordinators trained doctors and nurses in their regions, the number of trainees at the

regional level being almost 750. Five hundred thousand copies of the health passport were distributed to the 20 regions of the country, according to the expected number of births in the year.

#### **7. Improved nutrition and breastfeeding levels**

208. The State is working tirelessly to put into effect health information to promote natural feeding of the child for the first six months. The State is endeavouring to promote breastfeeding as the best way to secure the food needs of the child and to assist in proper growth. One step to promote breast-feeding is the launch of the hospital “friend of the child” initiative in cooperation with UNICEF, and the friend of the child health centres. The Breast Milk Substitutes Act, approved by His Majesty in Royal Decree No. M/49 of 21/9/1425 A.H. (4 November 2004), has been applied.

#### **8. Development of epidemiological surveillance systems for infectious diseases**

209. The work of the Ministry of Health continues year after year to develop epidemiological surveillance systems for infectious diseases in the Kingdom and to upgrade action to control and combat them until they are eradicated. As a result of continuous efforts in the past years, the incidence of many infectious diseases has receded in recent years. The diseases whose rate of occurrence has diminished are under constant observation by the epidemiological surveillance units scattered throughout the regions of the country and the various health sectors. Table 57 shows immunization coverage in 2010 and the incidence of the diseases targeted by immunization for 2010 as compared with those for 2007, 2008 and 2009.

#### **9. HIV/AIDS**

210. In its observations issued after considering the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia, the Committee on the Rights of the Child commended the State on the measures taken and the progress achieved in the elimination and prevention of infectious diseases and breaking the silence around HIV/AIDS. It recommended that it continue its efforts to prevent HIV/AIDS.

211. Here we demonstrate the continuation of the country’s efforts in the field of prevention of, protection from and treatment of AIDS, especially in children. Saudi Arabia is a low-incidence State with an incidence of less than one per thousand adults. The number of cases diagnosed in 2010 was 439 Saudis and 682 non-Saudis, while the cumulative number of cases diagnosed between 1984 and the end of 2010 is 4,458 Saudis and 11,876 non-Saudis. Children under 15 years of age account for three per cent of cases diagnosed.

212. The health and educational institutions in the governmental and charitable sectors run several awareness programmes on modes of transmission and education on improving behaviours associated with higher risk of infection through awareness programmes for members of the community in general, especially young people. This includes seminars, training programmes for media personnel, printing and distribution of brochures, cassettes, and pamphlets and many radio and television programmes. The Ministry of Health provides counselling and rehabilitation programmes for children orphaned by AIDS and those on whom they are dependent, and provides them with financial and in-kind assistance in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs in a manner already detailed in this report, and through private voluntary AIDS organizations. In order to prevent discrimination, awareness programmes and psychological and social support programmes are implemented, in addition to the fact that existing regulations do not distinguish between these children and others.

213. The Shura Council is examining an Act to reduce HIV/AIDS, the provisions of which include free treatment for all people living with the disease, and developing procedures and policies to ensure the protection of children from HIV infection, such as screening all pregnant women to prevent the spread of the disease from a pregnant mother to the foetus.

214. With respect to the prevalence of obesity in children, a study conducted Saudi Arabia suggests that the prevalence of obesity (body mass index BMI > 30) in school-age children is 28 per cent, one of the highest rates in the world. Therefore, the National Strategy for Diet and Physical Activity, a programme to combat the spread of obesity in children, focuses on raising awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle through a balanced diet, exercise and physical activity, and educating children in schools as well as their families. This takes place through coordination and cooperation between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education (school health), the Ministry of Information, and other stakeholders. Legislation has been enacted preventing the sale or promotion of unhealthy food in schools, for example.

#### **D. Adolescent health and development**

215. In its observations issued after considering the second periodic report of the Kingdom, the Committee on the Rights of the Child commended the State on its efforts to ensure the development of boys and girls of school age up to late adolescence by providing them with school health services, nourishing meals and health education, but reiterated its concern regarding the information provided in relation to adolescent health, including reproductive health and mental health. It recommended taking into account general comment No. 4 on adolescent health and development and strengthening efforts to promote the health of adolescents and young people.

216. Based on the findings of a study for the National Plan for Adolescents in Saudi Arabia (2011), 8.4 per cent of adolescent males and 7 per cent of females use drugs. It further indicated that 8.5 per cent of male teenagers and 7.2 per cent of adolescent girls drink alcohol. The Ministry of Health has made strides in this area: a youth health programme, handbook, procedures and quality indicators have been prepared. Various relevant topics have been introduced, such as mental health issues, addiction prevention and reproductive health services.

217. The school health units run by the Ministry of Education deliver school health services, and therapeutic health services through coordination between health programmes run by the Ministry of Health to prevent duplication in service provision.

#### **E. Social security and child care services and facilities (art. 26, and art. 18, para. 3)**

218. The Ministry of Health strives for a fair distribution of and easy access to public services and primary health care services according to regions and hospital health care services, health care being available free of charge to Saudi nationals. Private sector workers are covered for health care through an Act that compels such establishments to provide health insurance for employees. There is a range of health policies supportive of the treatment systems for citizens and residents in the Kingdom according to the Cooperative Health Insurance Act and its implementing regulations. Table 58 shows the distribution of categories of centres in the regions in 2012, while table 59 shows the geographical distribution of centres in the regions.

## **F. Standard of living**

219. In its observations issued after considering the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia, the Committee on the Rights of the Child commended the State on the preparation of the national poverty reduction strategy and recommended expediting its adoption and paying particular attention to children when implementing it. Kindly refer to the series of measures, policies and programmes adopted by the State and detailed in the discussion of the Committee's observations in section E. Allocation of resources, and also the measures, policies and programmes adopted by the State and detailed in the discussion of Family environment and alternative health care (arts. 5, 9–11, 18, paras. 1 and 2, 19–21, 25, 27, para. 4, and 39).

## **VII. Education, training and cultural activities (arts. 28, 29 and 31)**

### **A. Pre-school education and early learning**

220. In its observations issued after considering the second periodic report of the Kingdom, the Committee on the Rights of the Child welcomed the fact that pre-school had been made a basic level of public education but noted with concern the low enrolment rate in pre-primary education. The Committee made several recommendation in this regard, including taking into account the Committee's General Comment No. 7 on implementing child rights in early childhood.

221. In response to the Committee's aforementioned observation and in implementation of the Ministry of Education directive to establish and upgrade the pre-school level, the Higher Pre-school Committee was set up in 2009 to take over direct supervision of raising enrolment rates at this important level and upgrading teaching staff. The committee is chaired by the Deputy Minister and has a membership of senior officials of the Ministry. It has managed in a relatively short time to increase the approved government posts for the pre-school level and open more than 1,300 new government pre-schools in geographic areas where children are most in need and that have not received the required expansion. In order to stimulate a rise in enrolment rates at this level, the Ministry of Education has issued a decision excluding from the stipulated age for admission to the first primary class those who have attended pre-school.

222. Recently work has been done to increase financial allocations to this level, as follows:

(a) The operational budgetary allocation to government pre-schools for educational supplies was estimated at 10,278,000 riyals in 2010. The budgetary allocation to equip pre-school classrooms with furniture and outdoor playgrounds suitable for the level was 8,000,000 riyals.

(b) 11,000 posts were approved for pre-schools in the 2011 state budget.

(c) Approval was given to open 371 pre-schools in various regions and provinces, concentrating on poor and remote areas in order to target the children most in need of early education. In addition, the establishment of 100 charitable pre-schools was approved, bringing the total number opened in 2011 to 471 pre-schools accommodating 37,720 children.

223. It should be noted that the charitable sector has made outstanding efforts to achieve the expansion and proliferation of pre-school with the encouragement of the State so that,

according to the latest statistics for 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010), there are 730 pre-schools, with 3,156 classes attended by 54,488 children, including 5,940 of other nationalities, and a total of 4,633 staff members.

224. The Ministry of Social Affairs plays a prominent role in the pre-school field, specifically by targeting the children most in need by providing several services the provision of which gives rise to the establishment of pre-schools, literacy classes, holding seminars and lectures. The Ministry also oversees the charities whose most important activities are maternity and child care and the establishment of pre-schools. In coordination with the Ministry of Education it has developed pre-school programmes and provided pre-schools affiliated to charities and cooperative societies with female Saudi staff and administrators who have the ability and competence to work in this area and learning materials and resources. As a result of these joint efforts the number of pre-schools affiliated to the Ministry of Social Affairs rose by 20 per cent to reach, according to statistics for 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010), 246 pre-schools, comprising 957 classes, attended by 16,541 children, including 1,244 children of other nationalities, and employing 1,200 teachers.

225. The Ministry of Labour has been working to support and improve child welfare centres and establishments and expand in them programmes within the framework of the Saudi women's work initiative in coordination with the authorities concerned in order to provide childcare support when mothers go out to work. Meetings have been held with the participation of ministries (Education, Labour, Social Affairs, Municipal and Rural Affairs, and Health, and the Human Resources Development Fund) during which it was agreed to unite the efforts of the relevant authorities on this matter. A women's work programme team at the Ministry of Labour is in charge of coordination between these bodies. Moreover, a competitive tender was prepared to conduct a practical study on implementation of a project to expand the establishment of child welfare centres and establishments. A specialized consultative centre will be commissioned to conduct that study.

226. Other sectors have also made efforts in the pre-school field, including: the Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu, where 20 pre-schools have been established spread over various districts of the cities of Jubail and Yanbu; the Educational Services Directorate runs 11 pre-schools attended by more than 2,672 children; encouraged by the Royal Commission for the Private Sector, the running of the remaining pre-schools has been assigned to Saudi investors at a symbolic rent. The Royal Commission is seeking to attract the private sector to invest in this area, provide them with land and additional incentives and facilitate the administrative and technical procedures. It also provides investors with the statistical information on which to base their planning.

227. With regard to the preparation and rehabilitation of pre-school teachers, the State wishes to extend the opening of specialized university departments for pre-school preparation, holding regular conferences and training courses that help raise staff standards. Numbers of pre-school teachers have increased to 10,337 specialists in the field and qualified teachers appointed in pre-schools in 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010).

228. In the area of training pre-school teachers, a project to improve the performance of pre-school teachers in Saudi Arabia has been launched in cooperation with the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations and UNESCO. The training lasts eight weeks at the rate of four hours a day, after which trainees are given a diploma. In recent years there have been developments in pre-school as a method, philosophy and style, resulting in a change in the work of training centres. The Ministry of Education is currently studying these centres in order to improve them in line with global developments. In order to increase the efficiency of pre-school teachers, the assessment and evaluation authority, under the guidance of the Ministry of Education, is preparing a professional test for

pre-school teachers before they enter the field. The first test will be available to female applicants in 2013.

