



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
27 January 2026
English
Original: Arabic
Arabic, English, French and
Spanish only

Committee on the Rights of the Child

Report submitted by the United Arab Emirates under article 12 (1) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, due in 2018*

[Date received: 16 October 2025]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	3
II. General guidelines.....	3
A. Report preparation and consultation process	3
B. Compliance with the general principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child	3
C. Reservations to the Optional Protocol	4
D. Factors and difficulties affecting compliance with the Optional Protocol.....	4
E. Relevant legislation	4
III. Preventive measures.....	5
A. Protection of children most at risk from the crimes envisioned in the Optional Protocol	5
B. Awareness-raising campaigns.....	6
IV. Prohibition and related issues.....	7
A. Laws criminalizing the sale of children and their exploitation in prostitution or pornography.....	7
B. Child prostitution	7
C. Pornography.....	8
D. Sale of children.....	9
E. Transplanting children's organs for profit	9
F. Using children in forced labour	9
G. Inappropriate inducements to adopt a child	10
H. Aggravating circumstances for certain offences	10
I. Statute of limitations for certain offences	12
J. Criminal liability of legal persons.....	12
V. Protecting the rights and interests of victims	13
A. Training for law enforcement officials	13
B. Social reintegration.....	14
C. Recognition of legal identity.....	14
D. Remedies	14
VI. International assistance and cooperation	15

I. Introduction

1. The United Arab Emirates hereby submits its initial report under article 12 (1) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The report covers the period from 2017 to 2023. It should be noted that the United Arab Emirates acceded to the Protocol on 2 March 2016 under Federal Decree No. 8 of 2016.
2. On 26 May 2022, the United Arab Emirates submitted its updated common core document, which contains general information and serves to supplement the present report.
3. The United Arab Emirates submitted its initial national report under the Convention on the Rights of the Child to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 1999. The second periodic report, which was discussed before the Committee in 2015, contained extensive information and data reflecting the country's efforts to implement the Convention and fulfil its international obligations. It also detailed the measures taken and the gains accomplished by the State in that regard, including key national legislation and mechanisms established to promote and protect children's rights.
4. The present report describes the efforts made to implement the Protocol, including legal and institutional frameworks. In particular, it focuses on legislation defining offences such as the sale of children and their exploitation in prostitution and pornography; the penalties for such crimes; available remedies; preventive measures; the protection, rehabilitation and social reintegration of victims; and international assistance and cooperation in the implementation of the Protocol.

II. General guidelines

A. Report preparation and consultation process

5. The report was drafted under the supervision of the Standing Committee for Human Rights in a process that saw the involvement of many government agencies at the federal and local levels, as well as of civil society organizations. Out of a concern to ensure stakeholder participation in the drafting process, the State held a series of consultations with human rights advocates, particularly those working in the field of children's rights, as well as with the National Human Rights Institution, in order to hear their opinions and duly reflect their views.
6. The report-writing team also took a body of other measures as part of the consultative process, holding a series of periodic meetings and organizing workshops, forums and events to discuss proposals on the best ways to prepare the report.

B. Compliance with the general principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

7. The Constitution of the United Arab Emirates seeks to promote and protect children's rights. Article 16 envisions the welfare of children and the protection of minors, while free compulsory education is enshrined in article 17. Articles 15, 19 and 25 provide for a support framework that includes family protection, healthcare, equality and non-discrimination. All of this serves to consolidate the fulfilment of the State's constitutional obligation to protect children and guarantee their fundamental rights.
8. The State has enacted Federal Act No. 3 of 2016 (Children's Rights Act), which contains 74 articles divided across 12 chapters and is consistent with the Protocol. The Act emphasizes children's right to life and to survival as well as the provision of all the means necessary to facilitate that end. The Act also seeks to protect children against all forms of neglect, exploitation and abuse, as well as from physical or psychological violence.

C. Reservations to the Optional Protocol

9. When it acceded to the Protocol, the United Arab Emirates entered reservations regarding article 3 (5), which concerns adoption arrangements, as the provisions contained therein are inconsistent with principles enshrined in Islamic sharia and national legislation.

D. Factors and difficulties affecting compliance with the Optional Protocol

10. The State faces a number of challenges in implementing the Protocol, including the growing number of social media sites and programs, and the increasing number of users, particularly among children. This situation calls for greater efforts to ensure compliance on the part of users of the Internet and social media as well as constant parental supervision in order to prevent children from being exposed to exploitation, sexual abuse or blackmail.

11. Social media and gaming platforms allow individuals to create accounts without revealing their true identities or undergoing identity verification. In the light of the violations that can occur in cyberspace, the United Arab Emirates has enacted a decree-law to combat the propagation of rumours and other cybercrimes, which includes strict provisions regarding the use of online media to perpetrate offences. The decree-law has helped to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement agencies to track and prosecute perpetrators of cybercrimes against children, in line with standards set forth in the Protocol, particularly in articles 8–10 regarding protection, prevention and cooperation with authorities.

12. In accordance with the Cybercrime Act and other relevant laws, the authorities have developed effective mechanisms that seek to strike a balance between promoting and protecting freedom of expression, administering access to information, ensuring compliance with the law and prosecuting individuals suspected of committing crimes against children.

