



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

Report submitted by Bahrain under article 8 (1) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, due in 2006**

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First report of the Kingdom of Bahrain on measures taken by the Kingdom to implement the provisions of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict

I. Introduction

1. The Kingdom of Bahrain is pleased to submit its first report on the implementation of the provisions of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, covering the 2004–2019 period and submitted under article 8, paragraph 1, of the Protocol. It will be recalled that the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict in 2004. It was published in the Official Gazette, No. 2652 of 15 September 2004. Bahrain did not submit any reservations to articles in the Protocol.

2. The Kingdom's ratification reflects its commitment to providing comprehensive protection, care and security for children.

3. On 1 May 2019, the Kingdom of Bahrain submitted core document HRI/CORE/BHR/2019, which is an integral part of the aforementioned report.

4. It should be noted that the combined fourth to sixth periodic reports on measures taken to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, submitted on 11 September 2017 under article 44 of that Convention, included background information on the State party to the Convention. The current report will confine itself to national legislation and measures taken by Bahrain to implement the provisions of the Optional Protocol. The Kingdom responded to the list of issues relating to the combined fourth to sixth periodic reports sent by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in a report submitted on 29 October 2018. That response included a number of items detailing recent measures taken to implement the provisions of the Convention. It would therefore be useful to take a look at that report.

5. The present report sets forth the Kingdom's approach to child protection in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols. It describes legislation and policies aimed at ensuring the exercise of children's rights; provision of services for children and their protection; and training of human resources to work with and interact with children. It also describes aspects of cooperation and complementarity with international and regional bodies.

6. The Higher Coordinating Committee for Human Rights, which is the national mechanism responsible for preparing and submitting national reports on human rights in the Kingdom of Bahrain and is chaired by Minister for Foreign Affairs Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, approved the report submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on 6 October 2020.

II. General implementation measures

A. Process for preparing the report

7. The first report of the Kingdom of Bahrain on measures taken by the Kingdom to implement the provisions of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict was prepared by the National Committee for Childhood. To prepare the report, a steering committee was formed made up of the ministries and authorities most involved in enforcing the provisions of the Protocol, foremost of which are the following: the Bahrain Defence Force; the Ministry of Labour and Social Development; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Religious Endowments; and the Legislation and Legal Opinion Commission. Also taking part

was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which chairs the Higher Coordinating Committee for Human Rights.

8. In the course of preparing this report, the National Committee for Childhood canvassed the observations and views of the National Institution for Human Rights, as an institution with a broad mandate in the field of human rights, as well as the relevant civil society organizations.

9. The revised guiding principles were made use of in preparing the report. The process of collecting and reviewing the necessary information for the report continued right up until the date of completion of the draft.

10. Representatives of the entities contributing to the preparation process were invited to review and discuss the draft report. The review produced several amendments to the draft report that were incorporated into the final version submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

B. Legal status of the Optional Protocol

11. Act No. 19 (2004) approved the accession of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography annexed to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain, Article 37, provides that a treaty shall have the force of law once it has been signed, ratified and published in the Official Gazette, which it was in No. 2652 of 15 September 2004. It can therefore be invoked before all courts in the State and any other body involved in application and enforcement of the law.

12. Given the importance of the principles and bases of the Protocol, the Kingdom has increased protection for children by recently enacting Act No. 44 (2018) concerning international crimes. That Act does not countenance the involvement of children in armed conflict; it treats it as a war crime. Article 23 of the Act provides as follows: "Anyone who knowingly recruits children under 18 years of age into the armed forces, forcibly or voluntarily, or enlists them to participate actively in hostilities as part of or in connection with an international or non-international armed conflict, shall be punished by life imprisonment or imprisonment for a term of not less than 10 years. If the act results in the death of the recruited child, the penalty shall be death or life imprisonment".

13. In addition, Act No. 1 (2008) concerning combating trafficking in persons addresses the recruitment of children in article 1 (b). It treats the recruitment of persons under the age of 18 as a human trafficking crime. That article provides that "recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring or receiving persons under the age of 18, or anyone whose situation or personal circumstances preclude him or her from giving consent or exercising free choice, for the purpose of mistreating them, even if the act is not committed by any of the means specified in the preceding paragraph, shall be considered trafficking in persons".

14. Article 59 of Act No. 37 (2012) enacting the Child Act prohibits the exploitation of children in various forms of organized and non-organized crime. That includes indoctrinating them in ideologies of intolerance and hate, and inciting them to engage in acts of violence and intimidation.

C. Implementation of the Protocol across the Kingdom of Bahrain

15. The Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict is in force de jure and de facto across Bahrain. Decree-Law No. 32 (2002) promulgating the Bahrain Defence Force Act prohibits the recruitment of anyone under the age of 18. That is to preserve children's rights and is in line with international conventions. Article 24 of that Act provides as follows: "Recruitment and enlistment in the Defence Force shall be in accordance with its needs for officers, soldiers and civilians in accordance with the principles and conditions set forth in this Act and in the regulations governing service. No officer or soldier shall be under the age of 18".

D. Reservations to the Optional Protocol

16. The Kingdom of Bahrain has not expressed reservations to any of the Optional Protocol's articles.

E. Parties involved in implementing the Optional Protocol

17. There are a number of government agencies responsible for implementing the Protocol, of which the foremost are the following: the Bahrain Defence Force; the Ministry of Labour and Social Development; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Religious Endowments; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the Legislation and Legal Opinion Commission.

18. The National Committee for Childhood is responsible for linking and coordinating the efforts of the relevant ministries to enforce the provisions of the Protocol through several mechanisms and in various ways. The National Committee for Childhood was reorganized by Council of Ministers Decision No. 28 (2018). It is chaired by the Minister of Labour and Social Development. That reflects the importance the Kingdom places on childhood and its desire to develop and strengthen all aspects of comprehensive child welfare.

F. Dissemination of the Optional Protocol and training efforts

19. The Optional Protocol was published in the *Official Gazette*, No. 2652 of 15 September 2004.

20. The Bahrain Defence Force has made important strides in raising awareness of the principles of international humanitarian law and human rights. The Department of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law was created within the military court system in 2018. It has offered numerous lectures on international humanitarian law, including some that have covered the principles enunciated in the Optional Protocol. Such lectures are offered in all military training courses, and also as awareness-raising lectures for all forces and units.

21. Since 2017, humanitarian law has been included as a basic subject in the curriculum of Isa Royal Military College. An integrated training manual has been prepared. No officer candidate can graduate from the Military College without becoming familiar with the principles and values of international humanitarian law. That includes the provisions of the Protocol.

22. It was also decided in the Bahrain Defence Force to teach international humanitarian law to all salaried personnel. That has raised awareness of the provisions and principles of international humanitarian law in an unprecedented manner.

23. The Bahrain Defence Force has also sent many of its members on specialized courses in international humanitarian law.

24. The provisions of Act No. 26 (2014) establishing the National Institution for Human Rights and amendments thereto stress its role in promoting human rights. Article 12 establishes a number of competencies for the Institution to help it achieve its objectives. It takes part in the formulation and implementation of a national plan to promote human rights at the Kingdom-wide level. It reviews human rights legislation and regulations in force and recommends amendments it deems appropriate, in particular in connection with ensuring that laws are consistent with the Kingdom's international human rights obligations. It also recommends the enactment of new relevant human rights legislation.

25. The Act grants the National Institution for Human Rights competence to review the compatibility of legislative and regulatory texts with regional and international human rights treaties. That includes recommending accession to relevant regional and international conventions, submitting shadow reports, and taking part in drafting, critiquing and publicizing the reports that the Kingdom is obligated to submit periodically in implementation of regional and international human rights conventions. It also engages in

cooperation with relevant national, regional and international bodies and organizations, and human rights institutions in other countries.

26. There are also provisions charging the National Institution for Human Rights with holding conferences, organizing seminars and educational and training courses on human rights, conducting research and studies, and taking part in local forums and meetings of regional and international organizations, as well as issuing bulletins, publications, statements and special reports and displaying them on its website.