229. On another level, programmes and projects have been prepared aiming to achieve the care and education of children commensurate with their developmental needs, including: the personal safety programme; the home education programme for mothers and children; scientific observation of the child; the children's theatre programme; a comprehensive quality evaluation of pre-schools (Lakers); a programme to develop the working environment in pre-schools; a programme on movement activities at the pre-school level; and a mobile training programme for the training of pre-school teachers.

230. The Ministry of Education is currently working with the Ministry of Higher Education to develop academic disciplines on early childhood from birth until the child reaches the age of eight and specialized graduate programmes for master's and doctoral degrees in order to qualify male and female specialists in pre-school studies. In addition, in 2010 a year-long programme on professional competence in the field of early childhood education was set up so that teachers wishing to teach at this level might have appropriate professional preparation.

231. In order to develop pre-school curricula in the Kingdom, the Ministry of Education has piloted three high-quality curricula of international companies specialized in this field in preparation for the adoption of the one that is most efficient and of the highest quality.

232. In the area of raising awareness and incentives for parents about the benefits of pre-school education and early education, the Ministry of Education is planning and implementing national awareness programmes on the importance of early childhood with the participation of several relevant governmental and private institutions, taking advantage of all the audiovisual and print media and exploiting national events to raise community awareness, including the Janadriya Festival, and the International Day of the Child. The National Commission for Childhood, in partnership with the General Directorate for Pre-schools, has prepared four publications designed to educate the family on the importance of enrolling children in pre-school, the quality standards to look for when choosing a pre-school, developmental methods available to prepare a child to enter pre-school, and improving the family relationship in pre-school. One hundred and twenty thousand copies of these publications have been printed and distributed in airport and hospital waiting rooms and elsewhere.

233. Several agencies are providing complementary and alternative programmes in order to reach groups of children in need who are unable to enrol. These are supporters of childhood programmes such as parental education and education at home for mother and child, a domestic education project for mother and child before the child starts school run by the Anoud Association. It works to build and support a long-term relationship between child and mother, and focuses on helping her to raise her children and teach them to read and write at home. In 2009, the first year of the programme, sixteen trainees and twenty-two families were trained, while forty families were trained in 2010. The Childhood Care Association offers a similar programme.

234. The Ministry of Education has formed partnerships with civil society and charitable organizations and businessmen to participate in opening pre-schools and improve the services provided at this stage through administrative regulations that encourage voluntary initiatives to support them. These initiatives include the opening and operation of more than 30 non-profit non-governmental pre-schools in several regions of the country.

235. In the light of the above, table 60 contains data on the pre-school stage for 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010). In spite of the modest enrolment rates, which do not reflect the quantitative growth hoped for, the enhanced policy of quantitative expansion and the constantly increasing budgets allocated to this level suggest that higher rates can be

expected in the foreseeable future so that the goals for this level are achieved and children have the opportunity to enrol in this level of education.

## **B. Quality basic education**

236. In its observations following consideration of the second periodic report, the Committee on the Rights of the Child commended Saudi Arabia on its investments in education and efforts to extend and improve it and appreciated that primary education was compulsory for all children and free of all direct and indirect costs.

237. According to Saudi national documents and obligations, in particular education policy, the child's right to education is characterized by vital importance and complementarity as it is connected with the goals and policies of the comprehensive social, economic and educational development of the Saudi people. "Primary school is the base upon which the youth prepare for the following stages of their lives; it is a general level including all the nation's children" Article 72. In accordance with this importance, Saudi education statutes and policies see children's right to education as central, the basic requirement for the child's empowerment and the guarantee of all other rights through compulsory primary education and free pre-school.

238. The Kingdom recognizes that the concept of compulsory education does not stop at dealing with parents who do not enrol their children in education, but goes beyond that to guarantee the opportunity of a free education for all — especially the most vulnerable groups — without imposing a fee on parents and causing children to be deprived of enjoyment of the right to education or imposing other, indirect costs, such as fees for certain school activities or school uniforms, or making enrolment difficult or unsafe, such as through lack of a school in a convenient geographical location, lack of free and safe school transport, or other factors that constitute a reason to deny some children enjoyment of their right to education.

239. An investigation of the regulations and procedures on enrolment of children in education and an examination of the massive education enrolment rates and the huge efforts and will of the State to provide education to all with no material consideration (i.e. free of charge) throughout the country, and comparing it to other countries, makes it clear that the measures and regulations applicable in Saudi Arabia clearly reflect the State's interest in and commitment to the enrolment of all children, going beyond the concept of the compulsory, which is not available in all countries of the world, through incentives that include providing financial grants and services necessary for the child and his family, such as housing, food, clothing and transportation to bring about the child's enrolment in and continuation at school, as will be seen below.

240. In addition to the huge education spending and the incentives offered to children and families to enrol and continue in education, a decision has made education compulsory from the age of 6 to 15 years and contains implementing measures to ensure that it is put into effect, including: the Ministry of Health, represented by the birth offices in the regions and governorates of the country, provide the Ministry of Education with the names of children who reach the age of formal education before the beginning of each academic year and the original birth certificate is delivered to the parent only after the father supplies notification of the child's registration in a primary school and a pledge to keep him or her in basic education; the relevant authorities in the Ministry of Interior grant students in difficulty their educational papers pending the completion of their regulatory procedures; coordination with the Ministry of Education in laying down and following up application of criminal procedures for those who violate the decision on compulsory education; inclusion by the Ministry of Labour in its regulations of articles prohibiting public and private sector institutions from employing children of compulsory school age in the labour system and

following up implementation of that; and development by the Ministry of Information and Culture of a media plan containing programmes on the importance of education, the decision on compulsory education and the penalties resulting from non-compliance with it.

241. The Kingdom has recognized the need to put into effect the decision on compulsory education by directing more attention to the construction of education infrastructure, drafting strategies and policies on the expansion and improving education in a manner consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as will be seen below.

242. With reference to the observation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the challenge of rapid population growth and increasing numbers of students, male and female alike, which in turn necessitates a more urgent need for increased education services in the form of more teachers and schools, in line with the Committee's recommendation to continue to monitor the appropriate financial, human and technical resources to ensure that all children have equal access to quality education at all levels of the education system, the State has adopted a series of measures, policies, and programmes as outlined in the following paragraphs.

243. The extension of basic education schools to all communities is under way and the rate at which schools are being established is keeping pace with the increase in birth rates for both sexes. Between 2006 and 2010 student enrolment in education in the Kingdom increased by 36.6 per cent in total schools, and 12.4 per cent of total students, with an average annual growth rate of 7.3 per cent and 2.5 per cent respectively. This difference between the rates of increase in the number of schools on the one hand and the percentage increase in the number of students on the other points to the country's concern to confront the expected future increase in the population and create the opportunity for every child to attend school in all parts of the country.

244. Similarly, the Ministry of Education is implementing large-scale projects that will meet the challenge of rapid growth in population and in the number of students, male and female alike. These projects are outlined in the following paragraphs.

245. The project to dispense with rented schools. As part of the Ministry of Education project to develop the school environment, the Ministry has harnessed its financial and human energies to create and construct school buildings in line with international standards in terms of quality of design and construction. It is putting into effect a comprehensive plan to dispense with rented school buildings that contains a mechanism requiring Departments of Education in the regions and provinces to decrease the number of rented buildings and thus reduce the cost of rents in exchange for increasing the number of projects. The Ministry of Education Buildings Agency has taken delivery of more than 1,000 complete buildings since 2010, while the Agency's projects and maintenance directorate is working hard to abide by the approved plan, including taking delivery of three new schools each day, approval of speedy construction of buildings in order to dispense with rented buildings in villages and agricultural settlements by constructing low-cost buildings. At the same time, more than 2,500 school projects are under construction according to a programme with a precise timeframe, in addition to modernized schools, schools needed for future growth or instead of old schools that may be accommodated by the 5,000 new governmental buildings targeted for approval in 2011–2016. As for private schools, the Ministry of Education requires their owners to provide school buildings that comply with security standards guaranteeing the safety of the children enrolled in the same way as government buildings; that includes prohibiting rented buildings that were built as non-educational amenities for children.

246. The school map project. In 2010, the Ministry of Education set up a digital management base in order to take its decisions on the basis of precise, documented information on dimensions of places for all planning and survey operations. It is based on

infrastructure documentation (spatial information) of educational facilities and establishments using GIS system servers and software that enhances the planning and decision-making capabilities of senior and middle management in government offices to collect data through advanced, speedy technology, evaluate data indicators and educational services and take decisions easily and confidently, and enables users to obtain information as needed.

247. A programme to support needy families, including the families of migrant workers, has been prepared in the framework of social security, to encourage investment in suitable projects to make it easier for all children of both sexes to start and remain in school. In addition to what is done by the Takaful Foundation (described in paragraphs 38 and 47 of this report), financial benefits and annual subsidies are offered to students as follows:

(a) Benefits: This refers to the sum awarded to students to encourage them when starting education, including benefits for special education students. The amount depends on the level: primary level 300 riyals per month; middle level 375 riyals per month; and secondary level 450 riyals per month. Benefits for Dar Al-Tawhid students, the benefit depending on the level: middle level 300 riyals per month; secondary level 375 riyals a month.

(b) Subsidies: This refers to the sum paid to assist students with accommodation and subsistence expenses when attending any kind of education. These subsidies are distributed as follows: subsidy for leaving home and travel subsidies equivalent to a 50 per cent reduction in the cost of internal flights for school students.

248. With regard to the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on continuation of the real efforts made by the Kingdom to eliminate the problem of dropping out of basic education and its recommendation on taking the necessary steps to provide educational, psychological and social counselling services, the Kingdom has developed regulations, policies, plans and programmes that are helping to raise male and female school enrolment rates and prevent leakage, including:

(a) What is set out in the Ninth Plan for Education for 2010–2014 (for compulsory education), which aims: to achieve a 100 per cent enrolment rate for students in primary education, a 98 per cent enrolment rate for the graduates of primary education in middle school, and a 95 per cent enrolment of middle school graduates at the secondary level.