E. Relevant legislation

13. The State acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography under Federal Decree No. 8 of 2016. This means that all governmental bodies are under an obligation to implement the Protocol pursuant to article 125 of the Constitution, according to which the Government is to take the measures necessary to enforce the laws enacted by the Federation and the international treaties and instruments it has concluded. This process entails the enactment of the necessary laws, regulations, decrees and local ordinances, and it means that the provisions of the Protocol may be invoked before national courts. Other significant pieces of legislation include the following:

- Federal Act No. 24 of 2023 on combating trafficking in persons
- Federal Decree-Law No. 55 of 2023 on regulating the media
- Federal Decree-Law No. 25 of 2023 concerning the donation and transplantation of human organs and tissues
- Federal Act No. 6 of 2022 regarding juvenile offenders and juveniles at risk of delinquency
- Federal Decree-Law No. 24 of 2022 regarding persons of unknown parentage
- Federal Decree-Law No. 38 of 2022 promulgating the Code of Criminal Procedure
- Federal Decree-Law No. 10 of 2022 regulating the registration of births and deaths
- Federal Decree-Law No. 31 of 2021 promulgating the Criminal Code
- Federal Decree-Law No. 34 of 2021 on combating rumour-mongering and cybercrime
- Federal Decree-Law No. 30 of 2021 on combating drugs and psychotropic substances
- Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021 on the regulation of labour relations
- Federal Act No. 12 of 2021 regulating the National Human Rights Institution

- Federal Decree-Law No. 45 of 2021 on the protection of personal data
- Federal Decree-Law No. 47 of 2021 promulgating unified general labour regulations for the United Arab Emirates
- Federal Decree-Law No. 10 of 2019 regarding protection from domestic violence
- Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 52 of 2018 promulgating the implementing regulations of Federal Act No. 3 of 2016 (Children’s Rights Act, known as “Wadeema’s Law”)
- Ministerial Decree No. 303 of 2018 regarding the rules and procedures for periodic testing of users of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances
- Ministerial Decree No. 395 of 2018 regarding the creation of a central DNA database
- Administrative Decree No. 160 of 2018 regarding the creation of a federal working group on security risks
- Federal Act No. 5 of 2017 on the use of remote communications technology in criminal proceedings
- Federal Decree-Law No. 16 of 2017 concerning nationality and passports
- Federal Act No. 3 of 2016 promulgating the Children’s Rights Act
- Decree No. 7/18 of 2010 of the National Commission to Combat Human Trafficking regarding regulatory procedures for handling victims of human trafficking
- Decree No. 8/21 of 2010 regarding the ethical standards to be followed by media outlets when conducting interviews with trafficking victims
- Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 15 of 2007 regarding the creation of the National Commission to Combat Human Trafficking

III. Preventive measures

A. Protection of children most at risk from the crimes envisioned in the Optional Protocol

14. The United Arab Emirates has sought to deliver social protection and welfare programmes for the most vulnerable members of society, particularly children. Its strategy in this regard focuses on four main areas:

- Developing legislation and laws on human trafficking and sexual exploitation
- Enabling the authorities to employ deterrent and preventive measures
- Providing protection and support for victims
- Expanding bilateral and international cooperation

15. The State is particularly concerned to protect children who are at risk of being sold or exploited in prostitution and pornography, and to this end it seeks to ensure a decent life for citizens with limited incomes. In July 2022, the State restructured its integrated social support programmes, which are valued at 28 billion UAE dirhams (Dh), to cover a number of social groups including older persons, persons with chronic health conditions, persons with disabilities, families of prison inmates and persons of unknown parentage.

16. The authorities have a number of measures at their disposal to protect children from exploitation. One of these is to refuse entry to children whose names are included on the passports of their parents or relatives and insisting that each must hold their own separate passport with separate entry visas. This serves to ensure compliance with regulations, to identify the children at the moment of entering the country and to ensure that they return to their country of origin with their parents or relatives.

17. In November 2019, the Government rolled out a policy intended to protect families from violence. The policy envisaged a number of programmes and initiatives, notably the enactment of federal legislation to deal with cases of domestic violence and regulate family relationships, and the creation of a unified mechanism for reporting complaints, assessing harm and responding promptly to instances of violence. It also included provision for a guide on the prevention of domestic violence, while staff who deal with issues of domestic violence are to receive high-quality and advanced professional training. Lastly, the policy envisages a raft of awareness-raising and educational projects aimed at drawing attention to domestic violence.

18. With the launch of its child protection strategy 2023–2026, the Ministry of the Interior is taking measures to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation. The strategy aims to achieve the following objectives: developing a smart system; strengthening the role of the family and parental supervision; enhancing cooperation at the national and international levels; developing the capacity of staff and caring for their mental health; raising public awareness about children’s rights and protection within the framework of a cohesive family; and improving the country’s position on international child protection indices.

19. A national policy on child protection in educational institutions was adopted in 2022 with a view to protecting and promoting the well-being of children, providing them with psychosocial support and addressing cases of child abuse, be it in the form of physical, sexual or mental abuse or neglect.

20. The Ministry of Education has also launched a “child protection unit” initiative which is aimed at students in State-run and private schools nationwide. Its purpose is to protect children from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation they may be exposed to in their surroundings, be it at school or at home, and to safeguard their physical and mental well-being.

21. The Social Services Department operates via a number of channels to protect children. The most notable of these is the child helpline, which was set up in 2007 to receive reports regarding children who are at risk or are being subjected to various forms of abuse – such as physical, sexual or emotional – or to neglect or commercial exploitation. The department has a specialized team which then works to resolve those issues.

22. Child-related legislation as well as social programmes and policies are being implemented, adopted or consolidated with a view to protecting children. Under Federal Decree-Law No. 24 of 2022 regarding persons of unknown parentage, eligible Emirati families can foster and raise children of unknown parentage. Such arrangements are regulated by specific rules and conditions to ensure that the child in question does not suffer any form of exploitation or ill-treatment. The State also provides monthly assistance to orphans, and both citizens and residents of the country are eligible to receive financial assistance to cover children’s living expenses, under the supervision of national charitable and humanitarian organizations.

