



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
3 August 2016
English
Original: Arabic
Arabic and English only

Committee on the Rights of the Child

Seventy-third session

13-30 September 2016

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Consideration of reports of States parties

List of issues in relation to the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Saudi Arabia

Addendum

Replies of Saudi Arabia to the list of issues*


[Date received: 8 June 2016]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

GE.16-13418 (E) 310816 310816



* 1 6 1 3 4 1 8 *

Please recycle 



Introduction

The present document includes the replies and comments of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the list of issues raised by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC/C/SAU/Q/3-4). Its purpose is to facilitate the discussion of the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Saudi Arabia under the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the Committee's seventy-third session, which is due to take place from 10 to 30 September 2016. Numerous legislative and practical measures designed to promote and protect human rights, including the rights of children, have been implemented since the report was submitted and such of those as relate to the Committee's questions will be set forth in this document.

Part I

Reply to paragraph 1 (a)

As stated in paragraph 25 of the periodic report, the National Childhood Strategy in Saudi Arabia acts as a frame of reference which, with the support of the director of National Commission for Childhood, has been operational since 2012-2013. The Strategy, then, is the framework that guides government efforts in favour of children in Saudi Arabia. It fully covers their needs, focusing on the creation of a safe environment capable of ensuring correct development, sound education, effective well-being and complete protection via a harmonized body of legislation, policies and programmes to govern the physical, mental social and emotional aspects of Saudi children over the next 10 years. In accordance with the National Strategy a number of programmes and projects for children have been adopted, the main ones being described below.

A project was launched to draw up a comprehensive national handbook on procedures in cases of neglect and abuse. All relevant governmental and non-governmental bodies participated in the project, which came to fulfilment in 2016 with the publication of the handbook.

Another national project aims to reduce the phenomenon of bullying among peers in State-run schools. The project was launched in 2016 and training has been imparted to around 400 counsellors throughout the country.

A project entitled "Towards a Safe Environment for Children" focuses on personal safety in kindergartens. The project was launched at the beginning of 2016 with the compilation of a training portfolio on child safety and the training of a central group of around 140 female kindergarten supervisors.

A programme has been launched to equip teachers with the skills necessary to detect and intervene early in cases of abuse and neglect. In the period 2015-2016, the project was implemented in 45 regions and has benefited 6,000 student counsellors and 22,000 teachers. It should also be noted that joint projects with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have, on the basis of the National Childhood Strategy, given rise to a series of programmes including: programmes to make the public and specialists more aware of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; a study on the condition of kindergartens in the country; a family and community awareness project on the effects and risks of child abuse; and a study on the current state of children in Saudi Arabia. The King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Public Education Development Project has also been positively affected by many aspects of the National Childhood Strategy, particularly as regards the improvement

of preschool education and the updating of development standards for education in kindergartens.

The National Youth Strategy, which was developed by the Ministry of Economy and Planning in cooperation with other government bodies and institutions, caters for persons between the ages of 15 and 24. If approved, it will be one of the most important youth support initiatives ever undertaken in the country. It will seek to formulate appropriate plans for the present and future of young people, in line with international resolutions and recommendations that urge States to develop national youth policies. The Strategy includes the following goals:

Developing a comprehensive and integrated framework for the development of Saudi Arabian youth, which will respond to their needs and help them to achieve their ambitions, in accordance with national priorities.

Creating a framework and a practical methodology to facilitate the process of moving from theory to practice in areas related to youth.

Creating a practical methodology to help develop a sense of pride in religion, nationality, loyalty to the king and preservation of the country's identity.

Encouraging cooperation and partnership between the organs of State, the institutions of civil society and the private sector through integrated planning and genuine collaboration to define roles and responsibilities towards young people.

Reducing social and regional gaps and improving access to quality services that guarantee equal opportunities and a secure life for young people, regardless of gender, age or class.

Making the National Youth Strategy the basis for research, evaluation and follow-up by developing indicators and benchmarks.

The Strategy, which comprises a number of key themes — education, training, employment, health, culture, media, information and communications technology, recreation and investment in leisure time, good citizenship, community participation and the family — is to be implemented through an executive plan of action clearly setting forth the goals and procedural policies for each of the themes, including the time frame for implementation and performance indicators with which to measure success as well as the financial costs involved. Another aspect of the implementation is that the programmes and activities envisaged by the Strategy will run in five-year periods, thereby dovetailing with the country's tenth five-year development plan. The Strategy is to be evaluated and developed in conformity with new developments and changes affecting young people, both locally and globally.

Reply to paragraph 1 (b)

According to paragraph 33 of the periodic report, the National Human Rights Association is an oversight authority that enjoys financial and administrative independence and is not subject to supervision by any governmental body. Royal Decree No. 605/M of 22 Muharram A.H. 1429 (31 January A.D. 2008), reaffirms the Association's independence and states that the exercise of its functions and the determination and timing of its procedures are matters for it to decide for itself. The National Human Rights Association has independent means and mechanisms for receiving complaints relating to human rights, directly and without external intervention, including allegations of violations of the Convention. It follows up on those complaints in a number of ways such as by making direct appeals to the State bodies concerned and raising the issues in its annual reports and press releases. This is one form of community-based oversight in the country.

Moreover, at a recent general assembly of the National Human Rights Association, in the exercise of its prerogatives under its own statutes, certain amendments were introduced to bring the statutes into line with the Paris Principles. The amendments were adopted at the seventeenth general assembly on 25 Jumada I A.H. 1436 (14 February A.D. 2015).

Reply to paragraph 1 (c)

The children's sector represents one of the chief areas of government spending. It receives funding from a number of ministries including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of the Interior, the Human Rights Commission and others. Those ministries absorb the largest share of the total annual budget and it is the task of the Ministry of Finance to monitor them and other government institutions through an annual audit of their financial statements. This means that there is a high degree of prudent financial management of the resources dedicated to children in Saudi Arabia.

With reference to paragraphs 38-50 of the periodic report, the National Commission for Childhood is responsible for tracking the financial support that Saudi Arabia provides for its joint programmes with UNICEF. That support, which has amounted to US\$ 500,000 annually since 2007, is still being provided. Annual tracking plans are reviewed to ensure that budgets are duly disbursed in accordance with an action plan that aims to promote high quality initiatives and programmes to serve children, in cooperation and coordination with relevant government and private sector bodies in Saudi Arabia.

