



**International Convention on  
the Elimination of All Forms  
of Racial Discrimination**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

**Combined sixth to ninth periodic reports  
submitted by Oman under article 9 of the  
Convention, due in 2020\***

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



## **Introduction**

1. The Sultanate of Oman is a fully sovereign, independent, Arab Islamic State, the capital of which is Muscat. The State religion is Islam, which is also the religion of the majority of the population of Oman, and Islamic sharia is the basis of legislation. However, followers of other religions are able to practise their religious rites in complete freedom. The official language of the State is Arabic, while other languages, such as English, are widely used in the economic sector and in education.
2. Oman acceded to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 2002, pursuant to Royal Decree No. 87/2002.
3. Oman has previously submitted reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in accordance with article 9 of the Convention, which requires States Parties to submit periodic reports on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted and which give effect to the provisions of the Convention.
4. Oman has put in place a legislative framework to consolidate human rights principles and eliminate racial discrimination, and it continues to develop and guarantee the highest possible standards in the protection and promotion of such rights, on the basis of the country's own sociocultural values and its international commitments. It also draws on the experiences of other States Parties, the expertise of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the technical know-how of other United Nations organizations and agencies.

## **Methodology and consultation process for preparing the report**

5. As an expression of the importance it attaches to the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and of its determination to implement the Convention, Oman formed a national team to draft the present report. The team, which was headed by the Deputy President of the Supreme Court, brought together representatives from relevant stakeholders, including the Oman Human Rights Commission (see annex 1 for the names of the authorities represented on the team). The team reviewed developments in local legislation and laws, particularly with regard to the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination. It also engaged with civil society organizations so that their views could be taken into account when drafting the report (see annex 2 for the civil society organizations involved in the preparation of the report).
6. The present report is divided into two parts: Part I. Basic information. Part II. The legal framework for implementing the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

## **Part I Basic information**

### **I. General information about the Sultanate of Oman**

#### **A. Geographical situation**

7. Throughout history, Oman has been an active centre of civilization that engaged with other centres of civilization in the ancient world. It has made important cultural contributions at various stages of history, as well as being an influential political and naval power during several periods. As with many civilized peoples and nations whose historical role has changed over time, the history of Oman comprises a number of different periods.
8. The Sultanate of Oman is located in the extreme south-east of the Arabian Peninsula, extending between latitudes 40°16' and 20°26' north and longitudes 50°51' and 40°59' east. It has a coastline that extends for 3,165 km, from the extreme south-east (the Arabian Sea

and the entrance to the Indian Ocean) to the Sea of Oman, ending at Musandam in the north, which overlooks the strategic Strait of Hormuz and the entrance to the Arabian Gulf. The Sultanate of Oman borders Yemen to the south-west, Saudi Arabia to the west and the United Arab Emirates to the north.

9. The total area of Oman is around 309,500 square kilometres and includes multiple landforms of varying topography.

## **B. Population**

10. According to the 2023 census, the population of Oman stands at 5,165,602, of whom 2,928,957 are Omanis and 2,236,645 are immigrants.

## **C. Key economic, social and cultural indicators**

11. Oman has achieved advanced levels of economic, social and cultural development. The many achievements and advances it has made in areas such as education, health, transportation, electricity, water, communications and other basic services have extended to all regions and governorates of the country, without exception. The aim has been to attain the well-being of society while also achieving justice and equality. According to data collected by the National Centre for Statistics and Information in 2022, the most significant socioeconomic indicators are as follows:

- The gross domestic product (GDP) at constant prices in Oman saw an increase of 9.6 per cent compared to 2021, while GDP at current prices rose by 28.2 per cent, also with respect to 2021, and per capita GDP at current prices rose by 29.2 per cent.
- The total number of workers in Oman stood at around 2.5 million, an increase of about 16.2 per cent compared to the previous year. Approximately 83.8 per cent of workers were employed in the private sector, compared to 16.2 per cent in the public sector. Omani workers numbered 801,815, and non-Omani workers 1,707,308.
- Total expenditure on education amounted to some 1,944 million Omani rials (RO) and on healthcare to around RO 827 million, while spending on social welfare and protection amounted to about RO 666 million.
- In all, 88.5 per cent of the population is educated and able to read and write, and the rate of illiteracy has fallen to 2.41 per cent. In the academic year 2021/22, 31,831 students – 13,695 male and 18,136 female – were enrolled in higher education.
- Infant mortality stood at 2.4 per cent of total births, which numbered 77,628, and 99.6 per cent of mothers received prenatal care.
- The number of published books increased by around 48 per cent. Also, there were 22 museums in Oman, 10 State-run and 12 private. The number of museum visitors increased by 124 per cent compared to the previous year.

## **D. Organizational, political and legal structure of the State**

12. Under the Basic Law of the State (i.e., the Constitution), which was promulgated by Royal Decree No. 6/2021, the system of government in Oman is that of a hereditary sultanate founded on justice, consultation and equality. Citizens have the right to participate in public affairs in accordance with the Basic Law of the State and under the terms and conditions prescribed by law.

13. The Basic Law of the State addresses all aspects of modern nation-building. It sets out the reference framework for the relationships between institutions, as well as the responsibilities and duties of the three powers: the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The Basic Law also ensures that each of these branches performs its role in a manner that respects the interests of the country, and it guarantees the rights and freedoms of citizens

under the law. The organizational structure of the State comprises the Head of State, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, as described in the following paragraphs.

### **Head of State**

14. The Sultan is Head of State and supreme leader. His person is inviolable, he is due respect, and his order is to be obeyed. He is the symbol of national unity and the guardian who cares for and protects the nation. His functions are defined in article 49 of the Basic Law of the State.

### **The executive**

15. The Council of Ministers is the highest executive authority in the Sultanate of Oman. It is headed by His Majesty the Sultan and assists the Sultan in formulating and implementing general State policy. In particular, the Council is responsible for forwarding recommendations to the Sultan regarding economic, political, social, operational and administrative questions that are of interest to the Government. This includes proposing draft laws and decrees; attending to the interests of citizens; ensuring the provision of vital services; raising economic, social, health and cultural standards; defining general goals and policies for economic, social and administrative development; proposing means and measures for the implementation of such goals and policies while ensuring the correct use of financial, economic and human resources; and discussing development plans prepared by the competent authorities and submitting them to the Sultan for approval and follow-up. The Council also discusses proposals from ministries regarding matters that fall within their purview and issues recommendations and decrees in that regard; oversees the operation of the administrative apparatus of the State, monitoring its performance and the fulfilment of its duties and coordinating between different units; and undertakes more general oversight of the enforcement of laws and decrees, regulations, covenants and treaties to ensure due compliance. Additionally, the Council performs any other tasks conferred upon it by the Sultan or by the law, and it has its own secretariat with which it cooperates in the exercise of its functions.

16. Article 50 of the Basic Law of the State includes provisions for the creation of specialized councils to assist His Majesty the Sultan, alongside the Council of Ministers, in formulating and implementing general State policy. These include the Defence Council, the National Security Council and the Board of Governors of the Central Bank.

### **The legislature**

17. Legislative authority in Oman is vested in His Majesty the Sultan. According to article 72 of the Basic Law of the State, the Council of Oman is responsible for proposing, approving and amending bills and for discussing development plans and the general budget of the State, as set forth in the law.

18. The Act regulating the Council of Oman was issued pursuant to Royal Decree No. 7/2021. The Council consists of the State Council, with members appointed by the Sultan, and the Shura Council, with members elected by the citizens of Oman to act on their behalf. The Council of Oman holds a regular session lasting not less than eight months per year, which is convened at the invitation of His Majesty the Sultan during the month of November each year. The decisions of the Council are taken by majority.