27. The National Institution for Human Rights believes that the issue of human rights is one of enduring national importance and that respecting and protecting human rights is part of a commitment to justice, equality and dignity for all human beings without discrimination. With a view to strengthening children's rights, the Institution has launched a number of programmes and training courses on human rights and children's rights.

28. It has offered several lectures and awareness-raising activities on children's rights as enunciated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Act. It has presented stimulating lectures and training programmes covering human rights, the right to a clean environment, and public rights and freedoms.

29. The Institution held an awareness-raising lecture for Royal Police Academy students enrolled in its Human Rights Diploma programme entitled "The role of the National Institution for Human Rights in the promotion and protection of human rights". It held another for a group of officers on "Human rights standards for police work", in cooperation with the Southern Governorate Police Directorate of the Ministry of Interior.

30. The Institution hosted a new contingent of master's students in criminal and police sciences, and administrative, security and crisis management studies. It hosted its fifth contingent of human rights diploma students and its second contingent of social work students in security institutions. The goal was to inform students in the academy about the Institution's role in promoting and protecting human rights – in particular its mandate to receive complaints, provide legal assistance, and monitor the human rights situation – and provide participants with practical skills in those areas.

31. As part of the Institution's strategy and action plan for disseminating a culture of human rights, and within the framework of a memorandum of understanding concluded with the National Security Agency, the Institute held a training programme for National Security Agency staff from 17 January to 4 September 2018. The goal was to strengthen and develop the human rights capabilities of National Security Agency personnel.

32. The National Institution for Human Rights, in cooperation with the professional standards office of the National Security Agency, held an introductory seminar on the code of conduct for National Security Agency staff issued pursuant to Decision No. 31 (2012). The goal was to spread and promote a culture of human rights in the Kingdom of Bahrain in line with international, regional and national human rights instruments.

33. The Institution has devoted attention to training for justice professionals. It has designed an intensive training programme for junior lawyers that addresses various aspects of human rights. The programme introduces the basic principles of human rights, the Paris Principles relating to the status of national human rights institutions, international human rights law, and international humanitarian law. It includes attendance of sessions and workshops of the international conference on the Arab human rights court. There was also a training course on public rights and freedoms in the Constitution of the Kingdom Bahrain that provided training on the principles of legal research in the field of human rights, a lecture on standards for fair trial guarantees, and another on invoking international human rights conventions before national courts.

34. The National Institution for Human Rights believes that human rights concepts should be promoted within the Kingdom's judicial system as a bulwark of protection for public rights and freedoms. In cooperation with the Secretariat of the Supreme Judicial Council, the Institution designed a training programme for a cohort of candidates for future judicial positions. It lasted an entire year. Workshops were held on various topics including the following: "Basic principles of human rights", "Research in electronic human rights sources and references", "Survey of the rights covered in the first annual report of the National

Institution for Human Rights”, “Public rights and freedoms in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain”, “Basic principles of international humanitarian law”, “The role of courts in protecting civil and political rights”, “The role of courts in protecting economic, social and cultural rights”, “The concept of criminal justice and human rights”, “Combating the crime of trafficking in persons”, “Standards for assessing penalties and guidelines for grounds for judgments in the light of human rights principles”, and “Invoking international human rights conventions before national courts”.

35. With a view to enriching scientific study and knowledge of human rights, the National Institution for Human Rights launched a human rights culture series in cooperation with the Centre for Constitutional and Legal Studies at the University of Bahrain, certain researchers, and others in the field both within the Kingdom and abroad. The goal was to put out academic legal publications to educate society and persons interested in human rights issues on various human rights topics. That included children’s rights.

36. This diverse legal series is one way the Institution carries out its function of promoting and disseminating a culture of human rights. It highlights the major fundamental rights and freedoms exercised by individuals. It explicates the state of domestic legislation and the extent to which it is compatible with relevant international human rights standards. It is accessible to anyone, including researchers, academics, lawyers, law enforcement personnel, judges, prosecutors, members of the House of Representatives and the Shura Council, university and grade school students, non-governmental organizations and human rights activists. The goal is to raise awareness and maximize the exercise of human rights.

37. Between 2017 and 2019, the National Institution for Human Rights, in partnership with the Bahrain Institute for Political Development, the Supreme Council for Women and the Judicial and Legal Studies Institute, organized the “My rights” programme for public sector employees and civil society institutions. The goal was to develop the constitutional, legal and human rights culture of public sector workers and human rights defenders into a culture, lifestyle and pattern of daily behaviour to be practiced in public service and within a community framework.

38. The Institution also organized a workshop on “The impact of bullying on human rights”. A number of staff from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and civil society organizations and other stakeholders took part, especially those involved with children’s rights.

39. The National Institution for Human Rights has published a colouring book on children’s rights. Next to the drawings are quotations from national legislation such as the Constitution and the Child Act and articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child that pertain to the right illustrated by the drawing. The goal is to impart information to the child in a stimulating educational and artistic fashion.

40. The Institution has also published a leaflet designed for children on the rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The rights are presented via attractive pictures and in simple and easy language that helps children learn about their basic rights.

41. As part of the Institution’s cooperation with international human rights mechanisms, especially those concerned with children’s rights, it submitted a shadow report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child at its 80th session to parallel the combined fourth to sixth periodic reports of the Kingdom of Bahrain on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It outlined the Institution’s efforts and activities to strengthen and protect the rights of that class of person, the major challenges, and recommendations on certain rights in the Convention. (The Institution’s shadow report on the combined fourth to sixth periodic reports is annexed.)

G. The National Institution for Human Rights

42. Bahrain promulgated Royal Decree No. 46 (2009) on the establishment of the National Institution for Human Rights with a view to establishing an institution that would

serve as beacon of human rights awareness and expertise. In addition to its preamble, the Decree contains 15 articles that deal with the establishment of an independent institution to be called the “National Institution for Human Rights”, which shall exercise its functions with complete freedom, impartially and independence.

43. With regard to the Institution’s mandate and role in implementing the Optional Protocol, article 12 of the Act provides that, in order to achieve its objectives, the National Institution for Human Rights is free to comment on any human rights issue, and to address any human rights situation as it deems appropriate. The National Institution performs the following duties:

- Participating in the development and implementation of a national plan for the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the country;
- Reviewing legislation and regulations on human rights in force in Bahrain, recommending what it believes are appropriate amendments in that regard, particularly with regard to the harmonization of that legislation with the international human rights obligations of Bahrain, and recommending new legislation on human rights;
- Reviewing the appropriateness of legislative and regulatory provisions contained in regional and international instruments on human rights, and submitting recommendations to the competent authorities on all matters relating to the promotion and protection of human rights, including recommendations regarding accession to regional and international human rights instruments;
- Submitting shadow reports, contributing to the drafting and discussion of periodic reports submitted by Bahrain and commenting thereon, in implementation of regional and international human rights instruments, and disseminating those reports in the media;
- Monitoring cases of human rights violations, conducting the necessary investigations, drawing the attention of the competent authorities to those violations, submitting proposals for initiatives to put an end to such violations and, where appropriate, expressing its views on the position adopted and steps taken by those authorities;
- Receiving, reviewing and investigating complaints concerning human rights, transmitting information that the Institution deems appropriate to the competent authorities and following up effectively, informing those concerned of the necessary procedures to be followed and helping them to do so, or helping them resolve matters with the relevant authorities;
- Conducting scheduled and unannounced field visits to monitor the human rights situation at correctional institutions and detention facilities, workers’ organizations, health and education facilities or any other public location at which it is suspected that human rights violations have taken place;
- Engaging with relevant cultural, public information and educational bodies and recommending actions that could help strengthen and promote a culture of awareness of the importance of human rights;
- Cooperating with national bodies, regional and international organizations and institutions in other countries working to promote and protect human rights;
- Holding joint meetings and activities, cooperating, coordinating and consulting with relevant civil society and non-governmental organizations, human rights defenders and other groups, engaging directly with those who claim to have been subjected to any form of abuse, and submitting reports to the Board of Commissioners;
- Holding conferences and organizing seminars and educational and training courses on human rights, and carrying out studies and conducting research;
- Participating in national and international forums and meetings of regional and international organizations concerned with human rights issues;

- Issuing bulletins, publications, statements and special reports and publishing them on the Institution’s website, to communicate directly with the public, as well as indirectly through the media.