Reply to paragraph 1 (d)

One of the main challenges in the collection of data and statistics for international treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, lies in the various concepts, mechanisms and ways used to classify figures and data, which differ between one place and another.

In this context, attention should be drawn to Council of Ministers Decree No. 11, dated 13 Muharram A.H. 1437 (26 October A.D. 2015), under which approval was granted for the creation of the Central Department of Statistics. Under the Decree, the new body has legal personality and financial and administrative independence and is part of the Ministry of Economy and Planning. It is responsible for gathering national statistics by setting up and running a comprehensive, precise unified and closely monitored statistical system and by developing the plans and programmes necessary to respond to the statistical requirements of development plans, scientific research and other activities.

Saudi Arabia recognizes the importance of treaty reports, which it sees as an effective instrument and a valuable opportunity to improve the human rights situation in States parties. The timely submission of such reports is part of States parties' obligations under the various treaties. Royal Decree No. 13084, dated 27 Rabi' I A.H. 1436 (18 January A.D. 2015), contained provision for the creation of a standing committee composed of a number of government agencies to prepare the country's reports under the human rights treaties. One of the main tasks of the committee is to gather information and data relevant to the various human rights treaties to which Saudi Arabia is party. The standing committee is currently focusing its efforts on the preparation of a database in which to gather detailed statistical information relevant to those treaties.

Reply to paragraph 1 (e)

The aims of human rights education are set forth in paragraph 276 of the periodic report. In addition, human rights terminology has now been incorporated into the curricula of kindergartens and into State education, while human rights are taught as part of higher education syllabuses or as separate subjects. The subject of international humanitarian law has been integrated into those syllabuses and the Human Rights Commission as well as educational and training institutions also play a part in human rights education. A number of steps have been taken in this regard, most notably:

The construction of a mechanism with a human rights perspective (a code of conduct and attendance in State-run schools), which has the aim of regulating the behaviour of students through education, equipping teaching staff (school principals, teachers, student counsellors and educational supervisors) with specific techniques to regulate student behaviour on the basis of appropriate educational principles, promoting desirable behaviour in students, teaching them self-control and minimizing behavioural problems through the use of all available educational tools.

The incorporation into academic syllabuses of themes derived from human rights standards (such as equality, tolerance and justice) and promoting awareness on those subjects through extracurricular activities.

The organization of university-level courses on the human rights treaties and special courses to train experts in the various different fields of human rights.

The Arab Plan for Human Rights Education (2009-2014), adopted by the League of Arab States, has been issued and will be implemented by the ministries concerned.

The State is benefiting from United Nations programmes and activities related to human rights.

As indicated, concepts and ideas to promote human rights have been introduced into education of all levels, beginning with kindergarten, then primary, middle and secondary schooling all the way up to university.

Reply to paragraph 2

Judicial rulings regarding whether a person is of age are based on certain physiological indicators the presence of which is considered to make a person competent to fulfil his or her religious obligations, dispose of financial assets and be held criminally accountable. This is in line with the caveat included in the definition of a child under article 1 of the Convention. It should be noted that determining whether a person is of age is a doctrinal matter that is open to a degree of interpretation in line with circumstances and considerations that may depend on recent advancements. In fact, a number of child protection laws have been enacted in which the child is defined as anyone who has not yet attained the age of 18. In this matter, Saudi Arabia would like to refer to the Committee's general comment No. 10 of 2007, which considers an age of criminal responsibility of 14-16 years as being high-level and commendable.

As regards the Committee's comments on paragraph 72 of the periodic report, concerning marriageable age, the laws of Saudi Arabia do not specify a particular age for marriage but they do require certain procedures to be carried out in cases where a person has not attained the age of 18 before the marriage contract is concluded. Moreover, according to the implementing regulations of the Child Protection Act, article 16 (3), "before concluding a marriage contract it must be ascertained that the marriage of a person

under the age of 18 will not cause harm to that person and will be in their best interests, be they male or female”.

In cooperation with the King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue, the National Committee on Childhood is currently examining the issue of the early marriage of girls, and a workshop was held in June 2016 at which all relevant stakeholders came together to discuss and examine the issue.

The Human Rights Commission and the National Human Rights Association have been actively attempting to reduce underage marriage in those social contexts where that form of union is permitted. The Association in particular has been acting to raise awareness among individuals about the harmful effects which can arise from such a form of marriage and the resulting psychological, social, family and economic damage.

Reply to paragraph 3

According to article 46 of the Basic Law of Governance, “the judiciary is an independent authority and the decisions of judges are subject to no authority other than that of Islamic sharia”. Under article 1 of the Statutes of the Judiciary, “judges are independent and are subject to no authority other than Islamic sharia and the regulations in force. No one has the right to interfere in the administration of justice.” At the same time, under article 50 of the Basic Law of Governance, “the King or his deputy shall be responsible for the enforcement of judicial rulings”.

No authority in the State has the power to modify or suspend the punishment prescribed for crimes of *qisas* (murder and assault) and crimes of *hudud* (those for which there are specified penalties in the Quran and Sunna), as these are categorically set forth in Islamic sharia and leave no leeway for interpretation. These are reserved for specific offences, which are described along with the penalties and the evidentiary requirements. The principle in the application of *hudud* punishments is that of the sharia principle “seek doubts to avoid punishment”. Pardon may be issued by one or more of the next of kin in *qisas* cases, as their incontestable personal right.

In the penalties for *tazir* cases, which are all those that do not come under *hudud* or *qisas*, consideration is given to the subjective individual circumstances of the offence, while the king is accorded the right to grant pardon. A number of criminal laws contain provisions covering certain *tazir* offences. These include the Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, the Cybercrime Act, the Anti-Money Laundering Act, the Arms and Ammunition Act, the Counterfeiting Act, the Anti-Human Trafficking Act and other pieces of criminal legislation.

Royal Decree No. A/20, dated 7 Safar A.H. 1436 (29 November A.D. 2014) includes provision for the formation of a committee to prepare a draft “compendium of judicial provisions” on legal topics relevant to the judiciary, classified in accordance with the categories of Islamic jurisprudence. The draft compendium includes the codification and classification of offences and punishments.