19. The two Councils undertake their legislative functions in accordance with the Basic Law of the State and the Act regulating the Council of Oman. These functions include considering bills, which are prepared by the Government then brought before the Council for approval or amendment before being submitted directly to His Majesty the Sultan for promulgation. The Council of Oman can also draft bills, which are then referred to the Government before coming back to the Council. Under the Basic Law of the State, draft development plans and the annual State budget must be referred by the Council of Ministers to the Council of Oman, which discusses them and makes recommendations. For its part, the Act regulating the Council of Oman specifies what monitoring tools the Council can use in its oversight of the executive. These tools include interrogation, consultation, requests for information, urgent statements and discussion of ministerial statements.

### **The judiciary**

20. Article 76 of the Basic Law of the State reads: “The rule of law is the basis of governance in the State. The honour of the judiciary and the integrity and fairness of judges constitute a guarantee for rights and freedoms.” Furthermore: “The judiciary is independent, and its authority is to be exercised by courts of different types and degrees, which hand down their rulings in accordance with the law.” Article 78 of the Basic Law stipulates that, when rendering judgment, judges are subject to no authority other than that of the law, and they may not be dismissed save in circumstances defined in the law. No one may interfere in judicial cases or in the course of justice, and such interference constitutes an offence punishable by law. All provisions pertaining to judges are set forth in the law.

### **Supreme Council of the Judiciary**

21. The Supreme Council of the Judiciary is headed by His Majesty the Sultan, while its members and functions are identified in Royal Decree No. 35/2022 regarding the administration of the judiciary. The main functions of the Council consist in formulating overall judicial policy, overseeing the proper functioning of the courts and the Office of the Public Prosecution, facilitating recourse to the courts and making the organs of justice more accessible to litigants. It also proposes draft laws and royal decrees on matters affecting the judiciary and expresses its views on draft judicial cooperation agreements between Oman and other countries.

22. The Office of the Public Prosecution, which is part of the judiciary, conducts prosecutions on behalf of society, oversees the activities of the law enforcement authorities and ensures the application of criminal law, the prosecution of offenders and the enforcement of judgments, as stipulated in article 86 of the Basic Law of the State.

23. According to Article 83 of the Basic Law of the State, the military judiciary is an independent judicial body competent to adjudicate military offences committed by members of the armed forces and the security forces, as detailed in the Military Judiciary Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 87/2022.

## **II. Legal framework for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination at the national level**

24. The supreme framework for the protection of human rights and the prevention of any form of racial discrimination in Oman is the Basic Law of the State, which regulates social, economic, educational and other rights. In fact, the Basic Law of the State includes numerous provisions safeguarding the rights and freedoms of citizens and residents of Oman. One guiding principle of State policy is enshrined in article 13 of the Basic Law, which reads: “A sound system of administration is a guarantee of justice, tranquillity and equality for citizens. It ensures respect for public order and protects the supreme interests of the nation.” For its part, article 15 of the Basic Law focuses on social principles, stating that justice, equality and equality of opportunity among Omanis underpin society and are to be guaranteed by the State. Those social principles also entail certain rights, such as healthcare; assistance during times of emergency and in case of illness, disability or old age; the right to work; and equality among citizens in access to public sector employment, in accordance with the law. In the light of the vital role played by families in the correct upbringing of children and with due respect for women’s rights, which are embodiments of the values of humanity, peace and social solidarity, the social principles enshrined in the Basic Law of the State lay emphasis on the need to protect families. The Basic Law also stipulates that the State has an obligation to attend to the welfare of children, persons with disabilities and young people.

25. The Basic Law of the State places particular emphasis on public rights and duties. According to article 18: “Every human being has the right to life and dignity, and the State is to be responsible for respecting and protecting that right, in accordance with the law.” Article 21 upholds the principle of equality and stipulates that all citizens are equal before the law and have equal public rights and duties, without discrimination on grounds of sex, origin, colour, language, religion, religious community, place of origin or social status. Also with a view to protecting rights and freedoms, article 23 of the Basic Law states that personal

freedom is guaranteed, and that no person may be arrested, detained, imprisoned or searched, or have their freedom of residence or movement curtailed, except in accordance with the law. Torture in all its forms, whether physical or mental, is prohibited under article 25, while article 30 guarantees the right of recourse to justice for all persons. This latter right is also upheld in articles 77 and 78 of the Basic Law, which establish the independence of the judiciary and of courts of all types and degrees, as well as the independence of judges, who may not be dismissed from office save as defined in the law. No one, moreover, may interfere in the course of justice in any way, and such interference constitutes an offence punishable by law.

26. All forms of degradation of human dignity are also prohibited under the Basic Law, which provides effective protection for the sanctity of private life. Article 33 of the Law stipulates: "Dwellings are inviolable, and it is not permitted to enter them without the permission of the occupants except in the circumstances and the manner prescribed in law." Article 35 safeguards freedom of opinion and expression in speech, writing or any other medium, within the limits of the law, while article 36 protects communications of all kinds, via telephone or telegraph, as well as correspondence via post and other means of communication. Confidentiality is guaranteed and such correspondence may not be censored, inspected, accessed, revealed, delayed or sequestered except in the circumstances and the manner prescribed in law. Article 37 of the Basic Law guarantees freedom of the press, printing and publishing, which may not be restricted save in aspects that give rise to civil strife, undermine State security or offend against human dignity and human rights. Article 40 stipulates the freedom to establish national associations for legitimate objectives, using peaceful means and in a manner that is consistent with the law and does not contradict the aims of the Basic Law of the State. However, it is prohibited to establish associations whose activities are hostile to societal order, that are secret or that are military in nature. No one may be forced to join an association. It should be noted that a number of human rights organizations have been involved in preparing national periodic reports under international treaties and in the interactive dialogue with treaty bodies to discuss those reports, for instance the Associations of Omani Women, the Oman Association for Persons with Disabilities, the Children First Association, the Association for the Care of Children with Disabilities, the Omani Society for Writers and Literati and the Bar Association. Article 42 of the Basic Law states that all persons who are legally resident in Oman enjoy protection of their person and property, in accordance with the law.

27. The Convention is part of applicable national law, as stipulated in the Basic Law of the State, article 13 of which provides that the principles guiding State policy are to be consistent with international and regional treaties and with generally recognized rules of international law. In addition, according to article 97 of the Basic Law of the State: "No institution of the State may issue regulations, decrees or instructions that violate extant laws or royal decrees or international covenants or treaties that are part of national law."

### **III. Legal framework for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination at the national level**

28. Oman has acceded to the following core international human rights instruments:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

29. The authorities are also considering accession to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In addition to the aforementioned, Oman has also acceded to the Arab Charter on Human Rights.

#### **IV. National human rights agencies and institutions**

30. In conjunction with its efforts to establish constitutional and legislative human rights norms, the State has established a number of national institutions tasked with safeguarding all human rights. The most important of these institutions are the Council of Oman, municipal councils, the Oman Human Rights Commission, the National Commission to Combat Human Trafficking, the National Committee for Family Affairs, the National Committee on Follow-up of the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the National Committee on Follow-up of the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the National Committee for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities, media institutions, civil society organizations, the Supreme Electoral Commission and the State Audit Institution.

##### **Council of Oman**

31. The Council of Oman – which has two chambers, the State Council and the Shura Council – has broad-ranging legislative and oversight powers that consist in approving, amending, proposing and reviewing bills, overseeing the performance of the executive and making its views known vis-à-vis international treaties. This has served to add new dimensions to the political rights of people in Oman and to involve them in the process of achieving development goals. The legislature also plays an important role in overseeing the implementation of international human rights instruments.