44. The National Institution for Human Rights, under Act No. 26 (2014) establishing it, as amended by Legislative Decree No. 20 (2016), has a broad mandate in the field of human rights. It covers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including for the most vulnerable groups, such as women, the elderly, persons with disabilities and children. Select standing committees such as the committee on public rights and freedoms, the committee on persons whose freedom is restricted, and the committee on complaints, monitoring and follow-up handle all issues relating to the rights of children. These competencies taken together operate to strengthen and protect human rights, whether for citizens or those resident on the Kingdom’s territory, according to their various legal statuses within the State system. This is in line with relevant national, regional and international standards.

III. Prevention

Prevention (articles 1, 2, and 4, paragraph 2, and article 6, paragraph 2)

A. Military recruitment

45. Bahrain does not have a law allowing for compulsory recruitment. The age of conscription is fixed and provided for in article 24 of Decree-Law No. 32 (2002) concerning enactment of the Bahrain Defence Force Act, and article 7 of the Reserve Force Act. Not even Decree-Law No. 27 (1981) on martial law (exceptional circumstances) allows a change in the age of conscription; that is not among the measures provided for in article 3.

B. Legislative and administrative measures

46. In accordance with articles 4,7 (f) and 8 the 1987 Reserve Force Act and the regulations issued pursuant thereto, persons wishing to volunteer present themselves for consideration by recruitment and mobilization offices. They submit applications by filling out the appropriate forms. After the application is accepted, the volunteer is given a military ID, registered in the reserve force and told when to appear for military training. There is no compulsory conscription in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

C. Verification of age during the recruitment process

47. In accordance with the Reserve Force Act and the enlistment requirements set forth in section 3 of the Reserve Force regulations, a volunteer is not accepted if they are under the age of 18. In other words, children are not allowed to volunteer in the Bahrain Defence Force.

48. Under article 13 of the Reserve Force Law, a volunteer is presented to a medical committee to be examined and have their fitness for reserve service assessed based on the prescribed medical fitness conditions.

49. State agencies verify that the age requirement is met during the military service application process. To ensure that the age requirement is met before anyone is accepted into military service, proof-of-age documents such as birth certificates, passports and identity cards are required.

D. Kindergarten, schools and colleges

50. The Ministry of Education tries to instil values and principles that promote the principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms among students at various academic levels. The Ministry has incorporated these values and principles in the curriculum itself and also into extracurricular activities. That includes the following:

- Curricula at various educational levels are revised and developed on an ongoing basis to promote human rights principles in the light of the changes being undergone by Bahraini society and continuous global developments relating to humanitarian values. The Ministry takes care to develop and review academic curricula continuously, with the help of international think tanks and organizations. Citizenship curricula offered at all academic levels in both public and private schools cover the principles of human rights and freedoms, citizenship values, belonging, the foundations of the democratic system and the requirements of coexistence and equality among all without sectarian discrimination.
- These values are also incorporated into several other academic curricula. Most courses touch upon these values and principles. That includes social studies and Arabic language books. The Ministry has also incorporated vital skills, community service, exercise of citizenship and promotion of human rights into its curricula. These curricula enshrine the values of community engagement, coexistence, learning to live together and self-improvement. The Ministry has devoted an independent and integrated curriculum to human rights, tolerance and coexistence. The Ministry also prepares pamphlets and leaflets covering those values and principles.
- The Ministry of Education sees to it that citizenship and human rights curricula are taught in private schools. These schools are provided free of charge with the same textbooks taught in public schools. Students in private schools are subject to the same assessments of citizenship and human rights courses as students in public schools, in keeping with the principle of equality in the teaching of values and with the Ministry's commitment to instilling these values and concepts in private school students as well as public school students.
- A number of programmes and workshops have been held with the aim of instilling the spirit of citizenship, strengthening national unity and enshrining the principles and values of human rights. With the help of experts from the International Bureau of Education in Geneva and various universities and prestigious institutions, seminars and workshops have been held for teachers in social studies and citizenship education. The Ministry of Education has also organized internal workshops on respect and tolerance. The goal is to disseminate the values of tolerance, coexistence and non-violence among school students, and promote the values of national unity, tolerance, love, national solidarity, and rejection of religious, sectarian or ethnic discrimination at all levels of education.
- Human rights content has been incorporated into cultural and educational competitions held by the Ministry and implemented by schools. That includes drawing, writing, seminars, student lectures, exhibitions, and so on.
- Schools hold numerous activities related to these values as part of national celebrations and human rights events.
- The “Schools promoting citizenship and human rights” project is an advanced stage of the Ministry's efforts to promote citizenship and disseminate a culture of tolerance and coexistence by combining theoretical and methodological lessons and practical activities inside and outside the school to build a citizenship community. The school turns into a miniature social space where best citizenship practices and tolerance prevail. This project has won numerous international accolades. It has been described as a pioneering experience that should be made universal around the globe. The project has achieved great success in spreading the values of tolerance, coexistence, dialogue and rejection of violence and extremism through innovative activities and projects.
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Associated Schools Network project is being implemented by encouraging contacts and establishing links between schools at the national and international levels. The goal is to share experiences and initiatives, and to draw on experiences in the field to support international understanding and sustainable development.

- Activities in private schools are followed up, as part of the supervisory and administrative responsibility of the Ministry of Education for such educational institutions, to assess their educational practices, compliance with the Ministry's instructions on promoting national unity and the values of citizenship, human rights, tolerance and coexistence, and on providing education for all within a framework that communicates the concept of patriotism and instils the values of tolerance, coexistence, vital skills and equality among students without discrimination.
- A curriculum has been designed based on educational experiences at the three kindergarten levels. The Ministry began using it in the 2014–2015 academic year. It incorporates a number of diverse experiences commensurate with the level of cognition of children at this stage. That includes the “My Bahraini homeland” unit, which consists of activities designed to instil citizenship, loyalty to the homeland, leadership and acceptance of differences of opinion. It also enshrines the principles of human rights and freedoms. The Ministry has already trained some kindergarten teachers in this curriculum. Efforts are ongoing to train additional cohorts as part of future Ministry plans. The Ministry has distributed the curriculum to kindergartens and provided guides for teachers and parents.
- With the aim of promoting human rights values in higher education, the Higher Education Council issued a decision to universalize the human rights curriculum taught by the University of Bahrain, making that course compulsory in all institutions of higher education.

E. Discipline in schools

51. The approach of the Ministry of Education to the services it provides is informed by the country's educational policy as well as by the provisions on universal education enshrined in the Constitution. Article 7 (a) of the Constitution reads as follows: “The State shall guarantee education and cultural services to its citizens. Elementary education shall be compulsory and free of charge”. Act No. 27 (2005) concerning education defines the meaning of “compulsory” and “free of charge”. Article 1 of the Act defines primary education and the compulsory school age as follows: “Primary education: The stage of education that starts at the age of compulsory education and shall extend for a minimum of nine academic years”; “Compulsory school age: Begins when a child reaches the age of six (solar) years and ends when the child reaches the age of 15”. Article 6 of the Education Act provides as follows: “Children who have reached the age of six by the start of the school year shall have the right to a primary education. The Kingdom of Bahrain undertakes to provide them with that education, and parents and guardians are obliged to comply for at least nine years of schooling”. Article 7 provides that “primary and secondary education shall be free of charge in government schools”. Article 8 also sets forth the liability of the guardian in the event that they cause a child of compulsory school age to drop out. Although secondary education is not compulsory under the Constitution or the law, Bahrain does provide free State education at various levels, and has issued regulations and decisions to ensure that students can remain in the classroom for all levels of schooling, including secondary education for those who wish to pursue it.