With regard to the cases mentioned by the Committee, it should be noted that the judiciary in Saudi Arabia is bound by the principle of the legality of offences and penalties. According to article 38 of the Basic Law of Governance, “penalties are personal and there can be no offence and no penalty save with reference to the provisions of sharia or of the law. Penalties can only be imposed for actions subsequent to the enactment of a law.” According to article 3 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, no criminal penalty may be applied against a person save for an action which is forbidden and penalized in sharia or in the law. Thus, the Code incorporates a number of procedural guarantees that regulate the course of criminal proceedings, protect the rights of accused persons and ensure that they

are considered innocent until such time as their guilt is proved by a definitive court judgment issued in compliance with the provisions of the Code and laws relating to the conduct of trials.

Article 4 of the Code of Criminal Procedure gives all accused persons the right to seek the assistance of a legal representative or lawyer to defend them during investigation and trial. Article 70 of the Code prohibits the investigating judge from separating an accused person from his legal representative or lawyer during the investigation, and it contains provision allowing the legal representative or lawyer to submit a written memorandum of comments, which is to be attached to the case file. Under article 84 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, an investigating judge may not seize any paper or document which the accused has entrusted to his legal representatives or lawyers in order to help them carry out their tasks, or any correspondence they may exchange in the course of the case. According to Article 139 of the Code, if an accused person cannot afford to appoint a lawyer of his own, he has the right to request the court to delegate a lawyer to defend him at State expense.

A bill on the protection of juveniles is currently being studied by the Shura Council. It contains comprehensive provisions on the treatment of juveniles and aim to ensure that their rights are upheld and that they are provided with the maximum safeguards during arrest, investigation, trial and the enforcement of the sentence.

In answer to the Committee's question about a minimum age of 18 years at the time of the commission of an offence, and with reference to paragraph 58 of the periodic report, judicial rulings regarding whether or not a person is of age are based on certain physiological indicators the presence of which is considered to make a person competent to fulfil his or her religious obligations, dispose of financial assets and be held criminally accountable. If a child commits an offence, he or she is dealt with in accordance with the age ranges of criminal responsibility for children in Islamic sharia: before children reach the age of discrimination (7 years) they bear no criminal responsibility and face no criminal or disciplinary penalties although they are not exempt from civil liability; between the ages of 7 and 15 children face disciplinary but not criminal responsibility and they are not considered recidivist no matter how many times they are disciplined; children who have reached the age of 15 and commit a *qisas* or *hudud* offence face *qisas* or *hudud* penalties depending upon their offence although the penalty is not enforced until they reach the age of 18.

Reply to paragraph 4

In addition to the information contained in paragraph 75 of the periodic report, it should be noted that the laws of Saudi Arabia, which are derived from Islamic sharia, enjoin complementary equality between men and women while taking account of the characteristics and features that are specific to either gender and that differentiate them from one another. In the end, justice is done and Saudi Arabia is confident that the complementarity of the relationship between the sexes is the best way to promote human rights, including the rights of women, and to prevent any discrimination against them. The laws of Saudi Arabia do not contain any distinctions, exclusions or restrictions to attenuate or prevent the recognition of the human rights and freedom of women in any area.

The laws of Saudi Arabia impose equality and forbid discrimination. According to article 26 of the Basic Law of Governance, "the State shall protect human rights in accordance with Islamic sharia" while under article 8, "governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is based on justice, consultation and equality under Islamic sharia law". In order to ensure that these and other principles are respected, there are a number of oversight and redress mechanisms chief among them the judiciary itself, which is the principal

guarantor of human rights and non-discrimination, including the rights of women. The Basic Law of Governance also enshrines the principle of equality before the law for all persons without discrimination. In fact, according to article 47 of the Basic Law, “all people, either citizens or residents of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, have an equal right to take legal action”.

One example of the promotion of equality in national law is to be found in article 2 of the Health Act, which stipulates that “the Act is designed to ensure the delivery of comprehensive, integrated health care to the entire population in a fair, affordable and regulated manner”. According to article 5 of the Code of Practice for Health Professionals, “health practitioners shall carry out their duties in the interests of the individual and of society. At the same time, they shall respect the human rights to life, safety and dignity, take account of the prevailing customs and traditions in Saudi Arabia and abstain from exploitation.”

The tenth development plan — A.H. 1436 to 1440 (A.D. 2015 to 2019) — has the aim of strengthening national unity while helping to promote equality and combat discrimination. This embraces the following policy objectives:

- Instilling values of citizenship and a sense of belonging to the nation among all groups in society
- Promoting the concept of moderation and intellectual dialogue and underscoring its role in the resolution of issues affecting the nation
- Promoting the principles of justice and equality and instilling them deeply in all social groups
- Raising awareness about human rights and their protection in the light of Islamic sharia.

Efforts have been made to disseminate knowledge about women’s rights. Government bodies have cooperated with civil society organizations to launch a national campaign to raise awareness among women about the laws and procedures in place to protect their rights, particularly in the field of social services and the procedures related to the registration of marriages, divorces, births, etc. In parallel efforts, other charitable organizations and associations, such as the “Mawaddah Association for the Reduction of Divorce and its Effects” have been implementing volunteer programmes to provide legal, social and psychological counselling to women. Thanks to its legal incubator programme, the Mawaddah Association has managed to train 180 legal counsellors in how to plead cases, provide legal advice on personal status issues and give free legal counselling to the Association’s beneficiaries. Moreover, in coordination with the Ministry of Justice, the Association has opened legal support offices within personal status courts in Riyadh, Mecca, Medina and Dammam, where experts provide free legal counselling to help the parties understand the procedures involved in legal cases, prepare the case file and understand the relevant legislation. Between the time they first opened, on 24 Jumada II A.H. 1436, and 4 Jumada II A.H. 1437, legal support offices provided legal services to more than 8,449 persons in more than 11,690 cases.

On the subject of the Committee’s request for clarification concerning male guardianship of women and girls, Saudi Arabia would like to underline the fact that there is no male guardianship of women in respect of the rights mandated to them under Islamic sharia. Certain principles are imposed for the protection of women, principles that some persons consider to be a violation of their rights such as *qawama* and *wilaya*. If those principles are misused, women have the right to seek redress before the bodies defined in national law, chief among them the judiciary.

On the subject of gender segregation, what the Committee calls segregation between men and women is limited to certain specific areas, such as teaching facilities and the workplace, and is a response to prevalent religious and social values. Those values are a right that must be safeguarded and protected and they do not lead to any attenuation or denial of the fundamental rights and freedoms of women. This cannot, therefore, be considered as discrimination against women under the definition contained in article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

As regards dress, the laws of Saudi Arabia do not require women to wear a specific type of clothing; they merely prohibit women from appearing in public without the hijab, which is a requirement of Islamic sharia. The principle that has to be applied is that of wearing clothing that covers those parts of a woman's body that must, according to sharia, be covered. The choice of the particular kind of hijab is left up to the woman herself. The issue is a religious one that concerns the cultural status of women, which is a cultural characteristic in all societies and must be respected, just as the cultural diversity of all civilizations must be respected and promoted. This is enshrined in the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and in Human Rights Council resolution 21/3 of 20 September 2012.