##### **Municipal councils**

32. The functions of elected municipal councils are closely related to human rights. In fact, the councils give opinions and recommendations on the development of municipal structures and services in the governorates, particularly with regard to public health, environmental protection against pollution, hydric projects, roads, schools, housing, places of worship, maternity, childhood, parks and other public services affecting citizens' everyday lives.

##### **Oman Human Rights Commission**

33. The Oman Human Rights Commission was established in 2008 as a national institution that concerns itself with all human rights issues and works to spread a culture of human rights throughout the country. It was restructured under Royal Decree No. 57/2022 to make it compliant with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). Under that Decree, the Oman Human Rights Commission is to be composed of 14 members, including human rights experts and representatives from a number of government agencies involved with human rights. The members are to elect one of their number – who cannot be a representative of a government agency – as chair of the Commission. The decisions the Commission issues are to be taken by a majority of civil society members present and, in the event of a tie, the side on which the chair of the meeting voted is to prevail. Members of the Commission who represent government agencies participate in the Commission's work and attend its meetings but do not have the right to vote.

34. The Commission holds its meetings (at the invitation of the Chair) four times a year or whenever necessary. This is a confirmation and a guarantee of the Commission's independence and its ability to perform its duties (as legislators intended) in accordance with international principles governing the work of national human rights institutions. The Statutes of the Oman Human Rights Commission, annexed to Decree No. 57/2022 restructuring the Commission, specify that membership is to be for a term of four years, renewable once.

35. The purpose of the Oman Human Rights Commission is to protect and promote human rights in the country, in accordance with the Basic Law of the State, the international treaties to which Oman is a party and current national law. Royal Decree No. 57/2022 served not only to restructure the Commission but also tasked it with developing a national human rights strategy, monitoring violations, receiving human rights-related complaints and conducting field visits to monitor the situation on the ground. In addition to this, the Commission undertakes awareness-raising activities such as conferences, courses and seminars on human rights-related topics. At the regional and international levels, the Commission cooperates with other human rights mechanisms, drafts reports and participates in meetings, and it represents Oman at regional and international conferences, events and meetings on human rights-related topics. Under its Statutes, the Commission submits an annual report on its efforts and activities, also containing any proposals it may have, directly to His Majesty the Sultan.

36. The Oman Human Rights Commission is responsible for examining any and all human rights violations and abuses. To this end, it receives and follows up on complaints concerning the human rights and fundamental freedoms that are protected by national law and legislation or by international human rights treaties.

37. The Commission has developed means to receive and monitor complaints in order to be able to address and respond effectively to all the reports it receives and thus fulfil its legal obligation to promote and protect human rights. In this connection, it has set up a free 24-hour telephone hotline and set up a system for filing complaints online via its own website and social media accounts.

38. The Commission has adopted a set of procedures to handle the complaints it receives. Its monitoring and complaints department first contacts the complainants and asks them to present themselves at the Commission headquarters to complete procedural formalities and, if the complaint was made online, to sign the relevant documents. The Commission then communicates with the competent authority to whom it explains the contents of the complaint as presented by the complainant and requests investigations, clarification, verification and other necessary measures.

39. The Commission itself may conduct a field visit to the location where the reported violation or abuse took place. If the Commission receives a response from the competent authority regarding the complaint, it makes a record of the proceedings and notifies the complainant of the response received from the competent authority and of the steps taken in that regard. In this way, the Commission monitors human rights-related violations and abuses in Oman and provides assistance to settle and resolve them.

40. The Commission also keeps an eye on any comments regarding human rights in Oman that might be made by foreign governments, international organizations or non-governmental bodies, and it coordinates with the relevant authorities to verify and respond to those comments.

41. Lastly, the Commission conducts field visits to prisons, detention centres, hospitals and workers' settlements to monitor human rights conditions there.

#### **National Commission to Combat Human Trafficking**

42. As part of its efforts to combat trafficking in persons, which is a growing global phenomenon, Oman enacted the Trafficking in Persons Act under Royal Decree No. 126/2008. Acting under article 21 of that Act, the Council of Ministers then issued a decree in 2009 to set up the National Commission to Combat Human Trafficking. The Commission – which has members from several governmental and non-governmental bodies – submits regular reports to the Council of Ministers detailing national efforts to combat human trafficking. It should be noted that Oman is currently cooperating with local and international experts and with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to draft a new law to combat human trafficking in order to keep pace with the latest developments in that field. Under Decree No. 50/2017, dated 1 November 2017, the Office of the Public Prosecution set up a special department to investigate and prosecute cases of human trafficking.

43. Human trafficking victims benefit from medical care, free legal and social assistance and dedicated shelters. In addition, a number of awareness-raising programmes have been broadcast via radio, television and the press.

#### **National Committee for Family Affairs**

44. The National Committee for Family Affairs, which was established under Royal Decree No. 12/2007, has members representing a number of government bodies. These include the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, as well as the Royal Oman Police, the Office of the Public Prosecution and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The National Committee has several functions, one of which is to coordinate the efforts made by government agencies, official bodies and voluntary organizations that work with families. It also cooperates with other family-related committees, councils and organizations in the Arab world and globally; it proposes public policies and programmes for family welfare in areas such as social care, health and culture; and it conducts follow-up with stakeholders to ensure they those policies and programmes are duly implemented. The National Committee also encourages studies and research into the family, and it monitors and implements resolutions and recommendations adopted at international and regional meetings and conferences on family issues. Lastly, it also expresses its views on relevant international and regional conventions. An independent technical secretariat of the National Committee for Family Affairs was established pursuant to Ministerial Decree No. 300/2012.

## **V. Disseminating and raising awareness about human rights instruments**

45. Decrees ratifying international instruments are published in the Official Gazette after which they become part of national law. In 2011, the Government took a decision to publish all ratified instruments in the Official Gazette. The provisions of treaties and protocols are also covered in various media outlets and are disseminated on the official websites of the ministries responsible for implementing them. In addition, the ministries produce print editions of the instruments, in both Arabic and English, which they then circulate among stakeholders. The ministries also celebrate international, regional, and national days dedicated to human rights. In coordination with media outlets, civil society institutions and relevant international organizations, the committees responsible for monitoring treaties and protocols have organized a series of seminars and workshops to raise public awareness about those instruments. Training is also provided to officials and specialists who work in the field of human rights, such as court staff, members of the military and security agencies, teachers, doctors, healthcare and social workers, lawyers and others.

46. Knowledge of human rights has been incorporated into school curricula, particularly with regard to the respect and promotion of rights, tolerance and gender equality. The Ministry of Education has drafted a paper regarding the integration of human rights concepts and education for peace into all school curricula at different levels.

47. Oman uses various media outlets such as newspapers, radio, television and the Internet to promote awareness and educate the public about human rights and international instruments. In addition, specialized training courses are organized for journalists and media professionals. Efforts to achieve these goals also extend to places of worship where the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs seeks to ensure that human rights concepts are disseminated in sermons and during religious events.

48. Civil society organizations in Oman also help to spread a culture of human rights, particularly with regard to women, children, persons with disabilities and assistance to needy families and other groups covered by international treaties. The organizations raise awareness about the issues persons in those categories face and draw attention to the relevant international instruments. A number of civil society organizations are also involved in the drafting of national periodic reports and in following up on the implementation of observations and recommendations issued by international bodies.