(b) The efforts the State, represented by the Ministry of Education and other governmental and private education agencies, is making to overcome all the difficulties faced by students in the levels of general education, taking action and measures to encourage students to enrol in school and reduce leakage. The State is, in particular:

1. Providing a safe and attractive school environment for students through the creation of school buildings keeping pace with modern educational requirements and the psychological, health and educational needs of students during the five-year period 2006 to 2010, with an average annual growth rate of 7.3 per cent, and continued implementation of new school projects over the next five years was discussed in detail above;
2. Qualifying and training teachers in modern teaching strategies, student particularities and needs according to age, and improving teachers' efficiency in integrating technology in teaching;
3. Securing tutoring programmes, which are programmes to help students who are lagging behind through educational service centres supervised by the Department of Student Counselling;

4. Providing school cafeterias where specialized food companies contracted by the Ministry of Education provide the proper diet that students need according to health standards, subject to the control of the school health unit and follow-up by the school management and supervisors;

5. Activating the role of educational counsellor in the implementation of programmes on awareness and prevention of hazards, such as the effects of smoking, drugs and infectious sexually transmitted diseases;

6. The health unit, which runs prevention programmes, such as: the early detection and prevention of diseases programme; the immunizations programme; the infectious diseases control programme; the environmental control programme; and treatment services including: the necessary health care for illness, emergency health care, care of disabled groups and appropriate treatment and rehabilitation programmes for them, primary health care for students, and awareness programmes and health education.

249. In line with the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child about the provision of non-formal programmes for basic education opportunities for those who have missed such opportunities, the Ministry of Education is continuing to expand adult education services through various means in order to provide basic education opportunities for those who have not had them. Those who benefit from and enrol in such programmes are supplied with books and the various materials free of charge. The number of students (male and female) enrolled in literacy and adult education centres in 1430-1431 A.H. (2009-2010) was 82,771 throughout the country. There were 69,682 Saudis (84.2 per cent), as compared with 15,175 non-Saudis (15.8 per cent). It is worth noting that this data concerns only the Ministry of Education and does not include the activities of other agencies offering similar services. All the teachers (male and female) in these centres are public education teachers who are given financial bonuses for their work in them. Table 61 shows the basic elements of this type of education.

250. Children in residential care homes are able to continue their education by attending the schools in those homes as has been described previously. The level the child has reached is calculated and he or she is admitted to the next level in a Ministry of Education school to enable the student to continue his or her education.

251. Educational, psychological and social counselling services are offered through school health programmes to help pupils with their educational, behavioural, psychological and social problems. The Ministry of Education runs several education programmes that cater to the health needs of children and their families. Such programmes run at the school level include:

(a) School health promotion programmes: These programmes train the health and teaching staff and provide them with the appropriate health concepts and knowledge to provide a healthy environment appropriate for learning;

(b) Health counsellor: Aims to improve the state of health of the school community by providing every school with a health worker trained in school health;

(c) Health education programmes for adults.

252. The State is encouraging private education and facilitating the participation of the private sector (individuals/institutions/companies) in offering education services, and the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Labour and other sectors have provided it with many administrative and financial facilities and loans in order to support the education process in the Kingdom. This sector is witnessing remarkable growth in response to the steady increase in the population and in 2010 private education was involved in the educational process from pre-school to the secondary level at the rate of

11.4 per cent. In 1433 A.H. (2011), the Minister of Education adopted rules governing private education that are designed to encourage this type of education.

253. In line with the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the State has continued to increase education allocations steadily, education allocations reaching 83.614802 billion riyals, accounting for around 17.6 per cent of State's total budget of 475 billion riyals. Government spending data on education in the Ministry of Education indicate that expenditure on capital projects accounted for 8.76 per cent of total spending, compared with 91.24 per cent allocated to recurrent expenditure, including salaries, allowances and miscellaneous expenses. Tables 62 and 63 show the distribution of the Ministry of Education budget to the boys' and girls' sectors by spending categories for 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010).

254. These measures and programmes have led to the development of indicators of success achieved in a manner that responds to the questions of the Committee on the Rights of the Child following consideration of the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia. This is highlighted through:

(a) A steady increase in the components of education during the five-year period 2006–2010: 36.6 per cent increase in the total number of schools and a 12.4 per cent increase in total students, with an annual growth rate of 7.3 per cent and 2.5 per cent respectively. Thus the number of schools and the number of male and female students has increased at all levels (2010), as detailed above.

(b) A very significant fall in student drop-out rates from general education at the middle and secondary levels, now no more than 1 per cent of total students. At the primary level, leakage is negligible.

255. To clarify what has been achieved regarding expansion and dissemination of education opportunities, we review the quantitative growth indicators for the primary and middle levels for 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010):

(a) Primary level: 2,493,125 students (male and female) were registered for this level in the Kingdom as a whole; 399,481 (13.6 per cent) of the total number of students were non-Saudis. New students registered entering the first primary class for the first time in 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010) numbered 415,004. The number of occupants of educational posts at the primary level was 223,511 teachers, while there were 11,673 administrative assistants and administrators. Table 64 shows some qualitative indicators through the maintenance of good ratios of the average number of students per school, class and teacher.

(b) Middle level: There were 1,188,342 students (male and female) registered at this level, of whom 142,945 (12 per cent) were non-Saudis. New students registered entering the first middle school class for the first time in 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010) numbered 386,039. There were 117,370 teachers and 6,289 administrative staff. Table 65 shows some qualitative indicators through the maintenance of good ratios of the average number of students per school, class and teacher.

### **C. Good quality secondary education**

256. It should be noted here that what has been said above about initiatives taken and policies adopted in basic education (primary and secondary education) applies to all levels of general education, including secondary education. In order to avoid repetition, we mention here additional information on secondary education in response to the questions of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the State having adopted a series of measures,

policies and programmes in order to achieve the objectives set forth in the following paragraphs.

257. The diversification of secondary education and its branching out and linkage with the labour market and sustainable development: It was noted in the second periodic report that the Kingdom, represented by the Ministry of Education and other governmental and non-governmental sectors, was keen to diversify secondary education in accordance with the needs of the State and the labour market. Secondary education has thus been divided into the general secondary education system and the secondary education and technical (vocational) institutes system. The “secondary education curricula system” has been introduced into the general secondary education system whereby schools follow systems that differ from or are modifications of traditional school systems. It includes multiple streams (scientific/literary and human), and the high school graduates of these streams are prepared for admission to universities, technical colleges and technical institutes to meet the needs of the labour market. Schools and vocational and industrial institutes, and vocational training centres have also been diversified and their curricula developed and linked to the needs of students and the community and the requirements of the labour market. They include the following:

- (a) High schools and technical institutes;
- (b) Industrial secondary schools;
- (c) Commercial secondary schools.

258. In 2008–2009, there were 1,040 private institutes, 648 for boys and 392 for girls, in which 67,222 trainees were enrolled. They are overseen by the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training, which is mainly concerned with technical support of such technical institutes and centres by directing them on the best technical specifications, the administrative system to be followed, the study curricula to be applied and their assessment and support of technical institutes similar to those that it supervises with books and curricula. It also provides them with material support in accordance with the statutes and rules governing them set out in the schedule of subsidies.

259. Establishment and improvement of secondary technical institutes for girls: A number of technical schools for girl have been established. Their aim is to give students educational and vocational qualifications useful to them in their working lives. They are divided into two types:

- (a) Vocational training centres: The period of study in them is two years after the primary diploma. The students learn sewing, embroidery, beauty care, and home economics skills.
- (b) Vocational secondary schools or institutes: The period of study in them is three years after the intermediate certificate of proficiency. The subjects offered are home economics, sewing and embroidery and the student gains a vocational secondary diploma in the section in which she has specialized.

260. Development of vocational training establishments: In the framework of the Organization’s efforts to link training outcomes with labour market needs training plans are constantly reviewed and developed in order to keep pace with emerging needs in work and production methods. In 2007–2008, the Organization conducted a comprehensive evaluation of all the training plans in technical college and vocational industrial institute programmes. On the basis of this evaluation and review, suitable training packages were written, amended and revised, and these new plans applied from 2009. The General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training provides several types of training for the governmental and private sectors, including the following:

(a) Governmental technical and vocational training implemented across five subprogrammes, including technical training for boys (technical colleges), vocational training for boys (industrial vocational training institutes) and technical and vocational training for girls (higher technical institutes);

(b) Technical and vocational training jointly with the private sector: This has seven subprogrammes, including private technical and vocational training (for-profit private institutes and centres), institutes and joint training programmes, the National Organization for Joint Training, on-the-job training, small and medium enterprises and vocational incubators, community service and continuing training, professional examination.

261. The Ministries of Education and Higher Education have been implementing a joint plan to address the needs for quantity and quality in general education in the coming years. The Eighth Development Plan 2005–2010 considered the harmonization of educational outputs one of the most pressing development issues in the Kingdom and therefore included a policy to develop the systems, curricula and programmes of higher education institutions to bring them into line with the needs and requirements of the labour market. The two ministries have also agreed to strengthen partnership and combine their efforts to improve general education and higher education in the Kingdom by upgrading teaching, promoting the harmonization of higher education outcomes and the needs of general education, supporting joint projects and programmes, encouraging and exchanging experiences between the two ministries and conducting a study to determine the expected demand for teachers over the next ten years according to specialization and level in all regions and provinces.

#### **D. Programmes and curricula and developing the quality of education**

262. The State has adopted a set of measures, policies and programmes to improve the quality of education and is thus achieving many quality successes and implementing several projects, the most prominent of which is the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Public Education Development Project (Tatweer) issued by Royal Decree No. BM/1087 of 26/1/1428 A.H. in 1426 A.H. (2005), which is one of the most important and comprehensive initiatives to develop education. Nine billion riyals have been allocated to it, and this initiative has been translated into the establishment of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Public Education Development Project, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and in partnership with several government agencies, with approval for licensing the establishment of an education development holding company under Royal Decree No. M/75 of 6/11/1429 A.H. as a national institution sponsoring this initiative (to guarantee the sustainability of resources for the project). The objectives of the project were defined as follows:

(a) To develop an integrated system for evaluating and measuring the quality of education;

(b) To develop the various elements of the educational process, which includes:

1. The development of educational curricula as a comprehensive concept responding to modern scientific and technical developments and meeting students' knowledge, professional, psychological, physical and mental health and living needs and their need for values;

2. To retrain teachers and prepare them to perform their educational and training duties in such a way as to achieve the objectives of the curricula developed;

3. To improve and rehabilitate the educational environment and prepare it to integrate technology and digital forms of curricula to make the classroom and school an environment conducive to learning to reach the highest level of achievement and education;

4. To strengthen capacities, skills and creativity, develop talents and hobbies, satisfy the psychological needs of students, and deepen national and social concepts and bonds through extracurricular activities of various kinds.