Reply to paragraph 5

With reference to paragraphs 92-95 of the periodic report, the underlying basis for the Saudi Arabian Citizenship Act is that children acquire the nationality of their parents. The Act also adheres to the principle of single rather than dual nationality, as is the case in the laws of many other States. In all cases, legislation in Saudi Arabia follows the principle of the best interests of the child. The Citizenship Act and its implementing regulations regulate all the issues and procedures that may arise in the conferral of Saudi Arabian citizenship to the persons to whom it is due, without discrimination on the basis of sex. In the case of children born to a Saudi Arabian mother and a foreign father the following rules apply:

- If the nationality of the father is unknown or he has no nationality, the children are considered to be Saudi Arabian, in accordance with article 7 of the Citizenship Act.
- If the nationality of the foreign father is known, the children acquire his nationality. On reaching the age of 18 they may, if they were born in Saudi Arabia and fulfil the requisite conditions, apply for Saudi Arabian nationality, in accordance with article 8 of the Citizenship Act.

Children born to a Saudi Arabian mother and a foreign father have the right to work in the private sector without any transfer of sponsorship. Moreover, they receive the same treatment as citizens in terms of education and medical treatment and they are considered on a par with Saudi Arabian nationals in private sector employment, in accordance with Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 406 of 27 Dhu'lhijjah A.H. 1433 (12 November A.D. 2012).

The laws of Saudi Arabia impose, without discrimination, the requirement that all births be immediately registered. A number of measures have been put in place to safeguard and facilitate the registration process irrespective of the child's place of birth or gender, the nationality or occupation of the parents or the circumstances of the birth. These provisions apply to all births in Saudi Arabia. The Civil Status Act, issued pursuant to Royal Decree No. M/7 on 20 Rabi' II A.H. 1407 (23 December A.D. 1986) contains provision relevant to the acquisition and termination of legal personality. According to article 8 of the Act, "The registration of events involving Saudi Arabian nationals and foreigners shall include a

register of births, a register of deaths and a register of marriages and divorces. Registers of other events involving Saudi Arabian nationals and foreigners may be added by decree of the Minister of the Interior.” Moreover, according to the implementing regulations of the Child Protection Act, article 18 (2): “Each child is to be issued with a health card. The information on the card shall be copied into the register of relevant medical centre and the card consigned to the child’s parent or guardian. The card is then to be presented whenever the child has to undergo a medical test in a primary care centre, health unit or other structure. The card will testify to the child’s state of health and act as a record of the type and date of any vaccinations.”

Reply to paragraph 6

All citizens of Saudi Arabia are Muslims and there are no religious minorities in the strict sense of the term. People who come to Saudi Arabia for business, work or a visit come only temporarily then return to their country of origin. With reference to paragraphs 98 and 99 of the periodic report, freedom of worship for non-Muslims in the country is guaranteed by law and in practice in their private homes. Instructions and regulations have been issued allowing non-Muslim residents in Saudi Arabia to carry out their religious rites in their own homes and inside the buildings of diplomatic missions, and those instructions have been circulated to all relevant bodies. Furthermore, housing complexes have been built to allow non-Muslim residents to practise their religions. It must be stressed that Islamic sharia forbids any expression of contempt or abuse for religious beliefs and insists that reverence be shown towards all prophets and messengers, peace be upon them. Anyone shown to have acted at variance with those norms is held accountable.

The Ministry of Education conducts oversight to ensure that educational services are provided in schools without discrimination. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs has launched a comprehensive programme designed to promote moderation and combat fanaticism and extremism, organizing a total of 29,951 seminars and 30 specialized courses that have benefited 2,515 imams and preachers. An agreement has also been concluded with the King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue to train around 40,000 imams of mosques. Moreover, there are no discriminatory stereotypes in school curricula.

State-run schools are accessible to everyone, as are private schools, and there are many foreign schools throughout the country.

In addition to the information contained in paragraphs 316-320 of the periodic report, it should be noted that no child has been sentenced for apostasy.

Reply to paragraph 7

The Royal Decree referred to in the Committee’s question was issued on 22 Muharram A.H. 1435 (25 November A.D. 2013) and concerns the Code of Criminal Procedure. For a reply to the question, please refer to the reply to paragraph 3 of the list of issues.

Reply to paragraph 8

As stated in paragraphs 144 to 160 of the periodic report, concerning legislative and regulatory measures to reduce domestic violence and violence against children, a number of laws have been enacted to strengthen the legal framework that protects human rights from violence. The enactment of the Protection from Abuse Act, which is referred to in the report, was followed by the issue of its implementing regulations pursuant to Decree No. 43047 of

the Minister of Labour and Social Development, dated 8 Jumada I A.H. 1435 (9 March A.D. 2014). The regulations define the mechanisms through which the Act is to be implemented, the role of the relevant institutions in preventing abuse and the penalties for any infractions.

Under the Protection from Abuse Act, anyone who learns of an act of abuse must report it immediately. Moreover, the Act includes a special provision under which all public officials, both civil and military, as well as persons working in charitable organizations, who, in the course of their duties, learn of an act of abuse, must report it forthwith to the institution for which they work, which must in turn report it to the relevant authorities or the police. The Act also prohibits revealing the identity of a person who reports abuse except in circumstances set forth in the implementing regulations or if that person gives their consent. The regulations describe the mechanisms through which the Act is to be implemented. These include: the obligation for all public or private bodies immediately to notify the Ministry of Labour and Social Development or the police about any case of abuse that may come to their attention or that is reported to them; the creation of a centre to receive reports of abuse; and the publication of circular No. 487/T of the Ministry of Labour, dated 19 Jumada I A.H. 1435, containing guidance for judges on the measures to be taken when learning of cases of domestic abuse. Moreover, the Code of Practice for Health Professionals, issued pursuant to Royal Decree No. M/59 in A.H. 1426 (A.D. 2005), imposes an obligation on health workers to report any injuries consistent with criminal assault, pursuant to article 11 of the Code.