B. Awareness-raising campaigns

23. Child protection authorities have run initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns and have organized 309 training sessions, workshops and lectures that reached 77,744 beneficiaries. These projects come as part of efforts to enforce anti-trafficking legislation; in fact, article 13 (7) of the relevant Act envisages “raising awareness about issues related to human trafficking”, while article 7 (9) of Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 52 of 2018 promulgating the implementing regulations of Federal Act No. 3 of 2016 (Children’s Rights Act) enjoins “using all possible means to promote a culture of children’s rights in order to curb any violations that may be committed against them”.

24. A joint initiative to promote digital safety for children has been launched by the Ministry of the Interior and the “National programme for happiness and quality of life”. The initiative, which aims to raise awareness, reduce online risks and promote positive and safe use of the Internet among minors, includes interactive camps for children and training workshops for parents as well as a support platform in the form of an educational online

portal featuring tools to help parents ensure their children’s digital safety. Notable achievements in this connection include the following:

- A first forum to raise awareness among the school community and schoolchildren in particular about the dangers of cybercrime and the safe use of the Internet. The forum, which served 200 pupils and supervisors from State-run and private schools, was attended by experts and specialists from both inside the country and abroad.
- A child protection campaign to raise awareness about sexual harassment involving awareness-raising lectures at 24 State-run schools. The campaign, which reached 3,150 students of both sexes aged between 6 and 12, also entailed the distribution of informational materials and posters.
- An initiative entitled “safety ambassadors” which served to qualify a group of schoolchildren with knowledge and awareness of their legally guaranteed rights, in order to help them protect their fellow students and monitor any practices or behaviours that could violate those rights. The initiative benefited 100 students aged between 6 and 16.
- A forum entitled “Our children are our trust” to ensure the welfare of children and protect them from all forms of exploitation and abuse as well as from physical, psychological and emotional violence. The forum, which also sought to educate children about their rights and responsibilities and to promote awareness about the importance of child protection, was aimed at pupils and teaching staff in Abu Dhabi.

IV. Prohibition and related issues

A. Laws criminalizing the sale of children and their exploitation in prostitution or pornography

25. The sale of children and their exploitation in prostitution or pornography is a criminal offence under the laws of the United Arab Emirates:

- Article 13 of Federal Act No. 3 of 2016 (Children’s Rights Act) stipulates: “Any arbitrary intervention or unlawful action in children’s lives, families, homes or correspondence is prohibited. It is similarly prohibited to trespass on children’s honour or reputation. The State is to ensure that children are protected against all forms of child pornography, in accordance with current legislation.”
- Federal Act No. 24 of 2023 on combating trafficking in persons prioritizes the protection of children against sale or exploitation in prostitution or pornography. Specifically, it protects them against sexual exploitation, prostitution, the removal of human organs or tissues, forced labour or service, slavery, begging and practices similar to slavery or servitude. Furthermore, the Act penalizes the sale of children, the offer of children for sale or purchase or the promise thereof. It also penalizes enticing, using, recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring, receiving or delivering children for the purpose of exploitation. In order to ensure comprehensive protection for children, it has been decreed that no account is to be given to any consent on the part of the father or the guardian in cases where the victim is a child.

B. Child prostitution

26. The Children’s Rights Act criminalizes the sexual exploitation of children, including in prostitution. Article 33 of the Act focuses on aspects that could threaten children or endanger their physical, psychological, moral or mental well-being and that, therefore, evoke their right to protection. In this regard, article 33 (5) mentions “subjecting children to sexual exploitation or abuse” while article 33 (9) refers to “abducting, selling or trafficking in children for any purpose, or exploiting children in any way”. For its part, article 37 of the Act prohibits any actions that entail the exploitation of children, including those referred to in 37 (6): “sexually exploiting children by exposing or preparing them for acts of prostitution

or debauchery, directly or indirectly and irrespective of any compensation or absence thereof'. The Children's Rights Act envisages a term of imprisonment of not less than 10 years for the sexual exploitation of a child.

27. The Children's Rights Act does not limit itself to punishing perpetrators of exploitation against children. Article 54 of the Act stipulates that perpetrators are also to be prohibited from holding any position or engaging in any activities that would bring them into contact with the child victim or from residing in the same area as that victim.

28. In no case can persons who have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment for sexual assault against a child be released until – prior to the expiration of that term – they have undergone psychiatric examinations to ensure that they no longer pose a danger to society. If this can be shown, the courts can order that such persons be placed in a treatment facility upon completion of their prison term. The implementing regulations of the Act describe the procedures to be followed when placing a convicted person in a treatment facility and when reviewing applications for release.

C. Pornography

29. The Children's Rights Act expressly prohibits the exploitation of children in pornography. Article 26 of the Act stipulates: "It is prohibited to publish, display, circulate, possess or produce any audiovisual or printed works for children or children's toys that are intended to appeal to a child's sexual instincts, that encourage behaviour that is contrary to public order and public morals or that are likely to encourage deviancy," Article 29 of the Act places an obligation on telecommunications companies and other online service providers to report to the authorities any pornographic material disseminated via websites.

30. Legislators in the United Arab Emirates have established penalties for violations of the Children's Rights Act. For example, anyone violating any provision of article 21 (4) or article 29 of the Act is liable to a term of imprisonment of not less than 6 months and/or a fine of between Dh 100,000 and Dh 1 million. According to article 65 of the Act, anyone violating any provision of article 37 (1), (2), (5) or (6) is liable to a term of imprisonment of not less than 10 years. For its part, article 66 states that "anyone violating any provision of article 26 or article 37 (3) or (4) of the present Act is liable to a term of imprisonment of not less than a year and/or a fine of between Dh 100,000 and Dh 400,000."