52. The Kingdom of Bahrain has made great progress in education. This is evidenced by the Kingdom's high rankings in progress towards achievement of the six Education for All goals set out in the UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Report. Between 2003 and 2016, Bahrain was ranked among the best performing countries in achievement of the goals. In particular, it achieved 100 per cent primary school enrolment. The dropout rate was 0.04 per cent, which was the lowest in the Arab world. There are also opportunities to continue education in the evening.

53. The Ministry of Education has expended considerable efforts over recent years to develop industrial and vocational education, in cooperation with bodies operating in that field, in order to ensure that educational outcomes are as compatible as possible with the Bahraini labour market's growing need for highly trained technical workers. Moreover, the Ministry has been quick to implement directives from international organizations active in the field of

technical and vocational education, most significantly by introducing curricula and textbooks responsive to evolving needs; modernizing methods of teaching and evaluation; and monitoring the cultural, professional and educational level of teachers. In addition, a quality control system, which is applied in secondary schools, has been expanded to cover all aspects of the educational system. Thanks to this, the Ministry has obtained accreditation from the Scottish Qualifications Authority and industrial secondary schools have begun issuing professional qualifications.

54. A scientific analysis of technical, industrial and vocational education over recent years has produced important results for the Ministry of Education that point to the need to restructure methods of secondary education so as to better serve new economic trends, while pointing away from more general education. An apprenticeship initiative has been implemented in a new and evolving context within the new secondary education structure. The initiative has been introduced into boys' and girls' schools on a gradual basis and in cooperation with parents, guardians and the private sector. A phased roll-out of the initiative began in the year 2007/08.

55. In preparing for the expanded technical and vocational education system and implementing the apprenticeship project, the Ministry took into account a set of basic factors related to improving education outcomes, keeping pace with the needs of the labour market at the national and regional levels, and linking educational and training specialties to the needs of the labour market. It worked with bodies operating in that field, in order to ensure that educational outcomes are as compatible as possible with the Bahraini labour market's growing need for highly trained technical workers. Moreover, the Ministry has been quick to implement directives from international organizations active in the field of technical and vocational education, most significantly by introducing curricula and textbooks responsive to evolving needs; modernizing methods of teaching and evaluation; and monitoring the cultural, professional and educational level of teachers. In addition, a quality control system, which is applied in secondary schools, has been expanded to cover all aspects of the educational system. Thanks to this, the Ministry has obtained accreditation from the Scottish Qualifications Authority and industrial secondary schools have begun issuing professional qualifications.

56. The Ministry has also recently expanded and merged the industrial and commercial education tracks (developed and specialized) into one track, that is the developed industrial and commercial track, so that all graduates of this track can enrol in higher education institutions.

57. The Arab Knowledge Report 2009 attests to the remarkable development and expansion of secondary education enrolment rates in the Kingdom of Bahrain. As the report puts it: "Bahrain has scored a series of achievements in education that have raised it to level of the vanguard of Arab countries in this domain.... Bahrain boasts one of the lowest ratios of children out of school, the highest level of net enrolment in primary education, the best enrolment rates in secondary education as a whole, and gender parity. It has nearly reached the saturation point in enrolment rates at the upper secondary education level, and it has the highest enrolment rate in technical secondary education among both Arab and Asian countries. Secondary education enrolment rates in Bahrain have risen steadily from 1999 to 2006. It is clear that this growth is due to the noticeable increase in the enrolment...of young women and men in the technical and vocational programmes." The report adds: "This quantitative development is undoubtedly connected with the structural reform of secondary education that Bahrain put into effect in the last decade. In addition to diversifying the programmes of technical secondary education and providing an element of flexibility in these programmes, the avenue is now open to enrol in corresponding higher educational programmes, thereby offering a horizon for technical secondary school graduates to continue their studies and progress further in their vocational choice."

F. Corporal punishment

Educational institutions

58. Corporal punishment in public and private educational institutions is prohibited under the School Discipline Act, which the Ministry of Education promulgated by Decree No. 549/168-1/1992. In the first-cycle report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (A/HRC/WG.6/1/BHR/3, issued on 6 March 2008), it is indicated that the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (GIECP) has noted that this prohibition is in place.

59. The Ministry of Education supervises and monitors private educational institutions, including kindergartens, both educationally and administratively, in order to ensure that they comply with the provisions of Decree-Law No. 25 (1998) concerning educational and training institutions, as well as the relevant implementing decisions, with view to ensuring that children enjoy a safe environment and are not subjected to violence and ill-treatment. Accordingly, the Ministry absolutely prohibits all forms of corporal or psychological punishment of students, and it strives to safeguard children and their interests in all relevant regulations and laws, with a view to fulfilling its educational duty towards all students to the best of its ability. To that end, the Ministry:

- Distributes leaflets, booklets and manuals to administrative and educational bodies in which it prohibits corporal or psychological punishment of students, and it publishes circulars prohibiting such punishment;
- Monitors violations, including corporal punishment of students by administrative or educational bodies. The Ministry punishes perpetrators on the basis of the list of violations and penalties annexed to the Civil Service Act and its implementing regulations;
- Uses educational rather than punitive means to address behavioural or disciplinary irregularities in educational institutions, in accordance with the regulations governing school discipline, as amended, with the aim of modifying students' behaviour and instilling self-discipline and desirable practices. The regulations are also aimed at promoting behavioural remedies that are based on a sound educational assessment, in order to protect children and their interests in all circumstances.

In the family

60. The National Strategy for Children includes a section on protecting children from all forms of violence and ill-treatment. The plan of action annexed thereto includes initiatives and programmes that are aimed at ensuring respect for the physical, mental and psychological integrity of children in all circumstances, as well as at combating violence and other forms of child abuse. In addition, the National Strategy for the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence contains a two-part section on prevention, the first of which addresses pre-empting domestic violence against women and children. To that end, a number of measures were taken to raise awareness of the devastating impact of corporal punishment on children and to promote alternative methods of rearing and disciplining children. The initiatives included awareness-raising programmes organized by the Family and Childhood Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development to develop family members' skills, including positive and effective communication skills, and to help them solve their psychological and social problems. The programmes are implemented through social centres in all parts of the country, the Child Protection Centre and family guidance offices. Television programmes on sound methods of upbringing directed at families have been broadcast.

61. The Protection from Domestic Violence Act (No. 17 of 2015) includes provisions relating to the protection of the family and its members from all forms of domestic, physical, psychological, economic and sexual abuse (amendment introduced by the Supreme Council for Women).

62. A special prosecution department for family and children was created by Decision No. 1 (2016) of the Public Prosecutor. This department, which is headed by a woman judge with the Supreme Court of Appeal, is responsible for protecting families and children who have

been subjected to violence and intervening rapidly in order to halt domestic violence and provide victims with psychological, social and legal help in a safe environment and ensure that offenders are prosecuted (added by the Supreme Council for Women).

63. Civil society organizations concerned with families and children play an active awareness-raising role. In addition, such organizations offer guidance to parents on sound child-rearing skills and help them to identify various problems facing their children and resolve them through special programmes. There are many bodies that provide support, in particular economic support, for families and women, so that they can meet their children's material needs, thereby effectively contributing to the creation of a safe, secure and stable family environment (added by the Supreme Council for Women).

In residential care facilities

64. Corporal punishment, regardless of its purpose and degree of severity, is absolutely prohibited under the by-laws of Batelco Child Care Centre, the State-run home for children without family care. Strong measures have recently been taken against two of the Centre's staff members. One of the nurses was dismissed after she lightly shoved a child, and a technician was also dismissed for punishing a child with a light blow. The Centre never fails to respond to even less serious acts.