## **VI. Status of the Convention in the legal system of Oman and dissemination of the report**

49. Article 13 of the Basic Law of the State provides that the principles guiding State policy are to be consistent with international and regional treaties and with generally recognized rules of international law. According to article 93 of the Basic Law: “International charters and treaties are not to have force of law until they have been ratified. In no instance may any charter or treaty contain secret provisions that contradict its public provisions.” Article 97 stipulates: “No institution of the State may issue regulations, decrees or instructions that violate extant laws or royal decrees or international covenants or treaties that are part of national law.” This means that the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, once ratified by Oman, became part of national law and has binding effect on all the organs of State. Thus, all governmental and judicial bodies – as well as the Council of Oman – are bound by the Convention, which is part of the nation’s law, and they may not issue any rulings, decrees or laws that are inconsistent therewith.

### **Part II Legal framework for implementing the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**

50. The Basic Law of the State, which was promulgated on 11 January 2021, sets forth the principles upon which the Sultanate of Oman was founded. Those same principles have informed and guided its policies at the local, regional and international levels, consolidated its international standing and cemented its role as an upholder of justice, truth, security, stability and peace among countries and peoples.

51. The Basic Law of the State replaced the previous Basic Law, which had been promulgated under Royal Decree No. 101/96. The new Basic Law consolidates a system of laws and rights underpinned by fundamental principles enshrined in the Law itself.

52. The Basic Law of the State, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 6/2021, is the fundamental piece of human rights legislation in Oman. It guarantees basic rights on an equal basis to all persons covered by its provisions, including the rights to property, inheritance, healthcare, work, education and access to justice.

53. Despite the fact that it contains no explicit definition of the term “discrimination”, existing legislation – from the Basic Law of the State through laws, treaties, regulations and decrees – does nonetheless clarify exactly what is meant by “racial discrimination”, in accordance with the provisions of article 1 of the Convention. For example, article 21 of the Basic Law reaffirms the fact that citizens have equal rights and duties, without discrimination on grounds of sex, origin, colour, language, religion, religious community, domicile or social status. In this way, the Basic Law of the State prohibits all aspects of racial discrimination as defined in article 1 of the Convention. It is important to note, furthermore, that provisions relating to rights and freedoms concern all persons in general, and that the Basic Law actually includes a special provision specifically reaffirming the rights of residents of Oman. In fact, according to article 42, all residents or persons lawfully present in the country enjoy the protection of their person and property, in accordance with the law. They are, moreover, obligated to comply with national legislation and laws, and to observe the values of society and respect its traditions and sentiments.

54. Many existing laws include provisions that uphold the principle of equality and non-discrimination. These include the Children’s Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 22/2014, article 2 of which envisages a body of rights including the right not to suffer discrimination on grounds of colour, sex, origin, language, religion or social status or any other grounds. Article 51 states that children with disabilities enjoy all the rights envisaged in the Act without discrimination on the grounds of their disability. Article 42 of the School Education Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 31/2023, prohibits discrimination in education and stipulates that all children have the right to be schooled without discrimination

on grounds of sex, origin, colour, language, religion, religious community, place of residence or social status or any other grounds. For its part, the Labour Act, promulgated under Royal Decree No. 53/2023, stipulates that a dismissal is to be considered as arbitrary if it is found to have been motivated on grounds of sex, origin, colour, language, religion, belief or social status. Moreover, social justice is enshrined in the Social Protection Act, promulgated under Royal Decree No. 52/2023, in the form of equality of rights and obligations for all persons subject to the provisions of the Act. Thus, it should be clear that most legislation in Oman adheres to and upholds the principle of equality.

### **Adherence to the principles enshrined in the Convention**

55. In line with article 2 of the Convention, and in particular the obligation of all public authorities to adhere to the principle of preventing racial discrimination as set forth in the Convention, article 97 of the Basic Law stipulates that no State institution may issue regulations, decrees or instructions that violate extant laws or royal decrees or international covenants or treaties that are part of national law. Accordingly, no public body may enact legislation or adopt policies that conflict with the provisions of the Basic Law of the State, including those that envisage equality of rights and duties or that prohibit discrimination on any grounds.

56. The political and legal system in Oman does not recognize so-called ethnic minorities. This is because all persons in the country, be they citizens or residents, enjoy the same rights on a basis of equality, in accordance with the principle enshrined in article 21 of the Basic Law of the State. In fact, all persons have equal public rights and duties, without discrimination on grounds of sex, origin, colour, language, religion, religious community, place of origin or social status, as stated earlier. No legislation in Oman is directed at a particular group or minority or contains any prohibited discrimination of any kind.

57. Oman wishes to reaffirm the absence of any kind of ethnic classification of its population. All citizens and residents have the same rights and duties, and Oman considers that the use of the term “ethnic” to describe any particular group in society itself constitutes an act of racial discrimination. All members of the population coexist in Omani society without discrimination.

58. Furthermore, published statistics relating to the population of Oman do not include ethnic references. Rather, the population is divided into two groups, “Omani” and “non-Omani”, in order to draw a distinction between Omani citizens and others who come to work and reside in the country on a temporary basis.

59. National laws have been enacted to translate the provisions of the Convention into legal texts that prohibit any action or practice that constitutes racial discrimination. The State, for its part, ensures that this is effectively achieved. This is consistent with article 15 of the Basic Law, which reaffirms equality between women and men.

### **Eliminating racial discrimination**

60. In accordance with article 3 of the Convention, article 15 of the Basic Law of the State stipulates: “Mutual support and compassion act as close bonds between citizens. Strengthening national unity is a duty, and the State is to prohibit any action that gives rise to division or discord, or that compromises national unity.”

61. These principles are the underpinnings of society in Oman, and national legislation and laws have been enacted to condemn and criminalize any kind of segregation or racial discrimination. This is a confirmation of the country’s adherence and commitment to international human rights treaties.

62. In order to give effect to article 4 of the Convention, the Basic Law of the State – which is the country’s supreme legislative text – upholds equality between all persons, as stated earlier. In this connection, article 172 of the Criminal Code, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 7/2018, envisages a term of imprisonment of up to 10 years for anyone who arouses religious or sectarian discord or strife, or feelings of hatred, animosity and dissonance among the population, or who incites others to do so. The same penalty is applicable to

anyone who holds a meeting, seminar or conference for the purposes mentioned in the previous paragraph or who, knowing those purposes, participates in such events.

63. Article 5 of the Civil Associations Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 23/2007, provides that associations must not enter into tribal or sectarian affiliations.

#### **Equality before the law**

64. In order to give effect to article 5 (a) of the Convention and “the right to equal treatment before the tribunals and all other organs administering justice”, article 76 of the Basic Law states: “The rule of law is the basis of governance in the State. The honour of the judiciary and the integrity and fairness of judges constitute a guarantee for rights and freedoms.” The right of access to justice is upheld in article 30 of the Basic Law, while the independence of the courts is enshrined in article 77, which states: “The judiciary is independent, and its authority is to be exercised by courts of different types and degrees, which hand down their rulings in accordance with the law.” Furthermore: “When rendering judgment, judges are subject to no authority other than that of the law, and they may not be dismissed save in circumstances defined in the law. No one may interfere in judicial cases or in the course of justice, and such interference constitutes an offence punishable by law. All provisions pertaining to judges are set forth in the law.”

65. There is no hint of discrimination or distinction in national legislation, which is therefore applicable to all citizens within the protective framework of the courts, as envisaged in law. All persons have the right of recourse to the courts in order to claim their rights.

66. To ensure the professional and technical integrity of court proceedings, article 4 of Royal Decree No. 35/2022 regarding the administration of the judiciary envisages the creation of a judicial oversight authority, which reports to the Vice President of the Council. The authority is chaired by a full-time judge and its members are other experienced judges and members of the Office of the Public Prosecution. It is responsible for overseeing and reporting on the work of judges and, if necessary, holding them accountable before the competent authority.