31. The Government of the United Arab Emirates has also taken steps to ban pornography, particularly that involving children, to which end it has enacted a specific law on cybercrime in the form of Federal Decree-Law No. 34 of 2021 on combating rumour-mongering and cybercrime. The Decree-Law defines child pornography as: the production, display, dissemination, possession or distribution of any image, film or drawing via any means of communication, social media networks or other medium in which a child appears in a degrading position or in a sexual act or sexual display, whether real or simulated. The Decree-Law envisages a raft of penalties. For example, article 32 – which addresses the creation or administration of a website for purposes of human trafficking, particularly of children – stipulates: "Anyone who creates, administers or supervises a website for purposes of human trafficking, particularly of children, or who disseminates information via a computer network or other information technology channel, with the intent of trafficking in human beings or of trafficking or dealing unlawfully in human organs, is liable to a term of imprisonment and/or a fine of between Dh 500,000 and Dh 1 million."

32. Article 33 of the Decree-Law addresses incitement to debauchery and prostitution, including cases involving children. It states: "Anyone who incites or entices another to commit prostitution or debauchery, or assists in such acts, using a computer network or other information technology channel, is liable to a term of imprisonment and a fine of between Dh 250,000 and Dh 1 million. If the victim of the offence is a child, the penalty increases to a term of imprisonment of not less than 5 years and a fine of up to Dh 1 million."

33. Article 35 of the Decree-Law concerns the use of children in the production of pornographic material. It stipulates: "Anyone who incites, entices or assists a child in the broadcast, production or dissemination of pornographic material via a computer network or

other information technology channel is liable to a term of imprisonment of not less than two 2 years and/or a fine of between Dh 250,000 and Dh 1 million.” Penalties for the possession of child pornography are set forth in article 36, which states: “Anyone who intentionally comes into possession of child pornography via an electronic information system, a computer network, a website or other information technology channel is liable to a term of imprisonment of not less than 6 months and a fine of between Dh 150,000 and Dh 1 million.”

D. Sale of children

34. The sale of children is prohibited under the Children’s Rights Act, article 33 of which focuses on aspects that could threaten children or endanger their physical, psychological, moral or mental well-being and that, therefore, evoke their right to protection. Article 33 (9) refers to “abducting, selling or trafficking in children for any purpose or exploiting children in any way”.

E. Transplanting children’s organs for profit

35. The donation and transplantation of human organs and tissues in the United Arab Emirates is regulated by Federal Decree-Law No. 25 of 2023. Trafficking in human organs is prohibited under Federal Decree-Law No. 24 of 2023 on combating trafficking in persons, article 19 (1) of which stipulates: “All persons including, notably, doctors and staff at healthcare facilities are prohibited from selling or purchasing human organs, body parts or tissues, by any means. They are prohibited moreover from receiving any compensation therefor and from advertising, promoting or brokering such activities.”

36. As concerns penalties, article 20 of the Decree-Law stipulates: “Anyone who secretly, by deception or coercion, or without the consent of the donor or the donor’s guardian or relative, as set forth in the present Decree-Law, removes any organ, part thereof or human tissue from a living person is liable to a term of imprisonment of not less than 10 years and a fine of between Dh 500,000 and Dh 2 million. The perpetration of such acts against a minor or a person lacking legal capacity is to be considered as an aggravating circumstance. If, as a consequence of the act, the donor dies or remains totally incapacitated, the perpetrator is liable to the death penalty or to life imprisonment and a fine of between Dh 1 million and Dh 2 million.”

37. On the subject of trafficking in organs for profit, article 21 of the Decree-Law reads: “Anyone who engages in trafficking or mediation in the traffic of human organs or tissues, or parts thereof, using any means, including information technology, is liable to a term of imprisonment of not less than 5 years and a fine of between Dh 200,000 and Dh 2 million.” Article 22 stipulates: “Anyone who sells, buys, offers, advertises, promotes or brokers the sale or purchase of a human organ, part thereof or human tissue, or who finances such a transaction, is liable to a term of imprisonment and a fine of between Dh 100,000 and Dh 1 million.”

F. Using children in forced labour

38. The United Arab Emirates is determined to protect children from engaging in forced labour and from performing hazardous work. In that connection, it has acceded to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

39. Furthermore, legislation is in place that affords children protection against forced labour. Article 14 of Federal Act No. 3 of 2016 (Children’s Rights Act) stipulates: “The competent bodies and authorities are to undertake to: (i) Prohibit the employment of children under the age of 15; (ii) Prohibit the economic exploitation of children and their employment in work which – by its nature or by the circumstances in which it is carried out – might endanger them.” Article 38 (2) of the Act prohibits the employment of children in unlawful conditions while, for its part, article 68 states: “Anyone who violates any provision of article 14 or article 38 of the present Act is liable to a term of imprisonment and/or a fine of

not less than Dh 20,000. If the violation in question endangers the life or the physical, mental or moral well-being of a child under the age of 15, this is to be considered as an aggravating circumstance.”

40. Federal legislators did not limit themselves to criminalizing forced labour in the Children’s Rights Act alone. Similar provisions also exist in labour legislation. Article 5 of Federal Act No. 33 of 2021 on the regulation of labour relations stipulates: “It is prohibited to employ anyone under the age of 15.” Persons over 15 but under 18 may be employed, but under strict conditions that are consistent with the ILO conventions to which the State has acceded. Article 52 of Federal Act No. 47 of 2021 promulgating unified general labour regulations for the United Arab Emirates states: “It is forbidden to appoint or employ anyone under the age of 18. Nonetheless, employers may appoint or employ persons aged 15 or over, under rules and conditions set forth in the relevant legislation.”

41. Criminalization also extends to laws against human trafficking, as article 2 (3) of Federal Act No. 24 of 2023 on combating trafficking in persons focuses on different forms of exploitation associated with that offence, including forced labour. The provision in question states: “The forms of exploitation referred to in the present article include all forms of sexual exploitation, the exploitation of another person in prostitution, the removal of human organs or tissues, forced labour or service, slavery, begging and practices similar to slavery or servitude.”