65. The Child Protection Centre, which was established in May 2007, is a social welfare agency under the Ministry of Labour and Social Development that is tasked with caring for children up to the age of 18 and protecting them from all forms of abuse and neglect (sexual and psychological abuse, as well as extreme neglect). The Centre's objectives are to (added to report by the Supreme Council for Women):

- Protect children from ill-treatment in the family and in society;
- Protect children from harm during investigations;
- Provide psychological, social and legal services and liaise with the relevant authorities;
- Counsel families, with a view to keeping children in their family environment, to the extent possible;
- Find foster families for children at risk of ill-treatment;
- Raise awareness among children and in society regarding protection of children and children's rights;
- Monitor the implementation and application of laws and treaties regarding the protection of children.

G. Children at risk

66. The Kingdom of Bahrain has enacted various regulations and laws as part of its efforts to ensure the integration of its protection and social welfare systems, in particular with respect to disadvantaged and vulnerable children. In that connection, Bahrain has ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), of the International Labour Organization and issued Decree-Law No. 12 (2001) approving accession to that Convention, which concerns the minimum age for employment. In addition, Bahrain promulgated Act No. 1 (2008) on combating trafficking in persons, and the Cabinet endorsed Decision No. 1 (2008) issued by the Minister for Foreign Affairs concerning the formation of the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons (see annex).

67. Bahrain has put in place a package of integrated systems that are designed to preserve the dignity of citizens and families and ensure social stability. It also offers direct cash support programmes that are designed to meet economic challenges. Children are one of the groups that have been a specific focus of the law, with a view to ensuring that they are protected from neglect and abuse. A total of 11 beneficiary groups that either do not have a source of income or do not have sufficient income to meet their livelihood needs are covered by Act No. 18 (2008) on social security. Two of those groups are specifically limited to

children under 18 years of age, namely, children (every male or female under the age of 18, or every male or female over the age of 18 who has no one to support him/her or sufficient funds to support himself/herself, provided that he/she provides proof that she/he is continuing to pursue his/her education until she/he has obtained an undergraduate university degree) and orphans (anyone whose father has died and does not have someone who is capable of and obliged to spend on her/him, or who lacks sufficient funds to support himself/herself; those whose parents are unknown are considered to be orphans). In addition to those groups, there are others beneficiary groups that include children. A greater amount of assistance is disbursed based on the number of family members (the amount of assistance is 70 dinars for one person, 120 dinars for two persons and another 25 dinars for each additional person). Social security programme beneficiaries also receive a monthly reduction in electricity and water fees. This benefit, which is a royal gift that is bestowed upon needy Bahraini families in order to reduce the burden of electricity and water expenses, is disbursed in coordination with the Electricity and Water Authority. Children who receive social security benefits can also benefit from the financial support programme for low-income persons, in order to help them address potential economic difficulties. This programme is open to persons whose income is less than 1,000 Bahraini dinars per month, and those who are eligible are classified into three benefit categories (100 dinars, 70 dinars and 50 dinars, based on total income).

68. A disability allowance of 100 dinars per month is disbursed to each person with a disability in accordance with ministerial decision No. 24 (2008) regarding the criteria for being entitled to the allowance for persons with disabilities. In that decision, the classifications of disability include physical, intellectual, visual and auditory disability, autism, cerebral palsy and multiple disabilities. Children with disabilities who are Bahraini nationals are among those who can receive this benefit. It should be noted that the third article of the aforementioned decision was amended in 2017 so as to include among the beneficiaries non-Bahrainis who are the children of Bahraini women and also permanent residents of the country.

69. It should be noted that, every year, all social security assistance and disability allowance recipients are given an additional payment on the occasion of the blessed month of Ramadan. This payment is disbursed in keeping with the desire of the country's wise leadership to reduce the cost of living for low-income Bahraini families during the holy month.

70. Moreover, there are no children who live below the poverty line or in remote areas of Bahrain, nor are there refugee or homeless children. There are isolated cases of begging. Such cases are transferred to institutions that address cases of homelessness and begging. These institutions have multidisciplinary team to protect such children and provide the necessary services.

71. There are no families living below the poverty line because Bahrain provides housing services and financial assistance to low-income persons. Should children be treated in manner that is contrary to the Protocol, there are entities to protect them, such as the Child Protection Centre of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, the Family and Child Prosecution Department, police stations and temporary shelters. These services are provided to all children residing in the Kingdom of Bahrain, regardless of identity, race, gender, etc.

72. It is the collective responsibility of civil society institutions to ensure that everyone respects the principles of human rights and public freedoms. Accordingly, the primary goals of the Information Centre for Women and Children of the Child and Maternal Welfare Society are to provide information and offer programmes that are aimed at raising community awareness, and to submit special recommendations to the relevant authorities. The Child and Maternal Welfare Society believes that children's rights require special protection and that the situation of children around the world requires continuous improvement. It also believes that children must develop and be educated in a peaceful and secure environment. The Society, as civil society organization, strives to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child through programmes, events and activities that are conducted by the Information Centre for Women and Children.

73. On Monday, 18 November 2019, the Information Centre for Women and Children organized a workshop on the theme "Children's rights: child abuse and domestic violence".

The workshop was led by Azhar al-Shu'lah, a social worker from the Batelco Domestic Violence Centre. That workshop was one of the events that were organized in the Kingdom to celebrate Universal Children's Day and the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Bahrain has ratified. The workshop was attended by a large number of interested persons, representatives of civil society organization, State ministries and relevant health committees, and several parents. The complex theme, which addressed childhood issues and domestic violence against children, was well received by participants. The workshop was enriched by the discussions that occurred and the valuable contributions of the participants. The following topics were addressed at the workshop:

- The historical development of children's rights
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The concept of violence against children
- The types of violence against children (physical, sexual, psychological and neglect)
- The forms of violence to which children are subjected
- What happens to abused children

The workshop was aimed at raising public awareness of important issues that affect children, including nutrition, health and education, as well as of the need to protect children from sexual and physical exploitation and all forms of psychological and physical violence.

74. The Bahrain Society for Child Development addresses various issues that are relevant to children, including humanitarian, health, legal, cultural, social, psychological, legislative and other issues. In that connection, the Bahrain Society for Child Development has taken a range of actions. Those actions include the following:

- Printing a booklet on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols and distributing it to the relevant authorities and government institutions, so that they could utilize it in developing future plans and programmes.
- Organizing many seminars, workshops and lectures aimed at addressing various issues related to abused children and children's rights, disseminating a culture of non-violence against children and child labour, and focusing attention on forms of violence against children, including physical, sexual and psychological violence and neglect.
- Working in cooperation and coordination with various institutions and ministries concerned with childhood, civil society associations specialized in child welfare and various media, in order to combine efforts aimed at responding to violence against children, as well as planning and developing activities and programmes aimed at providing protection for children from violence in its various forms and from sexual exploitation.
- Organizing training, awareness-raising and guidance programmes on children's rights directed at families, including dialogue meetings and lectures on appropriate methods of socialization and rearing in the context of the family; how to protect children from all forms of violence and the dangers surrounding them; and how to prevent children from being exposed to factors that put them at risk of violence, whether inside or outside the family.

75. On Sunday, 21 February 2016, the Bahrain Society for Child Development organized a conference on the theme "Developing Human Values in Childhood". The participants made the following recommendations:

- The relevant institutions need to make concerted efforts to address the comprehensive crisis of values facing Arab societies today.
- Children's behaviour and beliefs must be built on constructive human values.
- Free and responsible thinking based on a creative foundation that prepares children to face the challenges of the contemporary world should be encouraged.

IV. Prohibition and related matters

Articles 1 and 2, and paragraphs 1 and 2 of article 4

A. The material elements of the offences covered by the Optional Protocol

76. The laws of the Kingdom of Bahrain do not address the recruitment of children or their use in hostilities and the establishment of armed groups, because such things do not exist.