#### **Right to security**

67. In order to give effect to article 5 (b) of the Convention and the fundamental right to liberty and security of person, article 22 of the Basic Law states: “Every human being has the right to a safe life, and the State is to be responsible for providing security and tranquillity for its citizens and for all persons who reside on its territory.” Article 23 stipulates: “Personal freedom is guaranteed under the law, and no person may be arrested, detained, imprisoned or searched, or have their freedom of residence or movement curtailed, except in accordance with the law.” In accordance with the Basic Law of the State, the procedures to be followed in arrests and other preventive measures are set forth in the Code of Criminal Procedure, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 97/99. Article 41 of the Code states that no one may be arrested or imprisoned without an order from the competent authority and in accordance with legally prescribed procedures. Article 49 of the Code details the basic mandatory information that must be included in arrest warrants issued by prosecutors: the warrants must be written, signed and dated by the issuing authority, who must state his or her capacity, the name of the person whose arrest is being sought, that person’s place of residence and all information necessary for identification as well as the reason for the arrest warrant. If the warrant is not enforced within three months from the date of its issuance, it expires and cannot be enforced save via the issuance of a fresh written order.

68. Another existing safeguard is that persons must be informed of the reasons for their arrest. In that regard, article 29 of the Basic Law of the State stipulates: “Persons who are arrested or detained must be informed immediately of the reasons for their arrest or detention. They have the right to contact or seek assistance from a person of their choice in the manner regulated by law, and they must be promptly informed of the charges against them. They and their representatives have the right to appeal before the courts against any measure restricting personal freedom. The law regulates the right to appeal in a manner that ensures that a decision is made within a specified period of time, otherwise the detainee must be released.”

69. Article 50 of the Code of Criminal Procedure stipulates that law enforcement officials must immediately take a statement from a person who has been arrested. If nothing emerges to exonerate the person, the officials must refer the person to the competent prosecutor. According to article 51 of the Code, prosecutors are to question accused persons who have been arrested, within 24 hours, then order either that they be remanded in custody or released. If the interests of the investigation require the assistance of a doctor or other expert to prove a particular matter, prosecutors may issue an order for such a person to be appointed and to report back on the matter in question (art. 116 of the Code).

70. In addition to this, article 189 of the Code of Criminal Procedure stipulates that accused persons are not to be required to take an oath or compelled or induced to give responses or make statements. Under no circumstances is the silence of accused persons or their failure to respond to be construed as a confession, nor may they be punished for false testimony in respect of statements they make to deny the charges against them. Under article 192 of the Code, any statement or confession made as a result of torture or coercion is invalid and inadmissible.

71. Criminal liability, criminal actions and the relevant penalties are all set forth in the Criminal Code, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 7/2018, as amended. The Code guarantees the security of persons, their property and their honour, and it penalizes any form of abuse against individuals, whether committed by State officials or by others. The Code stipulates the penalties for each criminal act and defines what constitutes participation in or incitement to such acts. Murder, assault, torture, threats and the use of violence are all crimes punishable by law. The relevant provisions of the Criminal Code are attached.

### **Political rights**

72. As concerns article 5 (c) of the Convention, it is important to note that Oman has, in recent years, greatly consolidated the principle of equality among citizens and has guaranteed their right to participate in public life via the creation of local municipal councils. The procedures outlined in the following paragraphs constitute a comprehensive package of measures intended to uphold equality in Oman, also by eliminating all forms of racial discrimination.

73. The elimination of racial discrimination is enshrined in the Basic Law of the State, article 15 of which stipulates: "Justice, equality and equality of opportunity among Omanis underpin society and are to be guaranteed by the State."

74. The Act regulating elections to the Shura Council, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 54/2023, sets forth all the provisions governing voting and standing for election. According to article 1 of the Act, a voter is "any citizen whose name is recorded in the electoral register in accordance with the present Act", while a candidate is "a citizen who applies to become a candidate for election as a member of the Council". The Act also delineates the conditions for inclusion in the electoral register.

75. Municipal councils, for their part, are regulated by the Municipal Councils Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 126/2020, article 10 of which stipulates the candidacy requirements for persons who do not represent government entities. The Act does not contain any discriminatory provisions.

76. Regulations governing municipal council elections were issued under Ministerial Decree No. 92/2022. The Decree regulates the electoral process and gives all citizens the right to stand for election and to vote. It also grants equal opportunities for all to participate in the electoral process if they fulfil the necessary requirements set forth in law, which explicitly envisages complete equality and non-discrimination between individuals, irrespective of their origin, religious community or sex.

77. Oman can affirm that the electoral process is based on principles of transparency, fairness and equal opportunity, without discrimination between individuals. Calls for candidates and for registration (or transfer of registration) in the electoral registers are announced via print and audiovisual media. Legal deadlines are clearly specified so that all persons can submit their applications on time, and those applications are handled impartially by specialized staff. The public is given access to all information and data related to the

electoral process, while the submission of candidacy applications is facilitated using online means and the electoral website, with due regard for the protection and confidentiality of data. Technical support is available for citizens who encounter difficulties in the application process.

78. Statistics relating to the elections for the tenth term of the Shura Council in 2023 show that, out of a total 968 candidates, 932 were men and 36 were women. A total of 496,279 persons recorded on the electoral register cast their vote, 258,847 men and 237,432 women.

79. As concerns elections for the third term of the municipal council in 2022, the statistics show that, out of a total 881 candidates, 851 were men and 30 were women. A total of 288,469 persons recorded on the electoral register cast their vote, 164,109 men and 124,360 women.

80. Oman has made every effort to enable persons with disabilities to exercise their right to vote easily and conveniently via an electronic voting system. This serves to facilitate and improve the voting process and to enhance the political participation of such persons, whether they are inside or outside the country and regardless of their origin, religious community or sex. Voters make their choice by direct secret ballot and, to accommodate persons with visual impairments, a technical feature has been added to the voting app that enables them to listen to the voting instructions then select their candidate. The app also includes a feature that provides voting instructions in sign language for persons who are deaf.

#### **Other civil rights**

##### *Right to freedom of movement and residency, and to leave and return to the country*

81. With regard to article 5 (d) of the Convention, every human being has the right to a secure life, as stipulated in article 22 of the Basic Law of the State. For this reason, Oman is committed to providing security and peace of mind to its citizens and all persons who reside on its territory. Article 23 of the Basic Law of the State affirms that personal freedom is guaranteed under the law, and that no person may have their freedom of residence or movement curtailed, except in accordance with the law. This matter is regulated by the Foreigners' Residency Act, promulgated under Royal Decree No. 16/95, which dictates the circumstances under which a foreign national may be deported. The Inspector General may order the deportation of foreigners who have entered Oman unlawfully, at the expense of the foreign nationals concerned or of the person who brought them in or employed them. A foreign national who is convicted of committing a major offence is also to be deported as is a foreigner convicted of committing a minor offence or a misdemeanour if the sentence envisages deportation. In all cases, the deportation is to be carried out once the sentence has been served.

82. Under article 33 of the Foreigners' Residency Act, foreigners who are facing deportation and who have interests in Oman are to be given a period of one month to settle their affairs, having first provided personal surety. This period may be renewed one or more times, if the circumstances so require. If the foreigners concerned are unable to settle their affairs within the specified period, they may appoint an agent to do so on their behalf.

83. Under article 20 of the Basic Law of the State, citizens cannot be deported or exiled, or prevented from returning to the territory of the State.

84. Under article 31 of the Foreigners' Residency Act, the residency of foreign nationals may be revoked and they may be expelled from the country only if they engage in an activity that undermines national security; that endangers the political, economic or financial cohesion of the State; that violates public order or runs contrary to public morals; or that harms the interests of Oman with other nations.