G. Inappropriate inducements to adopt a child

42. The State has a foster care system for children of unknown parentage rather than a system of adoption. This is a reflection of its adherence to Islamic sharia, which is the primary source of legislation and whence national laws regarding *kafalah* derive. Such an approach is consistent with the spirit of article 20 (3) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. National legislation guarantees and encourages care for children of unknown parentage. Federal Act No. 24 of 2022 regarding persons of unknown parentage regulates the care and custody of such children and seeks to ensure that they are provided with the support they need in terms of healthcare, psychosocial well-being, education and recreation. The Act also aims to create living conditions appropriate for normal development, to protect the children concerned against abuse, inhuman treatment and neglect, and to provide them with a sound upbringing. The Act includes provisions regulating the foster care process, in which regard it describes the conditions that must be met by foster families, foster care standards and guidelines for monitoring children in care.

43. Legislators in the United Arab Emirates have given particular attention to the fostering process for children who lack parental support, notably in Federal Act No. 3 of 2016 (Children’s Rights Act) and its implementing regulations. Article 47 of the Act stipulates: “Children may be placed temporarily with a foster family or a suitable social, educational or healthcare structure, be it public or private, in accordance with the regulations set forth in the implementing regulations of the present Act”. The Act stipulates that children who have been deprived of a natural family environment, whether permanently or temporarily, have the right to alternative care, via a foster family or, if such a family is unavailable, in a public or private social welfare structure.

H. Aggravating circumstances for certain offences

44. According to article 103 of the Criminal Code (Act No. 36 of 2022), aggravating circumstances are considered to subsist if “(i) A crime is committed for contemptible motives; (ii) A crime is committed by taking advantage of the victim’s impaired understanding or inability to resist, or in circumstances that prevent others from defending the victim; (iii) A crime is committed using brutal methods or mutilating the victim; (iv) A crime is committed by a public official through abuse of official authority or status unless, in view of such status, the law prescribes a specific penalty.”

45. Legislators have increased the penalty for the crime of rape. In that connection, article 407 of the Criminal Code stipulates a term of imprisonment of between 10 and

25 years in the following circumstances: if the victim is under 18 years of age; if the victim's consent is, for any reason, not considered valid; if the victim has a physical disability or suffers from a health condition that renders resistance impossible; if the perpetrator is an antecedent or close relative of the victim or is responsible for the victim's care and upbringing or has authority over the victim; if the perpetrator is a servant of the victim or of any of the aforementioned persons; or if the crime occurred in a place of work, education, shelter or care."

46. Aggravating circumstances for the crime of human trafficking are described in article 7 of Federal Act No. 24 of 2023 on combating trafficking in persons. In fact, a penalty of life imprisonment and a fine of not less than Dh 5 million is envisaged if the victim of a human trafficking offence is a child, a person with a disability, a person lacking legal capacity or a pregnant woman.

47. Article 66 of the Children's Rights Act states that "anyone violating any provision of article 26 or article 37 (3) or (4) of the present Act is liable to a term of imprisonment of not less than a year and/or a fine of between Dh 100,000 and Dh 400,000." For its part, article 26 states: "It is prohibited to publish, display, circulate, possess or produce any audiovisual or printed works for children or children's toys that are intended to appeal to a child's sexual instincts, that encourage behaviour that is contrary to public order and public morals or that are likely to encourage deviancy." Under article 37 (3) and (4), the following acts are prohibited: "(3) Possessing child pornography, irrespective of any intention to distribute it; (4) Downloading, uploading or transmitting child pornography via a computer network or other information technology channel."

48. Federal Act No. 6 of 2022 regarding juvenile offenders and juveniles at risk of delinquency envisages penalties for anyone who causes juveniles to commit an action associated with any of the crimes envisaged in the Act, even if the delinquent action is not actually accomplished. According to article 42 of the Act, anyone who involves a minor in an act of delinquency by aiding, abetting or facilitating such conduct in any way is liable to a term of imprisonment of not less than 1 year and a fine of not less than Dh 50,000, even if the delinquent action is not actually accomplished. Anyone who readies a juvenile to commit an offence or to perform any act that prepares, facilitates or finalizes the commission of an offence, or who instigates a juvenile to do so, is liable to a term of imprisonment of not less than 2 years and a fine of not less than Dh 100,000, even if the juvenile in question does not actually commit the offence. If the offender uses coercion or threats against the juvenile, the penalty increases to a term of imprisonment of not less than 3 years and a fine of not less than Dh 200,000. If the offender commits the offence against more than one juvenile, even if at different times, the penalty increases to a term of imprisonment of not less than 5 years. It is considered an aggravating circumstance if the offender is the child's guardian, and the penalty increases for each additional child.

49. Federal Decree-Law No. 34 of 2021 on combating rumour-mongering and cybercrime sets forth the penalties for such offences. Specifically, article 33, which concerns incitement to debauchery and prostitution, envisages "a term of imprisonment of not less than 5 years and a fine of up to Dh 1 million if the victim of the offence is a child". For its part, article 34, which concerns pornography and outrages against public morals, states: "Anyone who creates, administers or supervises a website to disseminate pornography or any material that violates public morals, or who broadcasts, sends, publishes, republishes or displays such material via a computer network is liable to a term of imprisonment and/or a fine of between Dh 250,000 and Dh 500,000."

50. Penalties for the possession of child pornography are set forth in article 36, which states: "Anyone who intentionally comes into possession of child pornography via an electronic information system, a computer network, a website or other information technology channel is liable to a term of imprisonment of not less than 6 months and a fine of between Dh 150,000 and Dh 1 million." Article 60 stipulates that, in the enforcement of the Decree-Law, the following are to be considered as aggravating circumstances: if perpetrators commit any of the offences envisaged in the Decree-Law in the course of or in connection with the performance of their duties; if, when committing an offence not envisaged in the Decree-Law, perpetrators use an electronic information system, a computer network, a website or other information technology channel; or if perpetrators commit any

offence envisaged in the Decree-Law on behalf or for the benefit of a foreign State or any hostile or terrorist group or unlawful organization.