263. A great many initiatives, programmes and projects have grown out of the Project aimed at improving the quality of educational services, focusing on: setting up standards for national tests, and standards of tests and tools for the assessment of teachers; the national strategy for school mathematics; updating the career paths of teachers; developing educational leaders, such as the Saudi Oxford programme for educational leaders and the leader selection project; training programmes, such as the new teacher training project, the science and mathematics teacher training project, and the project to develop teacher preparation programmes in Saudi universities; schools development programmes, such as the schools development initiative, the schools development programme, the project to develop the design of the school building of the future, the project to develop school equipment specifications; educational technology programmes, such as the development of computer platforms and information technology, and the project to enrich the educational content of the Tatweer Internet portal. All this in addition to the establishment of new educational bodies and institutions, such as the national centre for the development of educational leaders, and the teaching centres project. For these programmes, please refer to table 66.

264. In addition to the initiatives, programmes and projects referred to above, the Development and Planning Agency of the Ministry of Education is continuing implementation of the project to develop general education curricula by running several projects, including;

(a) The comprehensive project to develop curricula: to make a quantum leap in basic education through comprehensive qualitative development of the curriculum to keep pace with rapid developments locally and globally.

(b) The science and mathematics project: to set up advanced science and mathematics courses based on the translation and harmonization of a global series of textbooks for science and mathematics.

(c) Gifted students: the Ministry of Education has adopted a multiple referee project in the operation to detect and identify gifted students by using scientific tools and methods on intelligence, capacities and innovation developed and codified in the Saudi environment for this purpose. The work is done in full partnership with the King Abdulaziz Foundation for the Gifted (Mawhiba), several Saudi universities and local, regional and global consultancies.

(d) Conferences and forums, including the International Conference on Comprehensive Quality in General Education, organized by the Ministry of Education in 2011, "the first international conference on total quality in public education", which discussed global practices and applications in the quality of public education, and held specialized workshops with the participation of several experts in the quality field, complementing Saud Arabia's efforts to develop public education and guide it qualitatively towards strengthening the knowledge economy.

(e) Secondary courses system project: aims to achieve integration and flexibility between courses so that the system gives the student an opportunity to omit and add courses offered and study in summer classes with an academic advisor assigned to each student.

The project is implemented in 162 secondary schools in all regions of the country. Table 67 shows the number of students in secondary schools with the courses system.

*Information and communication technologies in education*

265. The Ministry of Education has adopted a set of measures, policies and programmes to take advantage of information and communication technologies in education on the basis of the paramount place the information and communication technology revolution has come to occupy in modern education curricula and the consequent importance of giving more space to study of and training in information technology, for example:

(a) Development of computer and information technology curricula: the programme aims to develop the computer and information technology curriculum to apply integrated curricula of global standards at the middle and secondary levels and to train teachers and educational supervisors according to the school plan.

(b) Project to enrich educational content on the Internet: in order to activate the participation of the educational and other fields in enriching digital content, the project aims to stimulate students, teachers and specialists (individuals and institutions) to produce digital educational content directed towards enriching the educational process for public education students and their teachers.

(c) The educational Tatweer portal: Winner of first place as the best portal in the Arab world in 2010, it aims to provide effective educational content management systems, facilitating the work of teachers and communication between the parties to the educational process through various tools and techniques, including: the portals management system; the school management system (knowledge of the Web); the learning and educational content management system; the digital library; the virtual classroom system; virtual conferences; educational forums; cooperative pages; the project management system; the student project management system; village of activity; email; health applications; educational, entertainment and awareness content; educational and awareness games; SMS messages; integration with payment portal systems.

(d) Activation of school laboratories: In 2001, the Ministry of Education sought to secure 100 per cent of the needs of schools for reliable school laboratories for the boys' and girls' sectors. Work is also currently under way to bring into operation more than 2,000 virtual school laboratories for boys' and girls' schools, including training directly at school, and work is under way to complete the initiation of the secure computerized laboratories in education departments, comprehensive education in their operation and training in their use and application.

(e) Agreement with Intel: In 2011 in Riyadh the Ministry of Education and the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Public Education Development project signed a memorandum of understanding with Intel Corporation, the manufacturer of processors and information technology, on the development and provision of models of new processors for their assessment and use by the Ministry. The company would also give the Ministry technical advice in its areas of specialization.

(f) Mobile school: the Ministry covers all the material costs of this service: it pays the subscriptions and communications and messaging costs and allocates a special budget to every school to cover the costs of the service, which aims to invest modern information technology in enhancing communication with parents through an SMS service by allocating a mobile line to each school (boys' and girls') to facilitate communication with them in the many situations that require direct communication, including potential danger (flooding, sandstorm, tornado, any emergency situation), providing them with the necessary guidance and instructions or informing them of the measures that the school intends to take. Also to strengthen communication with them concerning their children and

to inform them of activities and events organized by the school to which they are invited, and other services.

(g) Digital content programme: the Ministry has signed a contract with a company for the production of all interactive electronic educational content (textbooks).

(h) First Gulf Forum for Enlightenment on Nanotechnology in General Education: The Forum was held in 2011 in cooperation with the International Movement for Leisure Activities in Science and Technology (IMLAST) with the participation of the ministries of education of the Gulf States and Yemen, and with the support of the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology, the King Abdullah Institute for Nanotechnology and Saudi universities.

266. In 2012, the Council of Ministers approved the establishment of the Public Education Evaluation Commission as a corporate body enjoying administrative and financial independence. The tasks and prerogatives relating to the activity of evaluating public education were to be transferred to the Commission by the Ministry of Education. These tasks include setting up a system for evaluating and guaranteeing the quality of public education, evaluating the performance of government and private schools and accrediting them on a regular basis, and establishing standardized national tests for each level of study.

267. These measures and programmes have led to the development of achievement indicators that illustrate the quantitative growth in the secondary stage in 1430/1431 A.H (2009–2010), the number of students (male and female) enrolled in this stage being 1,096,174 in the Kingdom as a whole, 110,490 (10.1 per cent) of whom were non-Saudis, while there were 99,753 occupants of educational posts and 4,756 occupants of administrative posts.

268. Lastly, the results of the measures and programmes adopted by the State to meet the growing demand for educational services at all stages (primary and secondary education) can be illustrated through extrapolation of steady growth in quantitative indicators while maintaining the levels of the quality indicators (number of students per class and teacher-student ratio). In order to achieve this, we review the statistical summary of general secondary education of all types for 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010) compared with the previous year, as follows:

(a) Classes (male and female): there was a total of 238,797 classes affiliated to the Ministry of Education, an increase of 3,064 over the previous year;

(b) There was a total of 5,040,445 students (male and female) for all the agencies supervising education of different types at all educational levels, including literacy and adult education, an increase of 53,185 over the previous year;

(c) The average number of students per class was fewer than 22 for all stages;

(d) There was a total of 33,597 schools and institutes (male and female), including schools and institutes affiliated to the Ministry of Education and other educational bodies in various stages and types of education, including literacy and adult education, an increase of 423 over the previous year;

(e) The average number of students per school (day school) was 166 for all stages;

(f) There was a total of 476,218 occupants of educational posts (male and female) at all stages of education and in the various agencies supervising education, including school heads, deputies, student counsellors, activity leaders and secretaries of centres of learning, laboratory attendants and teachers, an increase of 29,196 over the previous year.

## **E. Girls' education and elimination of illiteracy among women**

269. Saudi Arabia has adopted a raft of measures, policies and programmes on girls' education in addition to what has been achieved in the development of education, such as the King Abdullah Public Education Development Project, the comprehensive curriculum project and the mathematics and natural sciences project, which include the education of boys and girls alike. Curricula and textbooks for the two sexes have been unified, in addition to the inclusion in curricula and programmes for girls of lessons on awareness of the importance of education, girls' rights to education, gender equality and knowledge about successful female role models and leaders. These models include the appointment of women to high office in the Ministry of Education, including the Deputy Minister for Girls' Affairs and the Permanent Secretary for Girls' Education. The Kingdom has also adopted a great many plans and measures to eliminate illiteracy among women, attaching great importance to their education and awareness. Some of those measures are described in the following paragraphs.

270. The State has supported girls' education by giving them access to education accompanied by steady progress represented by the great increase in the number of schools, classes, teachers, management and the various equipment, which has resulted in an increase in the enrolment rate of girls at all levels of education. This has coincided with significant improvements in the quality of education at these levels in terms of curricula, books, tests, teaching methods, buildings and securing the necessary equipment, such as libraries, laboratories, computers, etc. The level of competence of teachers, health care and extra-curricular activities has been raised, reflecting the great ongoing efforts of the Ministry of Education, as already mentioned in detail in the education section of this report.

271. A comparison of the financial allocations to girls' and boys' education illustrates the extent of the State's interest in girls' education, as more than half of the Ministry of Education budget for 2009–2010 of 83.614802 billion riyals was allocated to girls' education.

272. Incentive and award programmes have been extended for outstanding achievements in performance and activities, and family and local involvement in honouring outstanding girls has developed. The Ministry of Education attaches great importance to extracurricular activities, activities being an essential pillar of the King Abdullah education development project, along with the curriculum, the teacher and the educational environment, because of their role in building student character and acquiring life skills that will enable women to work and participate in the community. The extracurricular activities of the King Abdullah project in public schools include the Schools for Life Project, which will be discussed later in the report. The Ministry of Education has also approved several activities run at the school level and allocates an estimated annual budget of 31 riyals per student and 3,770 riyals to every school with more than 100 pupils for the implementation of cultural, social and sports programmes through quarterly or annual plans implemented at school or departmental level or at country level, such as the celebration of Teachers' Day, the science clubs project, and the International Mathematics, Chemistry and Physics Olympiads, in which Saudi Arabia is represented by outstanding students. Radio activities and cultural contests also take place in schools, as do ceremonies to mark students' passage from one educational stage to the next during which outstanding students are honoured. Students who excel academically are also honoured at education department level in the regions and provinces such as by honouring the gifted and talented through departmental awards sponsored by private and commercial institutions.

273. Informal education programmes and their contribution to the elimination of illiteracy: Saudi Arabia pays careful attention to discontinuing female students at every stage by offering an education programme that includes classes attached to public education

schools at the middle and secondary stage that started in 1422/23 A.H. (2002). Adult female students who have graduated from primary school and discontinued their studies enrol in them. The programme A Society Free from Illiteracy was adopted on the basis of Ministerial Decree No. 158175 of 15/4/1429 A.H. (22 April 2008) and is the largest adult education programme. It aims to eradicate illiteracy among females aged between 10 and 45 in the place and at the time convenient to them and according to their circumstances at the elementary level. Table 68 shows the number of female students in the A Society Free from Illiteracy programme between 2008 and 2010.