Royal Decree No. M/14, approving the Child Protection Act, was issued on 3 Safar A.H. 1436. The Act serves to underscore and confirm provisions to uphold children's rights and protect them from all forms of abuse and neglect, as set forth in Islamic sharia and the law, and in the international treaties to which Saudi Arabia is party. The implementing regulations of the Act were issued pursuant to Decree No. 56386 of the Minister of Labour and Social Development, dated 16 Jumada II A.H. 1435, while the General Directorate for Social Protection was set up pursuant to Ministerial Decree No. 1/10771/SH, dated 1 Rabi' I A.H. 1425. The latter provides services for domestic violence victims, including children under the age of 18 and women of any age.

A centre for receiving reports of domestic violence has been opened with a single telephone number, 1919, while protection teams, which also receive reports, have been formed in all the regions and governorates of the country. Reports are treated very seriously and can lead to the authorities contacting victims and providing them with protection and shelter while perpetrators are arrested and brought to justice.

Efforts have been made to raise awareness in this regard, and the Act and its implementing regulations have been widely disseminated, both through traditional media outlets and via social media. Workshops have also been organized to train specialists and interested laypersons and to give them the skills necessary to play their role in putting the Act and its regulations into effect.

With reference to paragraphs 311 and 313 of the periodic report, child victims of sexual assault are treated with particular solicitude and given shelter and rehabilitation. Sexual assault of any kind is a crime under Islamic sharia and demands the severest punishment as it represents an assault on honour, which is one of the five essentials that the sharia seeks to protect. It is therefore considered to be a serious offence under the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the penalty is redoubled if the victim is a child. It is completely untrue that victims of sexual assault are themselves blamed.

The allegation that police request women and girls to obtain their male guardian's permission to lodge complaints is completely untrue and not in line with the laws of Saudi Arabia. Anyone who takes individual actions in that regard will be held accountable in accordance with national laws and directives.

As regards the case mentioned in in the Committee's question, it should be noted that the laws of Saudi Arabia and the mechanisms by which they are implemented act together to ensure that there is no impunity. The case in question is still before the courts.

Reply to paragraph 9

The laws of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia guarantee the right to life, survival and development for all children in the country without discrimination. They accord special attention to children most in need, regardless of gender, colour, race or creed, such as orphans, children with disabilities, children of unknown parentage, children born out of wedlock and children deprived of the care of one or both parents, or of other relatives, owing to death, separation, the ill-health of the mother or any other circumstance. Care is regulated by legislation and delivered through systems and institutions that offer shelter and through foster families. Under article 7 of the Child Protection Act, children who lack an appropriate family environment and are at risk of abuse or neglect have the right to alternative care in a foster family or, if no such family is available, in social welfare institutions run by the Government, civil society or charitable organizations. Thus, social, psychological, health and vocational care is provided to children whose circumstances prevent them being raised in their natural families, thereby ensuring that they can enjoy a sound upbringing and compensating them for the love and affection they have lost.

The natural family is the first choice as it provides an appropriate nurturing environment for the care of orphan children. The solution of placing children in residential care is considered as a last resort, to be employed only after inquiries have revealed that none of the relatives can provide a family environment and that no foster family is available. The *Kafalah* Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs oversees the provision of the following alternatives:

- The foster family programme: This allows families to provide comprehensive permanent care for orphans, thereby giving them the psychological security and emotional fulfilment they need and instilling them with exemplary social models and values. Thus, the orphan becomes a member of the foster family in accordance with the relevant legal dispositions.
- The friendly family programme: This programme is designed to cater for orphans who have not had the opportunity to be taken in by a foster family. They can be looked after on a part-time basis by natural families wishing to undertake that task. The family, which is associated with one or more orphans living in a care home, takes the orphan into its home as a guest for a set period of time, such as 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.

All children in alternative or foster families, or in social care institutions, are educated in State-run schools, it being one of the objectives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development to integrate children into society. However, in the case of correctional institutions such as social surveillance centres, and the institution for the care of girls, education is delivered through special schools attached to those institutions. Those schools, which are overseen by the Ministry of Education, apply the same curricula and educational standards as State-run schools.

Reply to paragraph 10

With reference to paragraph 236 of the periodic report, efforts are under way to ensure that basic education is obligatory for all children. National policy is to consider

education as a central right and cornerstone of human rights, including the rights of children, and education in Saudi Arabia, including kindergarten, is provided free of charge. Achieving equal educational opportunities between citizens and residents is a vital issue, one that reflects the efforts being made to achieve equality of all children. Council of Ministers Decree No. 139 of 26 Rabi' II A.H. 1425 (14 June A.D. 2004) made education compulsory for all children aged between 6 and 15 years with no distinction between the children of Saudi Arabian citizens and foreign residents. Responsibility for the implementation of that decree lies with the Ministry of Education.

The interruption of a child's education by the father or person responsible for rearing the child, or the person acting in their stead, is considered to be a form of child abuse under the Child Protection Act.

Under the implementing regulations of the Child Protection Act, article 9 (3): "Each child has the right to education and it is incumbent upon the competent authorities to take the steps necessary to facilitate that end. No administrative procedures may prevent the acceptance and enrolment of a child in school while every effort must be made to prevent pupils dropping out and to encourage them to attend school regularly." Under the regulations, the father or person responsible for rearing the child, or the person acting in their stead, must enrol the child in school and they are forbidden from then causing that child's education to be interrupted. The administration of the school in which the child is enrolled must make inquiries into the cause of any interruption and report the matter to the authorities. The Ministry of Education has decreed that education is compulsory from the age of 6 years, for both sexes without discrimination. Girls have the right to access educational opportunities and everything associated with their natural, family, social and practical needs.

As regards the right of girls to participate in recreational activities and sports, a committee has been formed to study the situation of women's sports in Saudi Arabia. Sports centres and clubs have been set up in different parts of the country where women can carry out sporting and recreational activities. Furthermore, a number of schools and universities have sections where girls can practise sports and physical exercise.

In answer to the concern expressed by the Committee about the negative stereotyping of women in school curricula, it should be pointed out that school curricula contain no negative stereotypes about either sex. Moreover, the Ministry of Education works on the curricula to develop them, ensure their quality and adapt them to changes in modern life, while efforts are currently under way on a new draft of the Education Act. Article 153 of the Policy on Education is not at odds with human rights. Quite the contrary, a sound Islamic education requires that human rights be respected, protected and promoted. The principles set forth in that article reaffirm the principle of equality based on complementarity between men and women, which has been referred to before in the course of these replies. The areas in which women can work, as defined in the article, are not exhaustive. Anyone who follows the situation of Saudi Arabian women in regard to work will know that they are active in many different fields including: the Shura Council, the legal profession, the military, the diplomatic service and Saudi Arabian delegations to international and regional organizations, etc. Women have, in fact, held high-level decision-making positions.