I. Statute of limitations for certain offences

51. The Code of Criminal Procedure (No. 38 of 2022) draws a distinction between the statute of limitations for criminal proceedings and the statute of limitations for penalties. As concerns the former, article 21 of the Code states that criminal proceedings are to be terminated in the following circumstances: with the death of the accused party, with a final judgment or definitive court order, with a settlement, with one of the parties waiving their rights, with a general pardon or with the repeal of the law penalizing the action in question. Apart from crimes of *qisas* and crimes that attract the death penalty or life imprisonment, the statute of limitations for criminal proceedings expires after 20 years in the case of major offences, after 5 years in the case of more minor offences and after 1 year in the case of misdemeanours. The statute of limitations for criminal proceedings cannot be suspended for any reason.

52. As concerns the statute of limitations for penalties, article 320 of the Code stipulates that, with the exception of crimes of *qisas* and crimes in which a definitive sentence of death or life imprisonment has been handed down, the penalty lapses after 30 years in the case of major offences, after 7 years in the case of more minor offences and after 2 years in the case of misdemeanours. This period is to begin on the date the sentence becomes definitive, unless the sentence was imposed in absentia by a criminal court for a major offence, in which case the period begins on the date the sentence was handed down.

J. Criminal liability of legal persons

53. The Criminal Code of the United Arab Emirates envisages criminal liability for legal persons for any actions or activities that constitute offences under the Protocol. In this connection, article 66 of the Criminal Code (Act No. 36 of 2022) stipulates: “Legal entities – with the exception of government agencies and departments, and public bodies and institutions – are criminally liable for any offences committed by their representatives, directors or agents on behalf or in the name of the entity. Legal entities may be penalized only with fines, asset seizure and other measures prescribed by law for the offence in question. If the law prescribes a penalty other than a fine, the penalty is nonetheless to be limited to a fine, which may not exceed Dh 5 million unless otherwise stated in law. This is without prejudice to any individual penalty to which the perpetrator of the offence might be liable under the law.”

54. Article 58 of Federal Decree-Law No. 34 of 2021 on combating rumour-mongering and cybercrime states: “Persons with effective responsibility for administering a legal entity are to be liable to the penalties prescribed for any violations of the present Decree-Law, if it is shown that they were aware of such violations and if a breach of the duties inherent to their administration of the entity contributed to the commission of the crime. The legal entity is to be liable for the payment of any fines or compensation awarded, if the violation was committed by one of its employees in the name of and for the benefit of the legal entity.” According to article 64, the following are not to constitute grounds for absence of criminal liability in the enforcement of the Decree-Law: if a person is subject to an obligation under any legislation, legal rule, contract or code of professional conduct that restricts or prevents compliance with any part of any writ envisaged under the Decree-Law; or if the person concerned or his or her representative has filed a grievance or an appeal, as the case may be, against such writs, in accordance with article 63 of the Decree-Law.

V. Protecting the rights and interests of victims

A. Training for law enforcement officials

55. A number of staff training programmes have been put in place with the aim of creating a qualified workforce equipped with the theoretical and practical skills and expertise necessary to enable them to contribute to the State's efforts to combat such offences. Some of these training programmes are described below:

- In 2015, the National Anti-Trafficking Committee launched a first programme for “anti-human trafficking specialists” entitled the “Anti-Trafficking Diploma”. This was the first specialized professional programme in the country, the Arab world or the wider region to focus exclusively on a specific criminal offence; i.e., trafficking in persons. The initiative – the name of which has recently been changed to the “Anti-human trafficking programme” – lasts five months and is run in collaboration with the Dubai Judicial Institute and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Of late, participants from countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and from other Arab nations have also been involved in the programme, further contributing to diversity of knowledge and providing insight into the experiences of countries that face similar challenges regarding human trafficking. Between 2015 and 2023, the programme produced 583 graduates from various institutions.
- In cooperation with a number of international organizations, the Ministry of the Interior has been running training courses for its staff teaching them how to combat human trafficking with rigour and professionalism. The Ministry has also participated in other training programmes at the national and international levels, with the aim of raising awareness about human trafficking and fostering an anti-trafficking culture. The courses held at the local level were attended by 3,373 participants, while 710 persons benefited from courses held abroad.
- The Judicial Department has run several workshops and training courses to draw attention to the most pressing contemporary human rights-related issues and the fight against human trafficking. A total of 65 judges, prosecutors, lawyers and anti-trafficking experts benefited from these initiatives. The judges alone numbered 38, most of them working in the field of labour legislation.
- The centre for monitoring human trafficking of the Dubai police has also run a number of training courses that cover various key aspects and that aim to enhance the capabilities of officers involved in combating this offence. In all, 234 trainees from various agencies benefited from the courses, which covered topics related to strategy development, strengthening communication with diplomatic missions, the importance of the role of such missions, inspections and visits, as well as other relevant topics.
- A training programme for child protection specialists, approved by the Ministry of Community Development, focuses on dealing with child-related issues and providing the necessary support. The programme also covers the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.
- The Ministry of the Interior has run training programmes for cybercrime specialists on Internet oversight to monitor the online circulation of pornographic images of children and identify culprits. The Ministry has also provided specialized training courses for staff in the field of child protection. In addition, it has run awareness-raising campaigns and held 34 workshops on subjects such as investigating crimes of violence against children and sexual crimes, as well as a course on how to identify children who have suffered abuse or sexual harassment.