85. Article 52 bis of the Code of Criminal Procedure includes a body of safeguards regarding the imposition of travel bans. It stipulates: "The Public Prosecutor, or the person deputizing for the Prosecutor, may issue a travel ban if there is sufficient evidence to charge a person with a major or minor offence that attracts a term of imprisonment. Travel bans are to be written, signed and dated by the issuing authority, who must state his or her capacity,

the name of the person who is banned from travelling and all information necessary for identification as well as the reason for and duration of the travel ban. The person concerned or his or her representative may appeal against the travel ban before the criminal court of appeal and the court, sitting in chambers, must rule on the appeal within three days. If the court finds no justification for the ban, it must be revoked immediately.”

86. The question of travel bans is addressed in articles 427 and 428 of the Code of Civil and Commercial Procedure, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 29/2002. Under those provisions, the courts may ban a defendant from travelling, under the conditions set forth in law.

#### *Right to nationality*

87. The right to nationality is enshrined in the Basic Law of the State, article 19 of which stipulates: “Omani nationality is to be regulated by law and may not be revoked or withdrawn save within the limits of the law.”

88. In implementation of this, the Omani Nationality Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 17/2025, and its implementing regulations promulgated by Ministerial Decree No. 92/2019, regulate all matters relating to the conferral, recovery, loss, revocation and withdrawal of Omani nationality. Legislators in Oman have embraced *jus sanguinis* on the paternal side as the basic criterion for the conferral of Omani nationality, while also adopting a set of precautionary criteria aimed at preventing situations of statelessness. These include *jus soli*, applicable to children who are born in Oman to unknown parents, and *jus sanguinis* on the maternal side, applicable to children who are born to an Omani mother in Oman or abroad and whose paternity has not been legally established.

89. Under article 22 of the Omani Nationality Act, Omani nationality may be granted to a minor child born to an Omani mother and her foreign husband, under the conditions set forth in law.

#### *Women’s right to marriage and choice of spouse*

90. The Basic Law of the State affirms that women are to enjoy the same rights as men, and it includes provisions that reaffirm the principles of equality, social justice and the full right of women to education, work and employment on an equal footing with men. Article 15 of the Basic Law states: “The family is the cornerstone of society, and its pillars are religion, morality and patriotism; the State is to endeavour to maintain the cohesion and stability of the family and consolidate its values. The State is also to guarantee equality between women and men and to undertake to provide care for children, persons with disabilities and young people, in the manner prescribed by law.” Justice, equality and equality of opportunity among citizens underpin society and are to be guaranteed by the State. For its part, article 21 of the Basic Law upholds the principle of equality and stipulates that all citizens are equal before the law and have equal public rights and duties, without discrimination. These constitutional rights underpin the whole of national legislation.

91. National laws and legislation confer protection on families in general and on women in particular. The Personal Status Code promulgated by Royal Decree No. 32/97 regulates the relationships and the reciprocal rights and duties of family members under law. In this way, the Code makes an effective contribution to maintaining family stability and to preventing – or reducing the likelihood of – disputes that can give rise to violence between members of the same family. The Code is thus one of the most important legal protection mechanisms. It lays down sound principles, takes account of the consequences of marriage break-up and establishes parameters for interaction between men and women in the event of divorce, with the aim of preserving the family unit even after spouses separate and protecting the rights and best interests of children.

92. Marriage contracts are also regulated under the Personal Status Code promulgated by Royal Decree No. 32/97, which stipulates that marriage can be contracted only with the consent of the woman. Thus, a woman’s consent is fundamental to a marriage contract and without it the union cannot be finalized. The same applies to a woman’s right to annul a marriage contract, as the law allows women, when entering into a marriage contract, to stipulate that they themselves are to have the right to seek divorce and annul the contract. It

should also be noted, moreover, that women can always turn to the courts to seek the annulment of a marriage contract whenever there are legal and factual considerations that support their right to do so.

93. Royal Decree No. 23/2023 concerns the issue of marriages between Omanis and foreigners. It regulates the documentation required under laws and royal decrees to prove a marriage between an Omani and a foreigner within Oman. Foreign documents attesting to such marriages are to be treated on a par with official Omani documents once they have been certified by the competent authorities in the foreign country and by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition to this, recognition is also extended to documents attesting to a marriage between an Omani and a foreigner issued by a foreign authority prior to the date of entry into force of the Decree, on condition that such documents are legalized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In this way the Decree overturns the previous regulations governing marriages between Omanis and foreigners, under which approval from the Ministry of the Interior was required before the marriage could take place.

*Right to own property*

94. The Basic Law of the State guarantees the right to property. Article 14 stipulates: “Private property is to be protected. No one is to be prevented from disposing of their property, within the limits of the law, and no one is to be deprived of their property save in the public interest, in circumstances set forth in the law and in return for fair compensation.”

95. The Basic Law of the State prohibits any generalized confiscation of property. Article 14 stipulates: “The generalized confiscation of property is prohibited, and individual confiscations are permissible only under a court order and in circumstances set forth in the law.” Current law is consistent with those principles, including the Act regulating expropriation in the public interest, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 71/2023. Article 2 of that Act stipulates that real estate property may not be expropriated or temporarily seized, save in the public interest, in exchange for fair compensation and in accordance with the provisions of the Act. Under article 13 of the Act, owners of a property part of which is to be expropriated must be compensated for the full value of the property if the portion remaining to them after the expropriation is unusable. Article 15 requires payment of compensation to the parties concerned, in cash or in kind, once the value of the property has been determined.

96. Furthermore, and in order to guarantee individual rights, the regulations governing the levying of taxes, fees and other sums owed to the State administrative apparatus, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 32/94, envision a body of controls to be applied when imposing a preventive or administrative seizure on a debtor’s assets.

97. Under the Code of Criminal Procedure, the enforcement of any measure to confiscate assets in the course of criminal proceedings requires a court order.

*Right to inherit*

98. All matters relating to civil status – such as marriage, divorce, alimony, *khul’* divorce, lineage, wills and inheritance – are regulated by the Personal Status Code. In Islam, the rights of women are protected on a basis of justice, fairness and balance; the duties of women and the obligations of men are counterpoised and fairly distributed.

99. The disparity between the shares due to male and female heirs under Islamic law is governed by three criteria: the degree of kinship between the heir (male or female) and the deceased; the relative positions of the inheriting generation and the generation of the deceased in the chronological order of generations; and the financial burden that Islamic sharia requires heirs to shoulder vis-à-vis others. This means that in many cases women receive a larger share of inheritance than men.

*Right to freedom of thought and conscience*

100. Religious freedom in Oman is considered a fundamental constitutional right under the Basic Law of the State, article 34 of which reads: “Freedom to practise religious rites in accordance with established customs is to be guaranteed, provided that this does not disturb public order or violate public morals.” Oman acceded to the International Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 2002, pursuant to Royal Decree No. 87/2002, which is part of national law and which upholds the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Article 21 of the Basic Law guarantees the principle of equality and stipulates that all citizens are equal before the law and have equal public rights and duties, without discrimination on grounds of sex, origin, colour, language, religion, religious community, place of origin or social status.

101. In order to give effect to constitutional provisions guaranteeing religious freedom, legislators have envisaged penalties against persons who encourage religious or sectarian strife or discord, including insults against other religions. Article 108 of the Criminal Code envisages a term of imprisonment of up to 10 years for anyone who arouses religious or sectarian discord or strife, or feelings of hatred, animosity and dissonance among the population, or who incites others to do so. The same penalty is applicable to anyone who holds a meeting, seminar or conference for the purposes mentioned in the previous paragraph or who, knowing those purposes, participates in such events. The offence is aggravated if committed in a place of worship or an official facility, in a public place or at a public gathering, or if it is committed by public officials during or in connection with the performance of their duties, or by a person in a position of religious authority.