274. It is worth noting that other bodies are involved in supporting women's education and the eradication of illiteracy, including: the Women's Renaissance Society, which works to qualify Saudi women economically and socially and runs many development projects and programmes that include a literacy project; the Quran Memorization Association (women's section), which agreed with the Ministry of Education Women's Education Directorate to provide classes and follow up on the registration of illiterate women, while the Ministry sends teachers and the necessary books free of charge, as well as running and supervising the programme. After successful completion of the programme students receive a diploma from the Women's Education Directorate.

## **F. Providing education and training opportunities and full integration to children with disabilities**

275. Pursuant to article 23 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by Royal Decree No. M/28 of 22/4/1425 A.H and acceded to by Saudi Arabia in August 2008, in addition to what has been detailed previously in this report, the State has adopted a set of measures, policies and programmes to guarantee the right of children with disabilities to education in a manner appropriate to their needs in the same schools and institutes open to other children, except for exceptional cases arising from the nature of the disability, and that in any case is linked to the public education system. There are two types of special education:

(a) Independent institutes and programmes and accompanying classes: There were 26,325 students in this type of education in the Kingdom in 1430/1431 A.H. (2009–2010), accounting for 0.5 per cent of the total number of students enrolled in all stages of education. There were 24,562 Saudi students, accounting for 93.3 per cent of the total, and 7,373 Saudi occupants of teaching posts, representing 94.5 per cent of the total, compared with 429 non-Saudis (5.5 per cent). There were 324 Saudi administrative assistants. Table 69 shows the basic elements of this type of education, while table 70 sets out some quality indicators through the maintenance of good average numbers of students per school and per class and good student-teacher ratios.

(b) Total integration programmes: the Ministry of Education General Directorate for Special Education provides special education programmes in general education schools called Total integration programmes. They aim to tackle the difficulties some students face in general education in the context of the normal school environment without the need to separate them from their peers. Tables 71 and 72 show the total integration programmes, the numbers of students in them, and the number of teachers working in them. It should be noted that these numbers are included in the general education data given previously for the primary, middle and secondary stages.

### **G. Providing a safe and healthy learning environment and the prohibition of all forms of abuse and violence, including corporal punishment**

276. Pursuant to article 28, paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in view of the clear importance of providing a safe and healthy learning environment and ensuring protection from all forms of abuse and violence, including corporal punishment, the State has adopted a set of measures policies and programmes that were detailed above in response to the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on articles 9 and 39 (paras. 138–160), in addition to what has been detailed about Ministry of Education measures on environmental safety for schools and the project to dispense with rented schools (para. 245).

### **H. Aims of education about human rights**

277. With regard to the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on inclusion of human rights education in the curriculum of all schools, including religious and foreign schools, and ensuring that children's rights, particularly with respect to tolerance and equality of religious minorities, are a core element, the State has taken several steps to ensure that the goals of education agree with the requirements of article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Education policy in Saudi Arabia is based on the belief in human dignity and the establishment of the right of males and females of different ages and those with special needs to education to suit the characteristics of learners, and seeks to achieve this through education plans, programmes and curricula, including the following:

(a) The integration of the culture and concepts of human rights in the development project, which aims to ensure the assimilation by new teachers of the human rights system and to prepare them to work in Ministry of Education schools to introduce human rights and duties and interact with the community and the environment in accordance with them.

(b) Saudi Arabia is participating in the preparation of the Arab Plan for Human Rights Education. Its purpose is to integrate human rights into the education system at all stages, to provide training for human resources on human rights education and to create an appropriate educational environment for, and expand community participation in, the dissemination of a human rights culture.

(c) The planning and development agency in the Ministry of Education is preparing an operational plan the aims of which focus on the inclusion of the values, principles and concepts of human rights in school curricula. The plan aims to train education staff in the human rights culture and produce reference manuals and educational media on how to include the values and concepts of human rights in the curriculum.

(d) Establishment of a ministerial coordinating committee in the girls' education sector to coordinate with the National Human Rights Association to tackle subjects relating to violence against female students, teachers and employees and awareness and education on rights and duties for all students.

### **I. Leisure and cultural activities (art. 31)**

278. With regard to leisure and cultural activities, the State is attentive to cultural and recreational activities for children and young people, as is confirmed by a number of relevant decisions, including the following:

(a) The Council of Ministers Directive issued on 11/10/1429 A.H. (11 October 2008) containing the following: "Expedite the implementation of cultural activities in sports clubs through a joint mechanism between the General Presidency of Youth Welfare and the Ministry of Culture and Information. Expand social and youth programmes for the benefit of those that have the greatest number of young people in the Kingdom in accordance with plans and programmes that are clearly defined technically and have a clear time scale. Authorize the construction of buildings for clubs for the deaf in Riyadh and Dammam; consider establishing such clubs in the rest of the country as needed."

(b) Shura Council Decision No. 19/27 of 13/5/1429 A.H. (18 May 2008) increasing stimulation of the content of radio and television programmes to achieve what is stated in article 3 of the media policy of the Kingdom and the development of programmes broadcast in languages other than Arabic, increasing broadcasting hours, and adding other new languages.

(c) Shura Council Decision No. 71/90 of 4/2/1426 A.H. (15 March 2005) introducing the new General Presidency of Youth Welfare youth welfare programmes to meet their social and cultural needs, qualify them and give them sound intellectual, educational and moral preparation, and extending the presidency into Saudi Arabian Youth Hostel Association programmes, the National Anti-drugs Association, the Deaf Club, heritage caravans, sports recreation for all programmes, and programmes for people with special needs, and approving fair and balanced expansion in cities, villages and hamlets.

(d) Shura Council Decision No. 52/70 of 10/11/1426 A.H. (11 December 2005) requiring the intellectual care, as well as the physical care, of young people, allocating to this an adequate share of the General Presidency of Youth Welfare budget, that the Presidency should support its contribution to the cultural and intellectual movement for young people through annual awards in this area, and balanced distribution of projects implemented across the regions of the Kingdom.

(e) Shura Council Decision No. 12/12 of 15/4/1429 A.H. (21 April 2008), which calls upon the General Presidency of Youth Welfare to increase and diversify programmes and activities for young people in order to achieve a balance between youth activities, especially during the summer period, taking advantage of Presidency facilities for this purpose. The Presidency should expand its programmes with other community organizations, the private sector, and volunteer programmes in order to spread a volunteering culture more widely among young people.

279. In response to the application of those decisions, the relevant ministries and agencies have made greater efforts to implement various programmes and activities, including as indicated in the following paragraphs.

## **1. Ministry of Education**

280. The Ministry of Education accords considerable importance to student activities and their inclusion in the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Education Development Project because of their role in character-building, and improving basic skills for achieving educational goals, including the School of Life project, which is implemented in 1,000 schools distributed geographically across the regions of the country, half of them boys' and half of them girls' schools. These schools offer a package of activities and programmes during the evening session for all age groups by opening their doors to students, families and the various segments of society around the school in order to give them the opportunity to practice various activities and hobbies. They also provide additional educational services, evening courses to help students and their families to overcome difficulties that hinder their educational attainment, services for the gifted and creative and all the means to enable them to embrace their talents and creativity. The project also aims to activate programmes for

families to make them better able to support their sons and daughters. A separate budget of 200,000 to 500,000 thousand riyals per school according to the number of children and the size of the school has been allocated to this project.

281. The Ministry of Education, represented by the General Directorate for Summer Activities of the two sectors has financed and launched a summer club project to make profitable use of the leisure time of students and those at their level in a variety of targeted educational programmes to equip them with life skills and experiences and discover and nurture their talents. Three hundred and twenty-four summer clubs were run in the Kingdom in 2010, and there were 239 courses to train directors and supervisors for them. Summer training camps were also held for students participating in the International Science Olympiad in one city in coordination with the King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity, the Boy Scouts and the Messengers of Peace programme, which aims to develop citizenship and the values of peace in scouts and to highlight their role in promoting national unity and global coexistence.

## 2. Ministry of Culture and Information

282. The Ministry of Culture and Information enriches children's culture through television and radio programmes, plays and annual festivals for children. These programmes include International Children's Day, celebrated internationally each year on 20 November. Saudi Arabia celebrates this occasion, participating in the global effort for children awareness and a culture and protection of their rights for five days during which many cultural and artistic events and entertainments for children are held. There are also five broadcasters supported by radio stations in all regions of the country, as well as more than 110 FM stations, all of which contribute programmes for children. There are 14 official television channels, many of them offering programmes for children, some, such as *Ajial*, for children, as well as non-official channels for children, such as *al-Mujid for Children*, and the MBC3 children's channel. Literary clubs in the Kingdom also contribute through their activities and programmes for young people. There were 16 literary clubs in the Kingdom in 2009, each of which was financially supported to the tune of 10 million riyals in 2011. A children's culture committee was set up in the second half of 2006 focussing on everything to do with children and their culture. Its most important achievements are:

- (a) The revival of some outstanding literary works of the pioneers of children's literature, through reproduction and printing;
- (b) The establishment of the first child culture festival, "The world and me";
- (c) The production of a manual for writers and illustrators of children's literature;
- (d) Work on the assessment of children's books submitted to the Ministry;
- (e) The promotion of reading by children by setting up regular activities;
- (f) Inviting writers and illustrators to participate in the publication of a series of books for children.

## 3. The General Presidency for Youth Welfare

283. The Presidency is the governmental agency responsible for sports, cultural and social activities in sports clubs, of which there were 153 in 2010. It also oversees the Saudi Arabian Youth Hostel Association, which runs 22 youth hostels and has around 75,000 members of different nationalities over ten years of age. It runs many activities according to an annual plan for each hostel by focusing on young members and attracting them to participate and take an interest in local environmental and community service projects in

days and weeks of public service. The General Presidency for Youth Welfare offices also participate in running their activities through the formation of family and activity groups in the hostels. The Saudi Arabian Youth Hostel Association allocates a budget to each hostel to pay for implementation of the activity plan.