77. With regard to the use of children in hostilities, article 23 of Decree-Law No. 44 (2018), promulgating the International Crimes Act, provides that anyone who knowingly recruits children under 18 years of age into the armed forces, forcibly or voluntarily, or enlists them to participate actively in hostilities as part of or in connection with an international or non-international armed conflict, shall be punished by life imprisonment or imprisonment for a term of not less than 10 years. If the act results in the death of the recruited child, the penalty shall be death or life imprisonment.

78. It should be noted that 172 States parties have ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

B. Maximum and minimum penalties for offences covered by the Optional Protocol

79. Anyone who knowingly recruits children under 18 years of age into the armed forces, forcibly or voluntarily, or enlists them to participate actively in hostilities as part of or in connection with an international or non-international armed conflict, shall be punished by life imprisonment or imprisonment for a term of not less than 10 years.

80. If the act results in the death of the recruited child, the penalty shall be death or life imprisonment.

C. Safeguards against invoking superior orders as a defence

81. It is not permitted to invoke superior orders as justification for a crime. Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the International Crimes Act address the issue of criminal responsibility for international crimes, including the crime of recruiting children. Article 9 stipulates that a military commander or person effectively acting as a military commander shall be criminally responsible for crimes set out in the present Act committed by forces under his or her effective command and control, or effective authority and control as the case may be, where:

(a) That military commander or person either knew or, owing to the circumstances at the time, should have known that the forces were committing or about to commit such crimes; and

(b) That military commander or person failed to take all necessary and reasonable measures within his or her power to prevent or repress their commission or to submit the matter to the competent authorities for investigation and prosecution.

82. Article 10 provides that, with respect to superior and subordinate relationships not described in paragraph 9, a superior shall be criminally responsible for offences that are set out in the present Act committed by subordinates under his or her effective authority and control, where:

(a) The superior either knew, or consciously disregarded information which clearly indicated, that the subordinates were committing or about to commit such crimes;

(b) The crimes concerned activities that were within the effective responsibility or control of the superior;

(c) The superior failed to take all necessary and reasonable measures within his or her power to prevent or repress their commission or to submit the matter to the competent authorities for investigation and prosecution.

83. Article 11 provides that the fact that an offence that is set out in the present Act was committed pursuant to an order of a superior, whether military or civilian, does not excuse the commission thereof unless:

- (a) The person was under a legal obligation to obey orders of the Government or the commander or superior in question;
- (b) The person did not know that the order was unlawful; and
- (c) The order was not manifestly unlawful.

For the purposes of this article, orders to commit genocide or crimes against humanity are manifestly unlawful.

D. Non-applicability of the statute of limitations to covered offences

84. In the Kingdom of Bahrain, all international crimes, including the recruitment of children, are not subject to any statute of limitations. Article 3 of the International Crimes Act provides that “the provisions relating to the expiration of criminal proceedings and penalties with expiration of the time limit stipulated in the Code of Criminal Procedure or any other law shall not apply to the crimes stipulated in the present Act.”

E. Other related offences

85. In addition to the above, Act No. 1 (2008) concerning combating trafficking in persons addresses the recruitment of children in article 1 (b), in which the recruitment of persons under the age of 18 is considered to be a crime of human trafficking. That article provides that recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring or receiving persons under the age of 18, or anyone who is in a situation or whose personal circumstances preclude him or her from giving consent or exercising free choice, for the purpose of mistreating them, even if the act is not committed by any of the means specified in the preceding paragraph, shall be considered trafficking in persons.

F. Penalties for the commission of related offences

86. Under the International Crimes Act, the penalty for attempting to commit the offence of recruiting children is the same as for having committed that offence. Article 4 of the Act provides that “attempting to commit the offences specified in the present Act shall be subject to the same penalties for committing the offence”. Abetting the commission of this offence is subject to the rules for criminal participation that are set out in the Penal Code. Those who abet the commission of an offence shall be subject to the same penalty as the person who committed the offence.

G. Laws for the implementation of the Optional Protocol

87. The Kingdom of Bahrain implements the provisions of the Protocol on the basis of the following laws:

- Act No. 19 (2004) approving the accession of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography;
- Act No. 37 (2012), promulgating the Family Code;
- Act No. 26 (2014), establishing the National Institution for Human Rights;

- Act No. 17 (2015), concerning protection from domestic violence;
- Act No. 19 (2017), promulgating the Family Code;
- Act No. 58 (2006), on the Protection of Society from Acts of Terrorism
- Act No. 1 (2008), on combating trafficking in persons;
- Decree-Law No. 44 (2008), promulgating the International Crimes;
- The House of Representatives approved a draft act on restorative justice for children and protecting children from abuse. The aim of the new act is to promote restorative justice for children, ensure that children are cared for and protected from abuse, and that the best interests of the children take precedence in all judgments, decisions and procedures related to them. The draft is being studied by the competent committee of the Consultative Council.

H. Instruments ratified by the Kingdom of Bahrain

88. With regard to considering acceding to the 1977 Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998 and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), of ILO, the Kingdom has acceded to the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. That accession was published in *Official Gazette No. 1708* on 21 August 1986 (the relevant decree-law is annexed). In 2001, the Kingdom of Bahrain ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), of ILO. The Ministry reports on the implementation of that Convention to ILO. The most recent report was submitted in 2017. The Kingdom signed the Rome Statute on 11 December 2000. In addition, it participates as an observer in the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and has attended all conferences of the Assembly of States Parties since the Kampala Conference, which was held in June 2010.

I. Criminal liability of legal persons

89. Various laws concerning the criminal liability of legal persons have been promulgated, including:

- Act No. 58 (2006), on the Protection of Society from Acts of Terrorism;
- Act No. 1 (2008), on combating trafficking in persons;
- Act No. 60 (2014), concerning cybercrime;
- Decree-Law No. 44 (2008) promulgating the International Crimes Act;
- Article 3 of Act No. 1 (2008), on combating trafficking in persons.

J. Procedures for the extradition of offenders

90. The Bahrain Defence Force has not received any request to extradite its members for any international crime, including the crimes that are set out in the Optional Protocol, nor has the military judiciary of the Bahrain Defence Force issued any request for extradition in relation to this type of offence. The provisions of chapter 1 (entitled “Extradition of accused and convicted persons”), part II, of the Penal Code, which was promulgated by Decree-Law No. 46 (2002), are applied when a request is received to extradite an accused or convicted person.

K. Best interests of child victims of prohibited practices

91. The situation envisaged in article 6, paragraph 3, of the Optional Protocol is not conceivable and does not arise in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Article 24 of the Defence Force Act provides that an officer or soldier shall not be less than 18 years of age. That article is in line with the Optional Protocol, including with respect to ensuring that children do not

become victims or are killed as a result of being recruited by or enlisted in a military force. Assuming, for the sake of argument, that this were to happen in violation of the provisions of the aforementioned Act, then it would constitute a criminal offence, and the perpetrators of such an offence would be subject to the deterrent criminal penalties established in the Code of Military Justice and the Penal Code. This law provides the necessary protection for children envisaged in the Optional Protocol and was enacted quickly by legislators in Bahrain, out of concern for preserving the rights of children that are enumerated in international conventions. The concern of the State for children is evidenced by its legislation regarding children and mothers and its social and health centres that care for children in the event that they are abused or are victims of crime, in order to keep them safe in all respects and ensure their return to normalcy.

L. Jurisdiction over foreign children

92. The measures that can be taken by the Defence Force within the limits of its jurisdiction are established in the Code of Military Justice promulgated by Decree No. 34 (2002), article 16 of which provides that it does not have jurisdiction over children who are not greater than 15 years of age, because they are considered juveniles under article 1 of Act No. 17 (1976) on juveniles. As for children who are over that age up and up to 18 years old, they are covered by the Child Act (No. 37 of 2012); the jurisdiction of the military judiciary over such children is limited to the extent that the provisions of that Act allow jurisdiction over these children and for the law to be applied to them.