Reply to paragraph 11

Article 3 of the Residence Act sets forth the procedures and conditions whereby persons can enter national territory, both in ordinary conditions and under compelling circumstances. Saudi Arabia affords humanitarian treatment to persons who seek refuge on its national territory from armed conflicts or human rights abuses such as torture and

natural disasters, in accordance with the tenets of Islamic sharia, national legislation and traditional Arabic values. Since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis, Saudi Arabia has taken in around 2.5 million Syrian nationals. It has been careful not to treat them as refugees or place them in refugee camps but has sought to preserve their dignity and well-being and to grant them complete freedom of movement. Those who wish to remain in the country — and they number in the hundreds of thousands — have been granted regular residency on an equal footing with other residents, and they consequently have the same rights to access free health care, the job market and education. Currently, more than 100,000 Syrian students enjoy free education in Saudi Arabia, which is also providing material and moral support and care to millions of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and others, in coordination with host country Governments and international humanitarian relief organizations.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, may God preserve him, has issued a directive for measures to be taken to regularize the status of Yemenis unlawfully resident in Saudi Arabia. Such persons are granted a six-month visa, renewable once they obtain travel documents from the legitimate Government of their country, and they are allowed to work in accordance with regulations laid down by the competent authorities. Steps to regularize their status have begun, they have been afforded the necessary facilities and the status of more than 200,000 persons from the Republic of Yemen has now been regularized.

The status of the Myanmar (Burmese) community has also been regularized by granting them normal residence permits free of charge and full access to social, health and education services, in addition to job opportunities. Through the Ministry of Labour, institutions and companies have been given incentives to encourage the recruitment of Burmese workers. In 2015 the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) commended this initiative on the part of Saudi Arabia, affirming that it is a pioneering experiment which could profitably be extended to other countries.

Although it has not acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, Saudi Arabia nevertheless plays an important humanitarian role in mitigating the refugee problems that affect many parts of the world due to ethnic strife, war, disasters and conflict. To that end, it cooperates with a number of organizations and bodies, including UNHCR. In fact, on 22 June 1993, Saudi Arabia signed a memorandum of understanding with UNHCR concerning consultation and collaboration on all issues relating to the welfare of refugees in the host country, support for the Saudi Arabian Government in its efforts to organize and provide humanitarian assistance to refugees in the country and close collaboration with the Government and consultation with other Governments and relevant international organizations on finding a definitive solution to the refugee problem.

Reply to paragraph 12

Saudi Arabia has made significant efforts to combat human trafficking and protect victims. It has enacted laws and developed mechanisms for implementation and follow-up while at the same time focusing on the preventive and educational aspects of the issue through campaigns, training courses and workshops to make people more aware of the dangers of human trafficking. Tangible results have been achieved through the work of the Standing Committee on Trafficking in Persons, which cooperates with both national and international bodies, and through a series of activities and events involving various sectors of society, which have addressed legal and procedural aspects and have helped to monitor and resolve a number of cases, in accordance with national law.

It should be noted that national law forbids the forced or compulsory labour of children or their employment in harmful sporting activities such as camel racing. Article 13 of the Child Protection Act prohibits the participation of children in races or in sporting and recreational activities that endanger their health or safety. Moreover, according to the implementing regulations of the Act, article 13 (2), it is prohibited to allow children to participate in races or in sporting and recreational activities that endanger their health or safety, such as camel racing or similar activities. The obligation to ensure that the prohibition is respected falls to the competent authorities. Oversight in this regard is the responsibility of governmental and non-governmental bodies, such as the Human Rights Commission and the National Society for Human Rights.

The Child Protection Act is the legal framework that safeguards the interests of all persons under the age of 18. Its objective is to tackle abuse and neglect of any kind that children may suffer in the environment in which they live and to protect the rights of minors in accordance with Islamic sharia, national law and the international treaties to which Saudi Arabia is party. The Act criminalizes a number of actions that are considered to be forms of abuse or neglect of children. They include ill-treatment, harassment and exploitation, abusive language injurious to a child's dignity or discrimination on the grounds of race, social class or economic status. According to article 4 of the Act, children are considered to be at risk of delinquency in any of the following cases: if they are involved in begging or engage in unlawful acts, if they are not under the authority of their parents or guardians, if they habitually run away from home, if they habitually sleep in places not intended for habitation, if they frequent socially or morally suspect places or if they work in connection with prostitution, debauchery, gambling or drugs. Sexual exploitation of children and trafficking in children for criminality and begging are prohibited under article 9 of the Act.

Under Decree No. 4786 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, dated 28 Dhu'l-hijjah A.H. 1436 (11 October A.D. 2015), persons who employ children under the age of 15 in violation of article 167 of the Labour Act face a fine of 20,000 Saudi Arabian riyals (SRI). A fine of SRI 20,000 is likewise imposed if the juveniles are employed in dangerous work or hazardous industries or during the night, as prohibited under article 163 of the Labour Code, or if they are employed for more than the number of daily hours set down in article 164, or during periods of weekly rest or on official holidays.

Statistics compiled by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development reveal no instances of the exploitation of children in slavery-like conditions. It should be noted, moreover, that the laws of Saudi Arabia do not allow children to be employed in domestic service.

In answer to the Committee's question about the measures taken to address the trafficking and economic and sexual exploitation of female domestic workers, Saudi Arabia considers it to fall outside the scope of the Convention, as the employment of female domestic workers under the age of 18 is, in any case, prohibited.

With regard to the matter of enabling foreign female domestic workers freely to leave their employer and visit their children living abroad, the relationship between the employer and the domestic worker is regulated by a contract of employment. Article 10 of the rules governing domestic employment states that domestic workers are entitled to one month's paid holiday if they have completed two years in service and intend to renew their contract for a similar period. According to article 15 of the rules, "if the contract comes to an end or if it is terminated by the employer for unlawful reasons or by the domestic worker for lawful reasons, the employer is required to defray the costs of returning the domestic worker to his or her country of origin". If any dispute arises on this point, the domestic worker may have recourse to one of the commissions for resolving domestic service disputes, which are located in all regions of the country and carry out their activities each

within its own territorial jurisdiction, pursuant to Decree No. 1/1/207 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, dated 16 Muharram A.H. 1435.