#### 4. Government libraries

284. Public libraries run many activities for children in 84 libraries around the country affiliated to the Ministry of Culture and Information. Many of these libraries have a children's corner where there are materials, books and materials for cultural development and refinement of their talents. In addition, the King Abdulaziz Public Library offers through its national branches an independent section for children equipped with the best and most up-to-date audiovisual media along with a children's library. The Library also offers many activities that seek to encourage children to read through reading follow-up cards, a book-of-the-week panel, a panel honouring the insatiable reader, and periodic reading circles, in addition to the following ongoing programmes:

(a) Children's Book Club for 11- to 15-year-olds. In exchange for a symbolic subscription fee, child participants receive two books a year, one fiction, one non-fiction, an educational newsletter for parents and a range of mental and linguistic activities designed to suit the children's age group.

(b) Birthday Club for Adolescent Girls for 11- to 15-year-old girls. It provides them with cultural activities, courses and workshops consistent with their needs and aspirations.

(c) Field trips for schools inside and outside the Library, that include the presentation of a range of stories in various ways — through story-telling, puppet theatre, shadow theatre, and PowerPoint — and offering activities associated with the stories such as an educational application, art activities, such as drawing the characters and events of the story. There are also intellectual contests, and at the end of the programme the distribution of prizes in the form of library publications.

(d) Training courses. The library pays great attention to educating mothers and women working with children by organizing workshops to raise awareness of the importance of reading to children and ways and means of doing so, such as the Read to Your Child workshop and the course Reading to elementary school students: how and why.

285. Other governmental agencies and private bodies also support many cultural and recreational programmes and activities, including the National Guard, Saudi Aramco, the Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu, and others that take place on national, periodic and seasonal occasions (summer), notably:

(a) National heritage and culture festivals, organized annually by the National Guard for all sections of society, citizens, residents and tourists, and different age groups, that includes a variety of cultural, recreational and artistic activities.

(b) The Aramco summer festival, an annual festival organized by the company in several cities that includes many scientific and cultural programmes and training courses for all sections of society, with a focus on children and young people involved in organizational work and in its various activities.

(c) The Reading for All festival: under the auspices of Saudi Aramco includes the establishment of mobile libraries that target all schools in the Kingdom. The libraries move around according to a specific timetable in order to cover all schools. This programme continues throughout the year.

286. The Ministry of Social Affairs, through its social development centres and their charitable committees, offers programmes and projects for children from the sections most in need, providing an appropriate atmosphere for the development of their abilities and energies and for the satisfaction of their needs and inclinations. In 2012, there were 615 childhood development projects with 253,920 beneficiaries. The most important of these projects were the child and youth development centres, the development clubs, the social welfare forum, the children's science club, the children's theatre, and pre-schools and nurseries.

## **VIII. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32–36, 37 (b)-(d), and 38–40)**

### **A. Child refugees and non-Saudi working children (art. 22)**

287. With reference to the questions of the Committee on the Rights of the Child after considering the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia concerning refugees and migrants, we should like to confirm that there are no child migrants in Saudi Arabia and that all the non-Saudi children present in the Kingdom are with their families who have employment contracts in the governmental or private sector or with a private individual. These children and their families enjoy all the rights that Saudi children and families enjoy in the fields of protection, education, health and entertainment and full freedom of movement.

288. In line with the right of the child to remain with his or her parents and family (art. 9) and family reunification (art. 10), the regulations in force in the Kingdom affirm the right of those arriving and legally resident to be accompanied by their children to reside with them, and if they are abroad authorize them to visit them. The procedures for workers to be accompanied by their families have been simplified in order to encourage and support family reunification. Saudi regulations also emphasize non-separation of children from their families and there are no regulations depriving family members of the freedom to leave or return to the country for family reunification. Indeed, employment regulations guarantee the payment of tickets for the children of non-Saudi workers legally resident in the Kingdom and there are procedures facilitating the admission of children with their families. Please refer to the response in this report to the Committee's questions on separation of the child from his parents (art. 9) and family reunification (art. 10), which contains thorough replies.

289. We further affirm that children arriving and resident in Saudi Arabia of all nationalities enjoy all health and educational services. We summarize below a recapitulation of the local legislation and regulations set out previously (in many parts of the report — kindly refer back to those parts for further details, if required) to show the rights they enjoy in accordance with the provisions of article 22 and related articles of the Convention.

#### **1. Education**

290. Achieving equal educational opportunities between citizens and residents is one of the most important themes reflecting the efforts made to achieve equality of all children. The text of Council of Ministers Decision No. 139 of 26/4/1425 A.H. made education compulsory for all aged from 6 to 15 years with no distinction between Saudi children and non-Saudi residents. The Ministry of Education has made enormous efforts to apply this decision fully and comprehensively and to expand and improve education for all without distinction. Reference has already been made in the section on education to the number of children of non-Saudi residents at general education schools affiliated to the Ministry of Education, the total number of whom (male and female) at the pre-school stage was 1,244,

representing 7.5 per cent of all pupils in that stage, while their total number at the primary stage was 339,481, representing 13.6 per cent of the total number of students at that stage. Their number at the intermediate stage was 142,945, representing 12 per cent of the total number of students at that stage, and 110,490 at the secondary stage, representing 10.1 per cent of total students at that stage.

291. The Kingdom is also home to a large number and variety of foreign schools that fulfil the child's right to education compatible with his or her religion, language and heritage. The establishment of foreign schools in Saudi Arabia was first permitted about 29 years ago. When the need arose to update the systems and procedures concerning this type of education in order to achieve the purpose of its existence, the List of Foreign Schools was approved in Council of Ministers Decision No. 26 of 4/2/1418 A.H. (10 June 1997) to help non-Arab communities legally resident in the Kingdom to educate their children in their own schools in order to be able to continue their education when they return to their country.

292. More than 20 foreign curricula are taught in the Kingdom, including British, American, French, Philippine, Australian, Pakistani, Indian, Portuguese, Guinean, Malian, Japanese, Korean, Swedish, Eritrean, Turkish, German, Indonesian, Ghanaian, Greek and Sri Lankan. The number of foreign schools has also increased over the last period, a natural increase commensurate with the increase in the number of foreign residents and the growth of communities living in the Kingdom: there are now 171 schools, including American, British, Indian, Filipino, Turkish, and other nationalities. The Ministry of Education provides support and free services designed to consolidate the quality of these schools and ensure that children resident in the Kingdom receive an education compatible with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Some Saudi families enrol their children in certain foreign schools.

## **2. Health care**

293. The following health care services are offered:

(a) Ambulatory (emergency) and preventive services are provided free of charge to all non-Saudi residents of the Kingdom, including children accompanying their families, in ministry hospitals and primary health care centres in the same way as to Saudis;

(b) Free medical services are provided to all non-Saudi residents working in the various governmental sectors in the Kingdom, including children accompanying their families, in ministry hospitals and primary health care centres in the same way as to Saudis;

(c) Medical services are provided to non-Saudi residents working in the various private and charitable sectors (and for individuals) in the Kingdom, including children accompanying their families, in private hospitals and private primary health care centres through a compulsory health insurance system that requires private sector employers to insure their employees and their families in accordance with the Cooperative Health Insurance Act promulgated in Royal Decree No. M/10 of 1/5/1420 (12 August 1999).

## **3. Social welfare and protection**

294. Social welfare and protection programmes and services are for all children with no distinction between Saudis and non-Saudis. Those programmes and services include residential, temporary or alternative social care and protection provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs in its own establishments (such as its social development centres and charitable committees) or those provided through charitable establishments and associations, of which there are 92 and details of which were given earlier in this report.

295. In this context, we note that the residential welfare directorate of the Ministry of Social Affairs ensures that all children have access to social services (with no distinction between those from Saudi and non-Saudi families) and enjoy their right to health care and housing, since the Ministry implements what is stipulated in the regulations and directives of the Kingdom concerning children with special circumstances. The security agencies (regional emirate) determine those categories (of unknown parentage or father or born unlawfully). The Ministry deals with civil status in order to register the child and have identity papers issued for him or her, and then shelters him or her in a residential home or places him or her with a *kafalah* (alternative) family able to care for him or her and bring him or her up in accordance with the regulations and conditions determined, in the light of which monthly financial assistance is paid. With regard to children born out of wedlock to a foreign (non-Saudi) mother, the regulations and directives require them not to be separated from their mother and to remain with her inside or outside Saudi Arabia. If for some reason that is not possible, in accordance with the child's best interests, a temporary birth certificate is granted to the child until he or she reaches adulthood and he or she is then given Saudi citizenship.

296. With regard to children who are separated from their families as a result of imprisonment of their relatives (with no distinction between Saudi and non-Saudi families), specialists from the Ministry of Social Affairs study their situation and order what is appropriate to their status by transferring them to a guest home or social training home to provide them with all social, psychological, health and educational services, and recreational programmes and activities so that their care is complete to the fullest extent until the end of their relatives' period of imprisonment.

297. With regard to access to the right to personal identity, registration of birth and protection of children who have been abandoned in the country of origin, article 7 of the Saudi Arabian Citizenship Act deals with these cases, stipulating that "A Saudi national is a person born in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia or abroad to a Saudi father or a Saudi mother and a stateless father or a father of unknown nationality or a person of unknown parentage born in the Kingdom. A foundling is deemed to have been born in the Kingdom unless there is evidence to the contrary". As for the registration of the fact of birth of children born in or outside the Kingdom, the Civil Status Act stipulates how a newborn, whether born inside or outside the Kingdom, is to be registered and the birth reported and the persons responsible for doing so, and also the registration of foundlings, as stated in the Civil Status Act (arts. 32–44).

298. Reference should also be made to the generous support the Kingdom offers to alleviate the suffering of child refugees and their families as a result of wars, earthquakes, floods, snow and drought, especially in poor countries, previously detailed in this report in paragraphs 95 to 101.

## **B. Economic exploitation (art. 32)**

299. In the context of the efforts it has made to protect children from economic exploitation, the Kingdom has taken action and strict regulatory measures to combat trafficking in children or their separation from their families whether in order to exploit them economically or for another reason. It has acceded to the existing conventions and concluded bilateral treaties in order to achieve this, such as the one concluded with Yemen on trafficking in children. It has also ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Kinds of Child Labour.

300. Royal Decree No. M/56 of 11/6/1428 A.H (26 June 2007) approved the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, and the Protocol to Prevent,

Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session on 19/8/1421 A.H. (15 November 2000).

301. In the same context, Royal Decree No. M/51 of 2/8/1426 (27 September 2005) approved the Labour Act, article 162 of which provides as follows:

“(1) No person under the age of fifteen years may be employed or allowed to enter places of work. The Minister may, pursuant to a decision by him, raise this age limit in certain industries or areas or for certain categories of minors.