102. Article 269 of the Code envisages penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment for the following actions:

- Insulting or offending the Supreme Being, whether verbally, in writing, through drawings, gestures or by any other means.
- Insulting, distorting or desecrating the Holy Qur'an.
- Insulting Islam or any Islamic rituals or insulting any other Abrahamic religions.
- Insulting or offending one of the prophets, whether verbally, in writing, through drawings, gestures or by any other means.
- Vandalizing or desecrating buildings or their contents if they are intended for the practice of the religious rites of Islam or of any other Abrahamic religion.

103. Article 273 of the Code, for its part, envisages a term of imprisonment of up to 1 year and/or a fine of RO 1,000 for anyone who produces, manufactures, sells, offers for sale or trade, acquires or possesses products, goods, publications, tapes or any other material bearing drawings, slogans, words, symbols, signs or anything else that offends Islam or any other Abrahamic religion. The same penalty is applicable to anyone who, knowing their contents, advertises such materials.

104. At the international level, Oman acceded to the Arab Charter on Human Rights under Royal Decree No. 16/2023 which, in accordance with article 97 of the Basic Law of the State, became part of national law. Article 30 of the Charter upholds the right to freedom of thought, belief and religion, which are to be subject to no restrictions save those envisaged in applicable legislation. Similarly, personal freedom to manifest religion or belief, either individually or in community with others, is to be subject to no restrictions save those which are prescribed by law and are necessary in a tolerant society that respects freedoms and human rights, for the protection of public safety, public order, public health and public morals, or for the protection of the rights and fundamental freedoms of others.

105. As part of national efforts to consolidate the right to freedom of conscience and religion, the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs has set up a special department for the religious welfare of non-Muslims. The department has made facilities available as places of worship for non-Muslims, thereby enabling them to perform their religious rites and rituals without discrimination.

106. Several places of worship have been set up as part of efforts to promote tolerance and the right to worship and religion. These include Protestant and Catholic churches, the Al-Amana Centre, the Mahajan Hindu Association and the Sikh community, which are the official representatives of their respective communities.

107. Efforts have also been made to promote religious tolerance and freedom of conscience via the media. In that regard, a number of publications and brochures have been issued,

including a supplement entitled “The Sultanate of Oman: A groundbreaking experience in the promotion of coexistence and combating terrorism”, which was released to coincide with the participation of Oman in the third United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week, held from 19 to 23 June 2023 at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

108. The authorities are also using media platforms to spread a culture of religious tolerance. A programme entitled “Talk of tolerance” has been broadcast on local radio, with a number of topics intended to reinforce religious values and the concept of religious tolerance.

*Right to freedom of opinion and expression*

109. The Basic Law of the State guarantees freedom of opinion and expression. Article 35 of the Law stipulates: “Freedom of opinion and expression through speech, writing and other means of expression is to be guaranteed, within the limits of the law.” Article 37 guarantees freedom of the press, printing and publishing, which may not be restricted save in aspects that give rise to civil strife, undermine State security or offend against human dignity and human rights.

110. Article 2 (d) of the Children’s Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 22/2014, affirms the right of children to participate and express their opinions within a framework that is consistent with the rights of others, public order, public morals and national security. They are, moreover, given full opportunity to make their views known.

111. The Ministry of Information is responsible for facilitating the operation of the national media. It is also responsible for authorizing artistic works for display and distribution in Oman, as regulated by the Act on the Oversight of Artistic Works, and it seeks to build capacity among journalists and media professionals working in units of the State administrative apparatus and other public entities as well as among those working in print and audiovisual media.

112. The media in Oman – which keeps pace with developments in communications technology at the international level – is eager to engage with and give a clear and transparent voice to the interests and aspirations of Omani citizens. There has been considerable activity in the media sector in Oman over recent years. In fact, in the first six months of 2024, 201 applications from press and media institutions were processed by the Ministry of Information (Media Licensing Department) and 11 licences were issued to radio and television stations, newspapers and online platforms. In addition to this, 279 applications were approved licensing media activities of various kinds, such as advertising, libraries, printing, photography and hoardings, and 85 certificates were issued for artistic and cinematic works, including 268 films and 226 video games. In all, 492 people were working in media and press organizations. For its part, the Oman Journalists’ Association hosted the global congress of the International Federation of Journalists, which took place from 31 May to 3 June 2022. The event – which attracted considerable local, regional and international attention as the most prominent press and media event ever seen in the Middle East – was attended by representatives of federations, unions and syndicates from around the world, as well as many journalists and media professionals from newspapers, radio and television stations and online outlets from all over the globe.

113. The Media Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 58/2024, was issued on 10 November 2024. It incorporates and reaffirms principles already enshrined in the Basic Law of the State, most notably: freedom of opinion and expression via the media; freedom to engage in media activities including journalism, printing and publishing; freedom to obtain and circulate information; prohibition of prior censorship of media activities; prohibition of any coercion of media professionals to disclose their sources of information; and the right to receive information from various media outlets. The Act also envisages protection for media professionals in the event of any attack they might suffer during or by reason of the work they do. It is important to note, also, that the Media Act guarantees all the aforementioned rights and freedoms without discrimination or distinction between members of society.

*Right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association*

114. Freedom of peaceful assembly is guaranteed under the Basic Law of the State, article 39 of which stipulates that citizens have the right to assemble in accordance with the law. Article 40, for its part, guarantees freedom to form associations at the national level, for legitimate purposes, by peaceful means and in a manner that is not contrary to the provisions of the law.

115. The right to strike and to conduct collective bargaining is addressed in articles 127 and 128 of the Labour Act. The Ministry of Labour issued Decree No. 294/2006 (subsequently amended), which regulates collective bargaining, peaceful strikes and lockouts and prioritizes workers and workers' rights in the event of the closure or bankruptcy of their place of work. The Act describes the mechanism by which workers are to receive their wages which, it stipulates, may not be withheld or waived save under the conditions set forth in the Act itself. Furthermore, the Act also defines daily and weekly working hours and leave, including annual and emergency leave, public holidays and weekly rest days.

116. A dialogue committee bringing together representatives of the three parties involved in the production process (government, employers and workers) was established under Ministerial Decree No. 625/2023. The committee reviews regional and international standards with a view to advancing social dialogue and thus promoting relations between the three parties concerned. It also seeks to orient the efforts of social partners in the labour market with a view to enhancing productivity and competitiveness, and to achieving balance and harmony between the interests of workers and employers in a manner that reinforces efforts towards comprehensive and sustainable development.

**Strengthening and protecting economic, social and cultural rights***Right to work*

117. Over the past 54 years, comprehensive development, and particularly human development, has been a top priority for Oman. The country has made tangible progress in the field of economic, social and cultural rights, especially those related to women, children, healthcare and education.

118. Article 40 of the Basic Law of the State guarantees freedom to form associations at the national level, for legitimate purposes and by peaceful means. The Civil Associations Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 14/2000, as amended, lists the areas in which associations may operate, the conditions for the establishment of such associations and their prerogative of independence. Article 5 of the Act specifies the areas in which civil society associations may not operate, which are limited to politics, the formation of parties and interference in religious affairs. Likewise, associations must not enter into tribal or sectarian affiliations. Under article 3 of the Act, the Ministry of Social Development has the authority to oversee such associations, without however encroaching upon their independence. The Act, moreover, guarantees the right of individuals to lodge grievances with the courts against decrees of the Ministry of Social Development that affect civil society associations, and it gives the associations' administrative boards the right to administer their associations in line with their own statutes and under the supervision of their general assembly.