Reply to paragraph 13

What the Committee refers to as “street children” do not exist in Saudi Arabia. The Government has established homes to provide support, protection and care to child beggars and street vendors, both residents and persons who are in contravention of the Residence Act. The establishment of the homes is the first step towards the systematization of efforts to support vulnerable children — both victims and potential victims of human trafficking — in line with international standards. The homes play a vital role in the provision of social services to victims, acting as safe spaces in which they can overcome the psychological and physical effects of the neglect, violence or persecution they may have suffered. The Standing Committee on Trafficking in Persons coordinates with the competent authorities to help all victims of human trafficking and provides assistance in various forms such as health and psychological care and integrated aid services.

Numerous actions have been taken to combat the phenomenon of begging among children. These include making the family pledge that there will be no repetition (as a punitive measure) and undertaking a study of the family’s situation to discover the reasons behind such behaviour and institute remedial action (as a curative measure). The number of beggars recorded in the year A.H. 1436 (A.D. 2014/15) was 12,429 of whom 87 per cent were not citizens of Saudi Arabia. Children represented 34 per cent of the total.

Reply to paragraph 14

What happened in the Republic of Yemen was an overthrow of legitimacy by the Houthi movement and the forces of the deposed President Saleh, which are acting outside the law. In response to a request from the legitimate Yemeni Government, a military coalition was formed among a number of Arab States under the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in accordance with article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. Moreover, in the preamble of Security Council resolution 2216 (2015), the Council reaffirms its strong commitment to the unity, sovereignty and people of Yemen and its recognition of the legitimate Government. The Council goes on to condemn the uprising, calls on the parties immediately to withdraw their forces from all areas they have seized and to cease all actions that are exclusively within the authority of the legitimate Government of Yemen. Furthermore, it should be noted that all actions by the forces of the Coalition to Support Legitimacy are undertaken in strict accordance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. All locations targeted by Coalition forces are either military sites or installations that are being used for military purposes. The identification of such locations involves precise procedures to ensure that the intelligence is accurate, and they are not targeted without firm confirmation about their characteristics. The targeting of the locations does not result in damage to civilians or to civilian sites. All military operations by the Coalition forces are carried out on the basis of plans and orders, which are adopted in advance, and they are in line with the provisions of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, most importantly that of not targeting civilians; health care, educational, religious or cultural institutions; diplomatic missions; evacuation sites or infrastructure. Each operation is followed by a comprehensive review and any findings are examined and addressed through the relevant procedures.

A team has been formed to assess and investigate any incidents involving forces of the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen. The team institutes inquiries into any operation alleged to have involved violations of international humanitarian law or

international human rights law. It should be noted, furthermore, that the Houthi militias, the forces loyal to the ousted President Saleh and terrorist groups have been responsible for the deliberate bombing of civilian sites and the deaths of civilians both during and after airstrikes and have attempted to lay those horrific crimes at the door of the forces of the Coalition. Statistics on the number of civilians and children allegedly killed by airstrikes ascribed to the forces of the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen, as contained in reports produced by United Nations mechanisms and NGOs, are inaccurate and not drawn from reliable sources.

Reply to paragraph 15

The draft law on alternative penalties is still being considered in the context of a draft compendium of judicial rulings.

Regarding the allegation about the arrest of 61 children, Saudi Arabia can state that no one is arrested unless they have committed a criminal act. Participation in such acts is not considered to constitute legal grounds for arrest unless the person concerned has committed a prohibited act for which they are criminally liable.

Replies to Part II of the list of issues

Reply to paragraph (a)

1. The Child Protection Act

The main purpose of the Act, which was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/14 of 3 Safar A.H. 1436 (25 November A.D. 2014), is to establish a system to protect all persons under the age of 18 and to tackle abuse and neglect of any kind that children may suffer in the environment in which they live, in accordance with the rights of minors under Islamic sharia, national law and the international treaties to which Saudi Arabia is party, or in the cases set forth in the implementing regulations of the Act, which were issued pursuant to Decree No. 56386 of the Minister of Labour and Social Development, dated 16 Jumada II A.H. 1435.

2. The Labour Act

The Act, which was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/51 of 23 Sha'ban A.H. 1426 and amended pursuant to Royal Decree No. M/46 of 5 Jumada II A.H. 1436, dedicates an entire chapter to the employment of juveniles. The implementing regulations of the Act, which were issued pursuant to Decree No. 1982 of the Minister of Labour and Social Development, dated 28 Jumada II A.H. 1437, incorporate a number of provisions to give effect to those parts of the Act that deal with juveniles.

3. The implementing regulations of the Protection from Abuse Act

The implementing regulations of the Protection from Abuse Act were issued pursuant to Decree No. 43047 of the Minister of Labour and Social Development, dated 8 Jumada I A.H. 1435. The Act is an important piece of national legislation intended both to address and to provide protection against the various forms of abuse that may be experienced by different groups in society. The regulations include provision for the implementation of the parts of the Act that describe how assistance and treatment are to be delivered. They also focus on the provision of shelter and social, psychological and health care to victims, define the procedural mechanisms in place to ensure that perpetrators are

brought to justice and punished and address how to raise awareness about abuse and its effects in society. Moreover, the regulations seek to tackle those behavioural phenomena that tend to create an environment favourable to abuse. Finally, another part of the regulations focuses on how to ensure that persons witnessing abuse fulfil their obligation to report it, including the obligation of civil and military officials and persons working in charitable organizations who learn of an act of abuse in the course of their duties, to report it forthwith to the institution for which they work.

4. The Civil Associations and Institutions Act

The Act, which was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/8 of 19 Safar A.H. 1437 (1 December A.D. 2015), aims to promote, regulate and protect the work of civil society, contribute to the development of the nation, encourage citizens to participate in the management and development of their communities, support a culture of voluntary work and achieve social solidarity.

5. The draft Juvenile Act

A bill on the protection of juveniles is currently being considered. It includes comprehensive provisions regulating the treatment of young people to ensure that their rights are upheld and that they are provided with maximum safeguards.