B. Social reintegration

56. Social integration serves to rectify negative behaviour patterns on the part of child victims of abuse, alter their psychosocial makeup and thus help alleviate their mental distress. Article 7 (3), (4), (5) and (6) of the implementing regulations of the Children’s Rights Act stipulates that appropriate preventive measures are to be taken to protect children. In addition, intervention plans are to be developed, and counselling and support provided to families and children who have suffered abuse, violence or exploitation. Families are to be taught the principles of sound parenting and healthy interaction with children while, through coordination with the competent authorities, child victims of violations and ill-treatment are to be given psychosocial treatment and healthcare. Throughout the protection process, families and children are to be provided with support to meet their needs, assess their circumstances, track their progress and make any recommendations in that regard.

57. Furthermore, article 47 (2) of the Children’s Rights Act stipulates: “Children may be placed temporarily with a foster family or a suitable social, educational or healthcare structure, be it public or private, in accordance with the regulations set forth in the implementing regulations of the present Act.”

C. Recognition of legal identity

58. Under article 2 of Federal Act No. 17 of 1972 on nationality and passports, as amended, the nationality of the United Arab Emirates is to be conferred upon children born in the country of unknown parents. Such children are presumed to have been born in the United Arab Emirates unless proven otherwise. Children of unknown parentage, moreover, have recognized rights under the law, notably Federal Act No. 24 of 2022 regarding persons of unknown parentage, which includes provision for all the support they need in terms of healthcare, psychosocial well-being, education and recreation. The Act also aims to create living conditions appropriate for normal development, to protect the children concerned against abuse, inhuman treatment and neglect, and to provide them with a sound upbringing.

D. Remedies

59. The United Arab Emirates has made sure to provide complaints mechanisms for all segments of society, including children and their relatives. To this end, it created the National Human Rights Institution as an independent body with legal personality. The Institution, which was established under Federal Act No. 12 of 2021, is consistent with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). Article 6 of the Act stipulates that the mandate of the National Human Rights Institution is to include “monitoring and verifying any violations or infringements of human rights and reporting them to the competent authorities”. The Institution can also receive and review individual human rights-related complaints and refer them to the competent authorities.

60. A number of procedural mechanisms are in place that provide effective human rights safeguards as well as channels via which different groups in society can submit reports or complaints. These include free telephone hotlines, ministerial websites and smartphone apps. The progress of the complaints procedure is duly tracked at every stage. These mechanisms include the following:

- Courts and police
- Government departments and agencies
- Governmental and non-governmental human rights organizations
- Ministry of Education
- Dubai Foundation for Women and Children
- Child helpline in Sharjah

- Hotline for shelters for women and children

VI. International assistance and cooperation

61. The United Arab Emirates is extending its engagement, both regionally and internationally, via the following:

Multilateral agreements

- United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Agreement on the enforcement of judgments, letters rogatory and court notices in the countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
- Riyadh Arab Convention on Judicial Cooperation

Bilateral cooperation

62. The National Anti-Trafficking Committee has rolled out a strategy for consolidating international cooperation, in which regard the United Arab Emirates has signed several memorandums of understanding to cooperate with other countries in combating human trafficking and protecting victims. The memorandums, which define the areas and frameworks within which the signatories can cooperate, focus particularly on the exchange of information and expertise between the two sides. The United Arab Emirates has concluded such memorandums of understanding with Armenia in 2009, Azerbaijan in 2011, Australia in 2013, Indonesia in 2015, India in 2016, Thailand in 2018 and the Philippines in 2019.

63. Under these memorandums of understanding concerning cooperation in the fight against human trafficking, the State has held bilateral meetings with countries and has agreed to run joint awareness-raising campaigns and training courses. Such initiatives are run, in cooperation with specialized United Nations bodies, in law enforcement agencies, the courts, prosecutors' offices and shelters. The meetings also serve to examine the victim-protection mechanisms in place in those countries and to reach agreement on how to strengthen cooperation in order to continue to train and build capacity among staff involved in the fight against trafficking, particularly those working at border checkpoints and those in the private sector, such as airline cabin crew.

64. The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation has signed labour-related memorandums of understanding with countries of origin of migrant workers, the purpose being to build partnerships, boost cooperation and apply best practices in handling temporary contractual workers who come to the United Arab Emirates. This process can entail the use of information technology, the exchange of information and the conduct of labour-related studies and research. The memorandums of understanding also envision the possibility of negotiations with sending countries with a view to integrating provisions that might provide further protection for workers entering the United Arab Emirates. In addition, the memorandums may place a requirement on recruitment agencies in the sending country to register workers with the Social Insurance Fund or with workers' social protection programmes.

Multilateral cooperation

65. In the framework of its cooperation with United Nations mechanisms, and with a view to combating human trafficking, the United Arab Emirates hosted the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children in 2009 and again in 2025. In

addition to this, in 2012, the State welcomed the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. In 2010, the United Arab Emirates joined with other countries to establish the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking, which held its first meetings on the sidelines of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. The aim of the Group is to strengthen the role of the United Nations and to coordinate and unify global efforts to combat human trafficking offences.

66. The United Arab Emirates is determined to consolidate its cooperation with the special procedures, to which end it has extended invitations to several mandate holders to make field visits to the country. They include the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities. The United Arab Emirates is also considering the possibility of inviting other mandate holders and of replying to visit requests it has received in the past.

67. The fifth Ministerial Consultation under the Abu Dhabi Dialogue process, held in 2019, witnessed the launch of a joint United Arab Emirates–India online recruitment platform. The new venture aims to strengthen joint governmental oversight over labour migration policies in sending and receiving countries with a view to eliminating detrimental recruitment practices. Such practices can, in fact, sometimes lead to workers being placed in positions of vulnerability by exposing them to forced labour or trafficking, also via bogus contracts of employment and debt bondage.

68. The Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood continues to cooperate closely with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in the area of child protection. One important initiative in this context is the launch of an injury-prevention campaign, which provides advice and information to ensure the welfare and safety of children. Other initiatives focus on safe learning, notably the “World’s largest lesson” which was held in 2018 and aimed to end violence in schools. The Supreme Council is also working with UNICEF on a school referral guide and is seeking to ensure that all children in the United Arab Emirates are able to enjoy childcare, healthcare, nutrition and early childhood education, in order to realize their full potential.