V. International assistance and cooperation

(Paragraph 1 of article 7)

93. The Kingdom of Bahrain has always lent its support to humanitarian affairs and international efforts to provide humanitarian assistance and resolve humanitarian crises. Through national humanitarian aid initiatives and involvement in relevant international organizations, the Kingdom of Bahrain strives to be involved in and contribute directly to international humanitarian efforts to alleviate serious humanitarian suffer in disaster-stricken areas.

94. The Kingdom of Bahrain provides humanitarian assistance within the country and abroad in a professional and systematic manner that preserves human dignity. The programme that implements such humanitarian programmes is administered by the Royal Charity Organization in accordance with the “MOSIF” theory, which rests on a clear, forward-looking vision for the advancement of the poor, orphans, widows and war victims.

95. The Royal Charity Organization, established by the Royal Decree of 14 August 2001, provides support for children who have lost a parent. “Provides support” here means providing full support for children living in the care of a parent or extended family. A second Royal Decree was promulgated to add widows as beneficiaries of the Organization’s services. His Majesty the King is the Honorary President of the Organization and his son presides over the Board of Trustees. The orphans receive personal attention from the King, who visits and receives them on a regular basis and sponsors activities for them.

96. The Organization supports orphans and widows from eligible families in accordance with its approved terms and criteria. It disburses monthly benefits and, on Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha and during the month of Ramadan, it provides material assistance to all widows and orphans registered with it. It also provides school supplies to children. In addition, the Organization offers psychological support services, providing free counselling for persons suffering from loss-related psychological problems through the Counselling Centre, which helps orphans and widows to cope with loss and to face current or future hardships and psychological stressors, with a view to ensuring their psychological and social stability.

97. In cooperation with kindergartens, businesses and private-sector institutions, the Organization provides educational support for orphans in the form of school supplies and free placements in kindergartens, subject to the number of annual placements it obtains.

Orphans are also offered free placements in private schools, in cooperation with the schools and with businesses and private-sector institutions. In addition, the Organization, out concern for their circumstances, provides them with assistance in preparing for final exams through educational institutes. Upon completion of their studies, 50 places at public and private universities are reserved for those who have scored at least 80 per cent. Support for additional places is provided by businesses and private-sector institutions.

98. The Organization provides free counselling and treatment for orphans at private hospitals and clinics. Beneficiaries receive free or low-cost treatments, medical devices and equipment, and appropriate health-care guidance.

99. The Organization also takes interest in the social lives and skills of orphans, organizing programmes and activities in the summer, during the spring holidays and throughout the year, and offering courses aimed at developing their personalities, talents and hobbies.

A. Examples of international assistance

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

- Founding of the Bahrain Social Centre for Creativity in Za'tari camp for Syrian refugees (2011).
- Founding of the Kingdom of Bahrain Scientific Complex in Za'tari camp, consisting of four schools for Syrian refugees, each with a capacity of 1,000 students, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund, the Ministry of Education of Jordan and the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (2012).
- Construction of the Kingdom of Bahrain housing complex in Za'tari camp, consisting of 500 units for Syrian refugees, in cooperation with the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (2013).
- Construction of the Kingdom of Bahrain housing complex in Azraq camp, consisting of 1,000 units for Syrian refugees, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2014).
- Construction of the Kingdom of Bahrain School in Irbid for Syrian refugees, in cooperation with the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (2014).
- Construction of the Kingdom of Bahrain School for Syrian refugees in Abu Nusayr, in cooperation with the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (2016).
- Provision of prefabricated houses for Iraqi Christian refugees at churches in Jordan, in cooperation with the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (2014).
- Construction of children's libraries in the Azraq camp for Syrian refugees, in cooperation with the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (2017).
- Distribution of toys to Syrian refugee children (2017).
- Construction of a football field in Za'tari camp for Syrian refugees (2018).

Philippines

- Establishment of two vocational training institutes, in Subic and Tacloban, in cooperation with the Philippine Red Cross (2014).

Arab Republic of Egypt

- Construction of the Kingdom of Bahrain School in Sharqiyah Governorate (Abu Qurah), in cooperation with the Misr El Kheir Foundation (2014).
- Construction of a health unit for ophthalmology treatment in Suhaj Governorate, in cooperation with the Egyptian Zakat and Charity House (2015).

- Construction of the Women's Faculty of Nursing in Bur Sa'id Governorate, in cooperation with the Egyptian Zakat and Charity House (2015).
- Construction of a health unit in Balaqtar al-Sharqiyah, in cooperation with the Egyptian Zakat and Charity House (2015).

Palestine

- Construction of the Kingdom of Bahrain Health Centre in Khan Yunis, Gaza, in cooperation with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (2010).
- Construction of a health centre in Shabura district, Gaza, in cooperation with UNRWA (2014).
- Construction of the Kingdom of Bahrain School in Tall al-Hawa, Gaza, in cooperation with UNRWA (2011).
- Construction of a school in Zaytun district, Gaza, in cooperation with UNRWA (2014).
- Expansion of Jabalia School, Gaza, with construction of eight classrooms, in cooperation with UNRWA (2011).
- Founding of a children's library at Fakhurah School, Khan Yunis, Gaza, in cooperation with UNRWA (2010).
- Construction of the Kingdom of Bahrain Library in the Rafah area, in cooperation with UNRWA (2014).
- Provision of hearing aids to the Deir El-Balah Association for the Hearing and Speech Impaired, in cooperation with UNRWA (2010).
- A project to provide meals to those breaking their fast and Eid clothing, in cooperation with the Deir El-Balah Association and UNRWA (2012).
- A grant of \$200,000 to operate the refugee shelter at the Kingdom of Bahrain School in Khan Yunis, in cooperation with UNRWA (2015).
- Construction of the Kingdom of Bahrain Library in Jerusalem, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (2013).
- Dispatch of six relief shipments, weighing 300 tons, to war victims, in cooperation with the Palestinian Red Crescent and the Egyptian Red Crescent (2009).
- Treatment of war victims at Palestine Hospital in Cairo, in cooperation with the Palestinian and Egyptian Red Crescent (2014).
- Manufacture and fitting of prosthetic limbs for 1,400 women, men and children with disabilities, in cooperation with Islamic Relief Worldwide (2009).
- Equipping of scientific laboratories at the Islamic University of Gaza (2010).
- Training and rehabilitation of the blind and visually impaired, in cooperation with the Islamic University of Gaza (2012).
- Scholarships for five medical students at the Islamic University of Gaza (2016).

Somalia

- Dispatch of five relief shipments, weighing 220 tons, to famine victims, in cooperation with the Somali Red Crescent and the International Red Crescent (2011).
- Construction of the Bahrain Specialist Hospital, in cooperation with the Government of Somalia and Islamic Relief Worldwide (2011).
- Drilling of 10 artesian water wells for the neediest areas, in cooperation with the Government of Somalia and Islamic Relief Worldwide (2011).

- Construction of the Kingdom of Bahrain Scientific Complex (Mogadishu National University), in cooperation with the Government of Somalia and Islamic Relief Worldwide (2012).
- Project for restoring sight to 4,286 citizens, in cooperation with the Government of Somalia and Islamic Relief Worldwide (2012).

Nepal

- Provision of 150 tons of humanitarian aid to earthquake victims, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of Nepal in Bahrain (2015).

Yemen

- The Kingdom of Bahrain is a member of the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen, which was established in response to an appeal from the legitimate Yemeni Government and in accordance with Security Council resolution 2216 (2015) in order to stand against the militias of the coup perpetrators, who are receiving foreign funding and arms from known sources in an effort to destabilize the region. Bahrain, as a member of that Coalition, affirms that the Coalition strives to protect civilians and children and to abide by recognized international laws, including international humanitarian law.
- The dispatch of four shipments, weighing 1,040 tons, in cooperation with the Government of Yemen, the Republic of Djibouti, the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre and the Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation for humanitarian aid (2015).
- Establishment of a cardiology centre in cooperation with the Government of Yemen and the Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation (2018).

Africa

- Support to the Ebola fund with a donation of \$1 million (2014).