In addition to legislative measures, a number of royal orders and decrees of the Council of Ministers also help to reinforce the human rights framework, notably the following:

(a) Royal Order No. A/20 of 7 Safar A.H. 1436 (29 November A.D. 2014), which includes provision to establish a committee of experts charged with preparing a draft compendium of legal rulings on matters relevant to the judiciary, classified in accordance with the categories of Islamic jurisprudence.

(b) Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 406 of 27 Dhu'lhijjah A.H. 1433 (12 November A.D. 2012), under which children born to a Saudi Arabian mother and a foreign father can have their guardianship transferred to the mother, if the children are in Saudi Arabia, and the mother has the right to bring the children into Saudi Arabia if they are outside the country. Under the Decree, the State meets the cost of the children's residency and grants them the right to work in the private sector without having to transfer their sponsorship. Moreover, they receive the same treatment as citizens in terms of education and medical treatment and they are considered on a par with Saudi Arabian nationals in private sector employment. Moreover, Saudi Arabian women married to foreign men can bring their husband into Saudi Arabia if he is outside the country, or transfer his sponsorship to themselves if he is already resident in the country and so wishes. He too can work in the private sector on condition that he is in possession of a recognized passport.

(c) Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 192 of 3 Jumada II A.H. 1431 (17 May A.D. 2010), containing regulations that aim to address and regulate the status of Saudi Arabian children abroad who have a Saudi Arabian father and a foreign mother.

Reply to paragraph (b)

1. The Job Creation and Anti-Unemployment Agency

The Agency was established pursuant to Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 535 of 29 Dhu'lhijjah A.H. 1436 (12 October A.D. 2015). It has legal personality, is financially and administratively independent and is answerable to the director of the Council of Economic Affairs and Development. Its role is to generate employment and combat

unemployment in Saudi Arabia in coordination with government agencies and private sector institutions that operate in the labour market, promoting cooperation between those bodies and working to develop job creation sectors.

2. The Central Department of Statistics

This was established pursuant to Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 11 of 13 Muharram A.H. 1437. It has legal personality, is financially and administratively independent and is answerable to the Minister of Economy and Planning. It is responsible for gathering national statistics by setting up and running a comprehensive, precise unified and closely monitored statistical system and by developing the plans and programmes necessary to respond to the statistical requirements of development plans, scientific research and other activities.

3. The Saudi Arabian Bar Association

The Association came into being pursuant to Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 317 of 8 Sha'ban A.H. 1436 (27 April A.D. 2015), its objective being to promote the role of lawyers. The Association, which has a general assembly composed of all licensed lawyers in Saudi Arabia, serves to regulate the legal profession and to support and promote the role of lawyers in protecting human rights.

4. The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre

The Centre, which specializes in international humanitarian relief work, was established on 24 Rajab A.H. 1436 (12 May A.D. 2015). It operates via a series of programmes based on the most up-to-date global models and extends the role played by the relief and aid programmes that Saudi Arabia already provides to mitigate the suffering of stricken communities and help them live a decent life. The objective is to unify and harmonize the country's foreign relief operations and to coordinate between all actors operating in that sector (both governmental and non-governmental). The Centre's most important aid effort consists in the charitable programmes being run through its "Restore Hope" operation to assist the people of Yemen.

Reply to paragraph (c)

1. The tenth development plan

The tenth development plan — A.H. 1436 to 1440 (A.D. 2015 to 2019) — includes a number of objectives and policies that aim to promote and protect human rights. This serves to reinforce the link between development and human rights, the one being a fundamental component of the other as set forth in the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development, and embraces the following policy objectives

- Promoting national unity: This includes a number of policies the chief ones to reinforce the concept of mediation and dialogue and the principles of justice, equality and the protection of human rights.
- Empowering women and increasing their participation in various aspects of development: This involves empowering women socially, economically and administratively.
- Promoting institutional reform, supporting civil society organizations improving the efficiency and productivity of State institutions and officials.
- Improving the efficiency of public services and facilities and increasing their effectiveness throughout the country.

- Providing high-quality, comprehensive and integrated health care to all inhabitants and facilitating access thereto.
- Facilitating citizens' access to suitable housing via a range of programmes and options that respond to demand.
- Providing sufficient suitable job opportunities for the national workforce and curbing unemployment.
- Improving social security networks and family and child support services.
- Achieving balanced development in all regions of the country.
- Instilling principles of accountability, transparency and integrity and combating corruption.
- Developing cultural activity and the media. This includes supporting the publication, translation and production of books and enriching the cultural assets of public libraries.

2. The Saudi Arabian Vision 2030

On 25 April A.D. 2016, Saudi Arabia unveiled its Vision 2030, which encompasses development plans and programmes covering a broad range of economic and social sectors. The aim of Vision 2030 is to make Saudi Arabia a successful and innovative model at the world level in many different fields. A number of mechanisms have been put into place to implement the project, notably a government restructuring programme, a “views and approaches” programme, a legislative review programme, performance indicators and a programme of national transformation. Not only is the Vision closely linked to human rights — as the goals it aims to achieve would necessarily have a positive effect on the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia — but it also explicitly incorporates a number of human rights such as the right to security, to health, to education, to work and to protection of the family. Furthermore, it contains provision to empower women, promote participation in political and public life, encourage freedom of association and the right to participate in cultural life and in sporting and leisure activities.

3. The National Transformation Programme

The need for a programme of national transformation emerged as a way to build the capacities and aptitudes necessary to realize the goals of the Saudi Arabian Vision 2030. The programme, which in its first year has involved 24 government institutions operating in the economic and development fields, focuses on a number of strategic objectives with various targets to be reached in phases up to 2020. The first phase of initiatives was launched in 2016 and will be followed by other annual phases involving other institutions. The programme seeks to recognize challenges and seize opportunities innovatively and has adopted effective mechanisms for planning, galvanizing private sector participation and evaluating performance. It has set phased targets for the Vision's strategic goals, laying operative foundations for sustainable governmental efforts by using innovative methods of planning, implementation and follow-up at the national level.

Reply to paragraph (d)

Saudi Arabia regularly examines the issue of its accession to international and regional human rights treaties to which it is not already party.

Replies to Part III of the list of issues

Efforts will be made to gather the necessary data in order to ensure — to the extent possible — that it is available for the Committee's examination of the periodic report.

Conclusion

Saudi Arabia trusts that the answers it has submitted will pave the way for a constructive dialogue with the Committee on the Rights of the Child and hopes that effective dialogue with the Committee will contribute to a fuller understanding of the country's combined third and fourth periodic reports and the contents of this document.