Foreign partnerships

69. In 2013 – as a participant in the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime – the United Arab Emirates organized a regional forum attended by 48 States and a number of international organizations to discuss policies, exchange expertise and information and strengthen cooperation with a view to helping countries in the region combat people smuggling, trafficking in persons and transnational organized crime.

70. The United Arab Emirates also participated in the fourteenth meeting of senior officials under the Bali Process, which was held in Viet Nam in July 2019.

71. The National Anti-Trafficking Committee participated in a Middle East forum on combating trafficking in persons, organized by Bahrain in October 2019. The forum served as an opportunity to exchange experiences on how to address and combat human trafficking from a regional perspective, in the light of the demographic and economic aspects of the phenomenon, which presents a unique challenge for all countries around the world. In 2023, the National Anti-Trafficking Committee also participated in the eighth ministerial conference under the Bali Process, held in Adelaide, Australia.

72. In addition to this, a delegation from the National Anti-Trafficking Committee participated in the eighth regular session of the Working Group on Trafficking in Persons, which was held at the United Nations Office at Vienna from 9 to 11 September 2019. A statement delivered on behalf of the United Arab Emirates outlined the measures and procedures being taken to combat human trafficking and to make the public at large and diplomats in particular aware of its perils.

73. A delegation from the Ministry of the Interior took part in the seventh global conference on human trafficking and migrant smuggling, held by the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The conference sought to

strengthen cooperation among all law enforcement agencies and specialized units in areas such as border security, human trafficking, migrant smuggling and crimes against children.

74. The Ministry of the Interior participated in three international operations between 2021 and 2022. The most notable of these was “Operation Liberterra”, which was run in coordination with INTERPOL and 47 other States and aimed to combat migrant smuggling, human trafficking and other related transcontinental crimes. The Operation led to the arrest of 286 individuals and the rescue of 430 victims of human trafficking, as well as the release of 4,000 irregular migrants in 74 countries around the world.

75. The United Arab Emirates organized the second international summit of the WeProtect Global Alliance, which has the purpose of defending children against sexual exploitation. The State has also been granted a permanent seat on the advisory board of We Protect. This comes as a result of the child protection efforts undertaken by the Ministry of the Interior of the United Arab Emirates and of the international commitments the country entered into following the aforementioned summit, which was held in Abu Dhabi. The country has also been given a seat on the Virtual Global Taskforce.

76. The State has participated in annual meetings of the INTERPOL Specialist Group on Crimes Against Children, which have addressed a number of different topics, such as serious and violent crimes against children, interaction with sex offenders and the identification of child victims.

77. The United Arab Emirates participated in the twenty-third regular session of the Arab Childhood Committee and the fifteenth meeting of the Committee for Ending Violence Against Children, which were held in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

Cooperation with international organizations

78. With a view to the interchange of expertise, the National Anti-Trafficking Committee maintains channels of communication with ILO, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNODC. This has enabled the United Arab Emirates to benefit from the experience of those organizations, which have also participated in workshops and training programmes inside the country, while officials from the United Arab Emirates have participated in events run by those organizations in various locations.

Notable international alliances

- Virtual Global Taskforce to combat the exploitation of children online
- WeProtect Global Alliance
- Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities

Victim support and assistance funds

79. The United Arab Emirates seeks to improve cooperation with all United Nations mechanisms and to support them as they go about their tasks. In that regard, the Government provided \$878,425 in 2020 and 2021, which included annual voluntary donations to support United Nations funds, the fulfilment of voluntary pledges to donate to the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review and support for anti-corruption and human rights projects.

80. The Fund for Ending Violence Against Children provides financial support for programmes and activities that seek to promote partnership and accelerate action in priority areas linked to Sustainable Development Goals 16 and 8. To date, only 26 States have joined the Fund, which the United Arab Emirates announced it was going to lead during the “End Violence Solution Summit” held in Sweden in February 2018.

81. The Fund for the Support of Victims of Human Trafficking, which constitutes one of the most important initiatives set in train by the National Anti-Trafficking Committee, was established pursuant to the Committee’s Decree No. 32/7 of 2014. During the course of 2019, the Committee disbursed a total of Dh 207,500 to trafficking victims residing in State-run welfare centres, care institutions and victim shelters. This brings the total value of the assistance disbursed by the Fund since it was established to Dh 970,200 (more than \$260,000).

Membership of international child protection organizations

82. The WeProtect Global Alliance is an international movement dedicated to promoting efforts at the national and global levels to eliminate the online sexual exploitation of children.

83. The Virtual Global Taskforce aims to combat the online exploitation of children, make the Internet a safer place, identify children at risk and take action against perpetrators.

84. As part of its ongoing efforts to protect and ensure the safety of children, the Ministry of the Interior has sought to utilize all available opportunities, including by establishing online connections to international databases such as the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children and the International Child Sexual Exploitation Database.

85. The United Arab Emirates hosted the second international summit of the WeProtect Global Alliance, in 2015. The event resulted in an agreement among governments and organizations to come up with coordinated responses at the national level to the online sexual exploitation of children. In 2018, as part of the global forum of the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities on “Child Dignity in the Digital World,” the United Arab Emirates managed to bring together 450 religious leaders from around the globe to develop a unified global vision to protect communities – especially children – from cyberextortion and other online perils.

86. Ms. Mama Fatima Singhateh, the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, visited the United Arab Emirates from 14 to 24 April 2025, one of a number of field visits conducted by mandate holders of the Human Rights Council. During her visit, the Special Rapporteur reviewed the efforts the United Arab Emirates has been making to combat the sale and exploitation of children.