(2) As an exception to paragraph (1) of this article, the Minister may allow the employment or work of persons between 13 and 15 years of age in light work, subject to the following conditions:

(a) Such jobs shall not be potentially harmful to their health or growth.

(b) Such jobs shall not hinder their school attendance, participation in orientation or vocational training programmes or impair their ability to benefit from their schooling.”

302. The Ministry of Labour has also issued a series of decisions, including the following:

(a) Decision No. 1/3839 of 9/9/1427 (2 October 2006), which authorizes the employment of juveniles in an establishment where the work is restricted to family members, work in vocational schools and training centres and work in bakeries except for the period from nine until four in the morning.

(b) Decision No. 2840/1 of 9/9/1427 (2 October 2006), which sets out the occupations and businesses that are likely to put the health, safety and morals of juveniles at risk because of their nature or the circumstances in which they are performed. These include work in mines and quarries and the extraction of minerals from under the ground, industries involving health risks, hard labour, racing involving risk to life, and any work performed in a place or in circumstances that might expose the juvenile to ethical and psychological problems. The Decision states that “in such cases the juvenile shall be no younger than seventeen years of age”.

(c) Decision No. 2841/1 of 9/9/1427 (2 October 2006) excludes from the provisions on the employment of juveniles contained in Chapter X of the Labour Act, and for the purpose of training and education, anyone who has reached the age of 14, if the work takes place in the following conditions: there is direct supervision by the agency responsible for the activity; the education or training is gradual so that it presents no difficulty to the learner and trainee; the education and training does not hinder the general academic achievement of the learner or trainee; the agency that wishes to organize the educational or training programme obtains the authorization of the Ministry of Labour and of the Ministry licensing the activity.

303. With regard to child beggars, under Council of Ministers Decision No. 8 of 7/3/1428 A.H., a joint committee was formed of several bodies, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Interior Ministry, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Da’wah and Guidance, the Ministry of Culture and Information and the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, to prepare a national plan to address the phenomenon of begging. The decision also contained urgent measures on begging pending the preparation and approval of the national plan. These measures focus on the formation in all regions of the Kingdom of city committees in which several agencies participate to assist and protect households involved in this behaviour, with a

focus on child beggars and especially those with special needs, whether they are Saudi or non-Saudi, to offer assistance to them and take action concerning them if they are identified within 24 hours, and to conduct media campaigns showing the danger of begging to the individual and society and especially to children.

304. With regard to trafficking in children for the purpose of economic exploitation, it should be noted that the Kingdom implements clear policies and practices and takes all appropriate steps to criminalize all forms of illegal migration, especially in relation to children, such cases being dealt with in accordance with the Borders Act and its implementing regulations, which criminalizes illegal migration. As for children who are trafficked by trafficking gangs for the purpose of exploiting them as beggars in the Kingdom, if such gangs are apprehended and the children found at the border, the children are returned and delivered to the authorities in the source States in accordance with the joint procedures between the two States. As for child beggars in the towns of the Kingdom, in order to ensure the care and protection of these children, the State pursues active and intensive methods to search for and protect them. In addition to the 12 offices to combat begging established throughout the Kingdom, the Ministry of Social Affairs has established accommodation centres for foreign (non-Saudi) child beggars in Mecca, Jeddah and Medina in cooperation with charities, the World Assembly of Muslim Youth and International Islamic Relief. These centres provide care and protection to non-Saudi child beggars under the age of 18, host them in private and friendly spaces, and provide social, health and psychological services until information has been obtained about their parents and they are handed over to them by the security authorities in accordance with regulations and joint procedures, such as those that have been agreed upon between the Kingdom and Yemen. More than 1,240 children have benefited from the services of these centres.

305. In cooperation with UNICEF, the National Commission for Childhood conducted a rapid assessment of children selling and begging in the streets of Mecca, Jeddah and Riyadh and then implemented a pilot project in conjunction with the charity Al-Bir in Jeddah to provide services to children who have been removed from exploitative activities on the streets; some 100 local professionals were trained and guided on protection of children's rights. Officials and advisory staff of embassies of source and transit countries have been involved in preventing trafficking in children in the future and ensuring children's return to their home country in an appropriate manner according to origins. A joint regional workshop on trafficking in children hosted by Naif Arab University for Security Sciences was held in Riyadh. In 2006–2007 Saudi officials held consultative meetings on child trafficking with officials from Yemen and UNICEF; a memorandum of understanding was reached on the status of joint action to curb the smuggling of children from Yemen. Several relevant governmental sectors were involved in the consultations.

306. In a move to find appropriate solutions to root out the problem and so it could be tackled by the surveillance centres of the Ministry of Social Affairs offices in the major towns on the border with Yemen, the Shura Council issued Decision No. 67/49 of 2/11/1426 A.H. (3 December 2005) on juveniles of unknown identity detained in social surveillance centres in Abha, Jizan and Najran, and the burden that represented to the centres for the duration of the procedures to deal with them, and a request for exemption of those areas from the provisions of article 2, paragraphs (b) and (f) of the executive instructions of the regulations on social surveillance centres:

(a) No need to exempt juveniles of unknown identity detained in social surveillance centres in Abha, Jizan and Najran from the provisions of article 2, paragraphs (b) and (f) of the executive instructions of the regulations on social surveillance centres, with an emphasis on the border guards and other relevant agencies (when the juvenile infiltrator or trafficked juvenile is apprehended) taking immediate action to make sure that

there are grounds for arrest and to assess his age, and then handing him over promptly to the competent social surveillance centre.

(b) Creation of a special section for juvenile infiltrators and trafficked juveniles in each social surveillance centre in Abha, Jizan and Najran and other places the Ministry considers appropriate, and provision of services appropriate to their situation. With the provision of the human and financial resources necessary to do so.

### **C. Sexual exploitation and trafficking (art. 34)**

307. The Kingdom appreciates the danger of sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons and is taking action to combat it by enacting measures to prevent, prosecute and protect, in addition to acceding to international conventions, such as the Kingdom's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, ratification of the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, and strengthening its bilateral and multilateral cooperation with source and transit countries in order to take more effective action to combat child trafficking, such as the existing cooperation with the Government of Yemen.

308. At the time when the Kingdom acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, it also promulgated a national Act to combat trafficking in persons that meets international standards in this regard. It is actively involved in regional and international efforts in this regard, including participation in the issuance of the Arab strategy to combat human trafficking, and the Arab framework law to combat the crime of trafficking in persons, and the Gulf framework law.

309. In Rajab 1430 A.H. (July 2009), the Saudi Council of Ministers approved the formation of a committee to combat trafficking in persons within the Human Rights Commission composed of representatives of the Interior Ministry, the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Culture and Information, and the Human Rights Commission.

310. The Saudi Trafficking in Persons Act, adopted by Council of Ministers Decision No. 244 of 20/7/1430 A.H. (12 July 2009), criminalizes all forms of human trafficking regardless of the means used to derive a profit. The most prominent features of the Act include: prohibition on trafficking any person in any way, including coercion, threats, fraud or deception, kidnapping, the exploitation of office or influence, abuse of authority, exploitation of weakness, giving or receiving money or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another for sexual assault, work, forced service, begging, or slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, the removal of organs or medical experiments. A department was created within the Human Rights Commission for this purpose.

311. It should be noted that the Saudi Trafficking in Persons Act does not take into account the victim's consent: criminal liability lies with the perpetrator even if the victim consented to the his or her exploitation. This Act added two new purposes to the purposes of exploitation: conducting medical experiments and begging. The Act deals with all Saudi and resident children and includes approval of the child's right to receive all forms of medical, psychological and social support and treatment, and the provision of security protection if necessary.

312. The Trafficking in Persons Act contains severe penalties of imprisonment of up to 15 years, a fine of up to one million Saudi riyals and the confiscation of the funds and tools

used in the crime or intended for use in it. It also criminalizes legal persons such as companies, with a fine of up to ten million riyals and liquidation or closure of the legal person.

313. The Trafficking in Persons Act also includes many ways of protecting victims, including: placing the victim in a specialized centre if he or she is in need of shelter; providing security protection if necessary; placing the victim in a medical, psychological or social rehabilitation centre if it is found that his or her medical or psychological state or age so requires; granting him or her the right to reside in the Kingdom and settlement of the statutory conditions relating thereto; examination of the victim by a specialist doctor to assess and meet his or her need for medical or psychological care; and informing the victim of his or her legal rights in a language he or she understands in order to ensure positive participation in giving full information about the crime contributing to finding and punishing the perpetrators.

314. The Kingdom has also worked on the development of mechanisms to contribute to combatting trafficking, such as actively searching for victims and intensifying means of identifying them, conducting studies to identify the causes of the crime of trafficking in persons, educating potential victims and members of the community, and monitoring the situation of victims to ensure that they do not become victims again.

315. Also within the framework of the Kingdom's efforts to protect children from sexual exploitation are Royal Decree M/17 of 8/3/1428 A.H. (26 March 2007), and Council of Ministers Decision No. 79 of 7/3/1428 A.H. (25 March 2007) approving the Cybercrime Act, which includes the punishment of "imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years and a fine not exceeding three million riyals, or one of those penalties" for any person who "constructs or publicizes a website on the information network or a computer to promote or facilitate human trafficking". Article 8 of the Act imposes a heavier penalty and fine if the offence is accompanied by "the luring and exploitation of minors and the like".

#### **D. Juvenile justice system (arts. 37, 39 and 40)**

316. We refer to the assessment of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its observations issued after examining the second periodic report of Saudi Arabia and its commendation of the Kingdom's efforts to reform its juvenile justice system, adoption of the new Code of Criminal Procedure and Code of Practice for Lawyers, establishment of special juvenile courts and the fact that that persons under 18 years of age are held in separate detention facilities and are entitled to be represented by a lawyer.

317. Because of the similarity and overlap of the observations and recommendations of the Committee listed here with those that have been dealt with regarding the Committee's observations and recommendations about periodic review of placement in institutions (paras. 247–256), please refer to what has been detailed above for the measures taken and efforts made by the Kingdom to harmonize its regulations with the requirements of articles 37, 40 and 39 of the Convention, as well as international standards and principles on children and juveniles in the criminal justice system.