Türkiye

- Dispatch of relief shipments, weighing 100 tons, to earthquake victims (2011).

Pakistan

- Dispatch of relief shipments, weighing 220 tons, to flood victims (2010).
- Provision of 10 reverse osmosis water pumps, producing 20 gallons per day (2010).

B. Role of charitable organizations

100. The Bahrain Trust Foundation is another of the international aid and cooperation initiatives of Bahrain. The Foundation is a non-profit charitable organization that was established in 2010 and is licensed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. The Foundation aims to make a positive difference in people's lives, locally and regionally.

101. The Foundation believes in the importance of providing long-term treatment centres and smart solutions in education, health and economic empowerment services for individuals in areas of ongoing disaster and conflict and in remote areas. The Foundation has made great efforts in developing practical programmes for useful and accessible education and health services.

102. The Foundation's projects cover four areas: education, health, economic empowerment and community service. The following are examples of the Foundation's generous contributions in that regard:

Project 1: Rihab School (Aswan, Egypt)

<i>Project details</i>	<i>Microschool (two classrooms for 25–30 students; football field)</i>
What is provided	Educational opportunity for children of compulsory school age
Beneficiaries	Children of compulsory school age who have dropped out of school or have been prevented from attending school
Number of beneficiaries	Approximately 26 students per year
Beneficiary ages	6 to 14
Project outputs	Improvements in teaching and learning outcomes Enrolment of children who have dropped out or have been prevented from attending school in Aswan Governorate Provision and subsidizing of school supplies
First annual operating budget (founding year)	BD 15,600 (includes demolition and reconstruction of the two classrooms)
Operating budget for the three years following the first three years	BD 5,200

Project 2: Muhammad Ali al-Saghir School (Aswan, Egypt)

<i>Project details</i>	<i>Microschool (classroom building for 30 students; toilet facilities; classroom renovation; football field)</i>
What is provided	Educational opportunity for children of compulsory school age
Beneficiaries	Children of compulsory school age who have dropped out of school or who have been prevented from attending school
Number of beneficiaries	30 students per year; 90 students within three years
Beneficiary ages	6 to 14
Project outputs	Improvements in teaching and learning outcomes Enrolment of children who dropped out or have been prevented from attending school in Aswan Governorate Provision and subsidizing of school supplies
First annual operating budget (founding year)	BD 8,191 (renovation; furniture; purchase of school supplies; mobile lab; football field)
Operating budget for the three years following the first three years	BD 2,731

Project 3: Naga'a Gobran School (Aswan, Egypt)

<i>Project details</i>	<i>Microschool (two classrooms for 20–25 students; football field)</i>
What is provided	Educational opportunity for children of compulsory school age
Beneficiaries	Children of compulsory school age who have dropped out or who are prevented from attending school

<i>Project details</i>	<i>Microschool (two classrooms for 20–25 students; football field)</i>
Number of beneficiaries	Approximately 25 students per year; 75 students in three years
Beneficiary ages	Children aged 6 to 14
Project outputs:	Improvements in teaching and learning outcomes Enrolment of children who have dropped out or have been prevented from attending school in Aswan Governorate Provision and subsidizing of school supplies
First annual operating budget (founding year)	BD 13,100 (construction of two classrooms; furniture; purchase of school supplies; projector; laptop; mobile laboratory; football field; toilet facilities)
Operating budget for the three years following the first three years	BD 4,367

Project 4: Deena Kanoo School (Bahrain, Salmaniah complex)

<i>Project details</i>	<i>Microschool in hospital, wards 202 and 31 (two classrooms for 20 students; playroom)</i>
What is provided	Educational opportunity for hospitalized children of compulsory school age (oncology ward 202 and ward 31)
Beneficiaries	Hospitalized children of compulsory school age
Number of beneficiaries	Approximately 20 students per year
Beneficiary ages	1 to 14
Project outputs	Combating illness-related isolation Encouraging children to continue studies Facilitating understanding of the curriculum through the way in which projects are taught Sharing learning experiences with peers to encourage staying in school Providing a special and appropriate learning environment according to each child's needs
Annual operating budget (five years)	BD 118,450 (equipping of two classrooms; furniture; purchase of school supplies; facilitators' salaries)
Annual operating budget	BD 22,449

Project 5: Ideal School (Kerala, India)

<i>Project details</i>	<i>Microschool (four classrooms for 20 students; playground)</i>
What is provided	Safe access to school for children in the village and neighbouring villages
Beneficiaries	Children enrolled in Bahrain Trust Foundation microschools
Number of beneficiaries	80 students; 240 students within three years
Beneficiary ages	6 to 14

<i>Project details</i>	<i>Microschool (four classrooms for 20 students; playground)</i>
Project outputs	Enrolment of children who have dropped out or have been prevented from attending school Provision and subsidizing of school supplies
Overall cost	BD 13,900
One-year annual operating budget	BD 4,634

Project 6: Mali (Africa) school

<i>Project details</i>	<i>Microschool (three classrooms for 20 students; playground; toilet facilities)</i>
What is provided	Safe access to school for children in the village and neighbouring villages
Beneficiaries	Children enrolled in Bahrain Trust Foundation microschools
Number of beneficiaries	60 students; 180 students within three years
Beneficiary ages	6 to 14
Project outputs	Combating lack of information and isolation from society. Upgrading schools, transforming them into buildings with strong and sustainable foundations suitable for year-round use Empowering more than 180 villagers to access education in coming years
Total cost	BD 15,832.7
One-year annual operating budget	BD 5,278

C. The arms trade and military assistance

103. The trade and export of small arms and light weapons is prohibited in accordance with article 18 of Decree-Law No. 16 (1976) on explosives, weapons and ammunition.

104. While there is no specific law concerning military assistance to countries where children are involved in armed conflict, Decree-Law No. 44 (2018) on international crimes protects children and prohibits their abuse.

VI. Conclusion

105. The Kingdom of Bahrain trusts that the present report has covered some of the efforts made by the State to implement the provisions of the Optional Protocol. Bahrain wishes to emphasize that there are no armed conflicts on its territory and that there have been no cases in which children have been forcibly conscripted or used in hostilities or in the establishment of armed groups. The Kingdom reaffirms that it intends to continue its efforts to advance the peace and stability process in the region.

106. The Kingdom is also a party to many regional and international human rights instruments and covenants, which were referred to earlier in the report.

107. For many decades, the Kingdom of Bahrain has recognized the importance of human rights. It has made human rights principles a fundamental pillar and a key element in

development plans and strategies and has consolidated human rights in such plans and strategies through the adoption of various human rights projects that have contributed to the advancement of human rights practices and pluralist democracy. These include the establishment of the National Institution for Human Rights and the amendment of the law establishing it in accordance with the Paris Principles; the formation of a committee on human rights in the Shura Council and the Council of Representatives; and the establishment of the Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Office of the Inspector General of the National Security Agency, the Special Investigation Unit and other human rights institutions and committees, which exercise their roles transparently and objectively in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the national laws governing this field.

108. With respect to cooperation at the international level, the Kingdom contributes to the enrichment and promotion of human rights. It also strives to implement the vision that was set out in the submission of Bahrain when it was a candidate for election to the Human Rights Council. That vision contains seven main pledges based on the achievements of Bahrain in the areas of women's rights, children's rights, combating trafficking in persons, the rights of persons with disabilities, religious tolerance and freedom of belief, protecting workers' rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.

109. In elections held at the General Assembly, the Kingdom of Bahrain obtained membership of the Human Rights Council for the period 2019–2021. The country gained global recognition for having successfully established a modern civil State that is founded on respecting and preserving human rights and guaranteeing rights and freedoms at all levels.

110. The Kingdom of Bahrain, acting through the agencies of the State, in particular television and radio channels and educational institutions, continuously strives to inform parents and society in general about the rights of the child. In addition, it has included human rights principles in educational curriculums in order to instil human rights principles into children at the earliest stages of development, with a view to ensuring that respecting human rights becomes something that is ingrained in all members of society.