318. In addition to what has been mentioned in this report in the discussion of article 25 of the Convention and confirming what was detailed previously in the Kingdom's second report concerning the criminal justice system promulgated by Royal Decree M/2 of 28/7/1435 prohibiting torture or degrading treatment in any place, the regulations in force in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia clearly distinguish between the criminal liability of children and the criminal liability of adults. The Juvenile Justice Act designates special courts under the supervision of competent judges to try children on the basis of a clear distinction between children and adults, in accordance with what was decided by the

Supreme Judicial Council at its sixty-fifth session in Decision No. 239/95 of 29/6/1428 A.H. (15 July 2007) on the assignment of “Judges of the criminal court to hear juvenile cases and surveillance centre cases for a period of four months and for the whole week and that the assignment includes all judges of the court except those delegated to work in the court and the like. The judge shall go to the juvenile rather than having the juvenile accused brought to the court”. The Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution works to follow up and investigate the circumstances of juveniles and ensure that human rights are respected in the application of the various punitive measures. Juveniles may not be punished under any Act except the Act specifically applicable to them and are charged by the Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution in accordance with Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution circular No. H 11/8795 of 2/4/1430 A.H. (29 March 2009).

319. The juvenile courts are required to take all available correctional measures, and solutions are restricted to treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration into society in a manner inspired by the general orientation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Act stipulates that the trial of a juvenile shall be secret and that only the social worker shall be present. The Act favours a speedy decision in a juvenile trial without the juvenile being placed in a social surveillance centre and imposes a custodial sentence only when strictly necessary and for the shortest possible time. The Act in force in Saudi Arabia encourages waiver of punishment, enables the judge to shorten the period of the juvenile’s stay in the surveillance centre, and it is possible to waive almost half the sentence for good behaviour, in addition to benefiting from a general Royal pardon issued annually before Eid al-Fitr so the juvenile can spend the feast with his or her family.

320. In line with the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to amend the Detention and Imprisonment Regulations and the Juvenile Justice Regulations to prohibit corporal punishment for persons under 18 deprived of their liberty and as a follow-up to the application of regulations and their possible inadequacy, instructions and controls have been put in place to remedy the inadequacy of regulations, cover deficiencies and keep abreast of developments, so regulations and circulars have been issued on juveniles, their prosecution and criminal and civil liability, and regulations have been issued on their placement in social surveillance centres under Council of Ministers Decision No. 169 of 19/6/1429 A.H. (24 June 2008), the most prominent features of which are as follows:

(a) Placement of juveniles in social surveillance centres is restricted to those who commit punishable acts and are over 12 and under 18 years of age.

(b) Juveniles who commit punishable acts and are under the age of 12 are handed over to their families after they have pledged to follow up their cases until their completion and the judgement has been handed down and executed. If the investigating authority considers that the interest of the juvenile or the interest of the investigation require him to be taken into custody, that shall be in a social guidance centre. If that is impractical, the parent of the juvenile shall choose to place him in the nearest social guidance centre or in a social surveillance centre in the town or region in which he resides or in the nearest social surveillance centre.

(c) Juveniles under the age of 12 who commit a serious offence or who are sentenced to imprisonment for such an offence are placed in a social surveillance centre until the end of the period of arrest or until execution of their sentences.

(d) Special emphasis is placed on the investigating authority working to solve all juvenile cases in general and in particular those involving children under 12 and concluding them without transferring the juvenile to a social surveillance centre, in accordance with the requirements of Council of Minister Decision No. 25 of 26/1/1421 A.H. and the amendments thereto.

(e) The authority responsible for the prosecution of juvenile cases (in particular those involving children under 12) shall ask the judge to consider a sentence alternative to prison.

(f) After five years of implementation of these measures, the Ministry of Social Affairs submitted to His Majesty a comprehensive and detailed report on the benefits achieved and the difficulties encountered and proposals for addressing them.

321. The legislative authorities in the Kingdom are currently completing a draft alternative penalties law which contains a comprehensive legislative treatment that would harmonize the juvenile justice system in particular and penalties in general with the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on alternative penalties. This is in addition to the continuing efforts of the educational, information and judicial authorities to prohibit corporal punishment, including by state institutions such as the police and prisons, and also the family and schools. In addition, several government agencies are studying the juvenile welfare system in order to improve it and address the shortcomings of the system now in force. The draft law also includes the establishment of juvenile courts. The National Commission for Childhood has studied and reviewed the draft of this proposed law and made amendments in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child concerning the Kingdom's second report. These authorities are disseminating the Convention and the observations of the Committee relevant to juveniles so that they are taken into account during preparation of the final draft of this law.

322. In the context of a discussion of continuing efforts to increase the number of juvenile courts and the efficiency of judges, lawyers, police officers and prosecutors, to secure the training of professionals in this field and the training of specialists in the rehabilitation and social integration of children in conflict with the law and in particular those deprived of their liberty, we recall the aforementioned King Abdullah Project for the Development of the Judiciary, the Judiciary Act, and the Act on the Office of Ombudsman and their executive instruments introduced by Royal Decree No. M/78 of 19/9/1428 A.H. to restructure the judicial institutions so that they could perform their duties effectively. The Act provides for the establishment of new courts, the development of the powers and functions of the Supreme Judicial Council, the establishment of the Supreme Court and courts of appeal, and the development of first instance courts such as criminal courts. The criminal courts include chambers for juvenile cases, each consisting of three judges. This is an important step towards achieving the guarantees of a fair trial, since before the promulgation of this Act, the Kingdom had adopted a system of a single judge in juvenile cases.

## Annex

### **Programmes and activities offered by the King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue**

1. National meetings: The Centre organizes periodic national meetings on many topics and issues, which are discussed during several preparatory meetings and final meetings in all the cities and regions of the Kingdom, with the participation of all intellectual constituencies of both sexes. They include some issues of interest to young people, such as the challenges of globalization and cultural openness to and with the other and the potential it holds for extremism or threat to authenticity and identity.

2. Annual national youth dialogue forum: This aims to activate the role of youth and adolescents in volunteer work to spread the culture of dialogue. It has included discussion and volunteer experience sessions, workshops and an accompanying exhibition in which about 700 young people participated from various cities and regions of the Kingdom and some Gulf Arab States.

3. Youth Committee: establishment of a volunteer youth committee to activate the role of youth and adolescents in the 16–25 age group in voluntary work in order to spread the culture of dialogue internally and externally. The work is currently being developed and extended as an independent directorate called the Youth Activities Directorate. Its most significant programmes are the following:

- Travel programmes: This programme aims to achieve understanding between peoples through understanding and accepting other cultures, working to promote common principles, avoiding conflict, and respect for the culture of individuals and the civilization of peoples. It includes regular meetings between Saudi students and their peers from the international schools in the Kingdom. So far 26 dialogues of this kind have been held. The programme reflects the system extending to stimulating the foreign and international participation of groups of young people in forums and conferences that deal with dialogue and cultural exchange. For example, the participation of young people of the Kingdom in the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York to discuss youth issues, and in the Arab Youth Parliament in Cairo in November 2008, the Islamic World Youth Forum organized by ISESCO in Tunis in 2009, and the first Arab-European Young Leaders Conference in Austria in 2009. Youth from the centre have also participated in meetings with foreign delegations, such as meeting a delegation from the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, a delegation of committee chairs and senior assistant legislators of the United States Congress, a meeting with the Dutch bridges organization, and a meeting of international relations and political science students from the University of Pennsylvania and Johns Hopkins University.
- The Bayader volunteer programme: Bayader is a voluntary group of youth interested in spreading the values and culture of moderation, tolerance and dialogue among young people. The programme is for general education and higher education students of both sexes, parents and mosque groups. One of its most prominent projects has been the Caravan of Dialogue, which went to 11 provinces and their villages in the Riyadh region governorates. Around 3,000 general education and university students and their parents benefited. The work is continuing in order to cover the governorates and villages of the rest of the Kingdom.

- Dialogue cafe: This is a monthly dialogue session at which matters that young people are interested in and curious about are discussed. It is run by a professional person from the dialogue directorate or there is discussion with an invited guest.

4. Youth-related Centre publications: Writing and publication of several books, reference manuals and surveys in the area of intellectual dialogue, including, for example, the following works: "The etiquette and principles of dialogue and teaching them to children"; "The educational role of dialogue in protecting youth from intellectual terrorism"; "Educational dialogue"; "The role of the Saudi family in the development of dialogue in children from an Islamic educational perspective"; "The culture of dialogue among female secondary school students in Riyadh and its role in promoting certain ethical values"; "The role of the Islamic education teacher in the development of the capacities for national dialogue among secondary school students"; "The status of dialogue and obstacles to it in the upbringing of children in the Saudi family"; "School dialogue: how do we establish successful school dialogue?" The Centre has also worked on the writing and publication of a series of bulletins on dialogue. These take the form of small booklets of between 40 and 70 pages for youth in particular. Fourteen booklets have been published, including: "Communication skills with children"; "Parents dialogue with their children the 'right of children'"; "Effective dialogue with children". The Centre has also issued a varied collection of short stories with the title "Fun and meaningful dialogue" for children aged between 5 and 16.

5. Bridges Programme: Aims to promote respect for the different religions and civilizations of expatriates in the Kingdom and citizens' interaction with them in a spirit of civilized, constructive dialogue, and to promote noble values among peoples as the children of one planet. Through this programme, more than 40 male and female trainees have been certified for civilizational dialogue, a set of training packages has been completed disseminating the culture of tolerance of the other, and a series of publications for children and young people in the 6 to 15 age group produced, including the following: "We are the children of the planet"; "A bridge between two continents"; "You and I" (a manual for parents and educators on the development of intercultural dialogue); a novel, "Coloured steps"; "Around the world in forty-five minutes".

6. Training in the culture of dialogue: The project aims to impart dialogue skills and the art of dealing with others in all human activities, to reveal the purity of origin of dialogue in Islamic culture, and to correct misconceptions about the culture of dialogue. Thus far the Centre has trained around 3,000 people in various programmes (leadership training, certified trainer, domestic dialogue counsellor, communication skills in dialogue, family dialogue, education and dialogue). Some 900,000 citizens have been trained in these programmes. Training projects spreading the culture of dialogue have benefited many youth bodies inside and outside the Kingdom, for example: a training course on the package "development of communications skills in dialogue" was run in the Kingdom and also in Beirut as part of the cooperation project between the Centre and UNESCO, which offered similar training courses in several Arab States, beginning in 2011. The programmes for youth have included: Dialogue of parents with children; Dialogue of children with parents (Successful dialogue); Educational dialogue (Dialogue of student with teacher).

7. Awareness campaign: The Centre has spread the culture of dialogue in many information and advertising media and global social networking sites targeting youth, such as the Saudi dialogue channel launched by the Centre through You Tube to put young people in touch with officials and ministers through the questions they pose.