119. The Government has sought to simplify the system for registering and announcing the creation of new associations in order to encourage the growth of a civil society that plays an active role in development and human rights. There are 39 professional associations in Oman with 5,305 members, and 31 community associations with 6,007 members. This is in addition to 10 charitable institutions with 46 members, and 65 Omani women's associations with 9,979 members. There are also 21 foreign community clubs with 3,257 members, as of the end of 2022.

120. Article 15 of the Basic Law of the State makes it clear that work is a right and a privilege, and citizens are free to engage in the work of their choice within the limits of the law. No citizen may be forced to work, save as required by law to perform a public service, for a specified period and for fair remuneration. The State is to enact laws to protect workers and employers, regulate relations between them and ensure safe and secure occupational health standards.

121. Royal Decree No. 89/2020, promulgated on 18 August 2020, concerns the creation, mandate and organizational structure of the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry is designated as having 29 functions, which concern the implementation and development of existing labour legislation, organizational aspects and the development of human resources in units of the State's administrative apparatus. The Ministry is also to regulate the labour market and the services provided to the private sector and to promote training and cooperation with international organizations and institutions.

122. Employment in the administrative apparatus of the State is regulated by the Ministry of Labour, within the limits of its functions and in accordance with the principles of fairness and equality. The Ministry's actions in this regard are governed by article 12 of the Civil Service Act, which specifies the conditions for employing citizens in public sector posts. Under article 5 of the Act, the Ministry is also responsible for determining which posts are to be advertised in local newspapers and on official websites.

123. Oman aspires to lay foundations for comprehensive and sustainable development that keeps pace with local and global advances in various fields. To this end it is pursuing the implementation of the Oman Vision 2040, which aims to create a labour market that attracts skills and that reflects and embraces demographic, economic, technological and knowledge-related changes. The Vision also aims to strengthen the role of the private sector in attracting and recruiting more national talent from all levels of education, from primary school to university, as well as skilled labour from abroad, and it highlights the importance of improving the legislation that regulates the labour market in order to align it with international labour standards.

124. In furtherance of the Government's tenth five-year development plan (2021–2025), the Ministry of Labour has been implementing strategic directives aimed at advancing labour-market policies, providing facilities and support to the private sector and directing efforts towards the launch of employment initiatives, with a view to providing suitable openings for jobseekers. The Ministry has also developed a number of strategic programmes to reflect the importance of national workers and of the role they play in building the nation. These programmes include the creation of a new mechanism for the "Omanization" of jobs, the roll-out of a national employment policy and the development of a sectoral strategy for human resource development. These initiatives will help to provide job openings and training for Omani workers and facilitate their stable presence on the labour market. Another important aspect is the digital transformation towards e-governance, which entails laying foundations and fixing standards for career planning, administrative development and performance management in government departments and private sector establishments.

125. Recruitment processes are fair and transparent, with job advertisements being posted on an online app known as "Maak", which covers jobs of all kinds in the public and private sectors and in the military. Jobs are also advertised in print newspapers and on the Ministry of Labour website. Jobseekers register themselves and their applications are considered by matching their profiles with available job openings, also taking account of seniority. Candidates are contacted and invited to attend an online written test on a date specified by the Ministry of Labour. The successful candidate is identified as a result of this online screening process, without discrimination and taking due account of equal employment opportunities for men and women.

126. As of December 2023, a total of 421,034 persons – 376,856 Omanis and 44,178 migrants – were working in the government sector. As concerns the private sector, in the same year, the number of Omani workers registered with social insurance stood at 453,904.

127. As a way of protecting the rights of both workers and employers, the law prohibits the recruitment of non-Omani workers unless legal safeguards are in place. These include the existence of a legal contract of employment setting forth the name of the employer and of the company and the address of the place of work. The contract is also to include information about the worker, including nationality, type of work, duration of the contract, wages and other emoluments and benefits as well as other legal conditions. The Ministry of Labour has legislated the relationship between domestic workers and their employers, notably in the form of Decree No. 189/2004, which concerns workplace conditions for domestic workers and

specifies the need for a written contract. This serves to regulate and document the working relationship, including the reciprocal rights and responsibilities of the two sides, such as monthly wages, holidays and food. In the case of any violation of those conditions, workers can appeal to the competent authorities. The Decree also requires employers to provide workers with free food, housing and healthcare, as well as a ticket to return to their country of origin at the end of the contract. It also envisages periods of rest during the day as well as a monthly period of rest, all to be stipulated in the contract of employment. The Ministry of Labour also issued Decree No. 1/2011, which regulates the recruitment of non-Omani workers, and which includes an annex containing the standard contract of employment for domestic workers. The Ministry is currently preparing regulations for domestic workers, which are expected to be issued soon.

128. Article 58 of the Labour Act stipulates: “Employers who conduct their business in particular zones (to be specified by the Minister) are required to provide their workers with appropriate means of transportation as well as with suitable accommodation, meals and drinking water in places designated for that purpose.”

129. The Labour Act includes provisions regulating leave for workers in the private sector, including maternity leave for female workers covering the period before and after childbirth. The Act also addresses the question of compensation for unfair dismissal and that of workers’ entitlement to full wages during officially designated public holidays. Moreover, workers who have a certified illness are entitled to sick leave of up to 182 days per year at specific proportions of their total wages. According to article 84 of the Labour Act, workers are entitled to special leave with full pay as follows: 7 days of paternity leave, provided that the child was born alive and that the leave is taken within 98 days of the birth; 3 days in the event of marriage; 10 days in the event of the death of a spouse or a child; and 15 days to perform the Hajj, provided that the worker has spent at least one continuous year in the service of the employer. Other leave entitlements include up to 15 days per year to take academic exams; 130 days for Muslim female workers in the event of the death of their husband and 14 days for non-Muslim female workers; 15 days per year for Omani workers to care for a sick person to whom they are related by marriage or by kinship up to the second degree; and 98 days of maternity leave for female workers covering the period before and after childbirth. Leave prior to the birth of the child is granted on medical advice and must not exceed 14 days, while the remainder of maternity leave is granted from the date of birth. All leave is granted on an equal basis and without discrimination.

130. According to article 70 of the Labour Act, workers may not be employed for more than 8 effective hours per day and a maximum of 40 hours per week. This does not include daily rest periods or meal breaks, and periods of continuous work may not exceed 6 hours. Maximum working hours for Muslim workers during Ramadan are 6 hours per day and 30 hours per week. Employers are required to place a schedule of daily and weekly working hours and rest periods on prominent display in the workplace. The Minister is to issue a decree defining the circumstances and types of work in which – for technical or operational reasons – work can continue without a rest period.

131. Article 71 of the Labour Act admits the possibility of working overtime with respect to the hours stipulated in article 70, if the nature of the work so requires. In such a case, the standard working hours plus the overtime must not exceed 12 hours per day, and employers are required to pay workers an additional wage for the extra hours worked equivalent to their basic wage plus at least 25 per cent for daytime work and at least 50 per cent for nighttime work, or to grant the workers compensatory time off.

132. With a view to providing workers with the necessary protection, the regulations governing vocational health and safety measures in businesses subject to the Labour Act, promulgated by Ministerial Decree No. 286/2008, prohibit the employment of workers in construction sites or outdoor locations during intense midday heat. The regulations also require the provision of shaded areas and the supply of cold water at work sites, as well as tanks containing adequate drinking water in workers’ residential compounds.

133. Under article 57 of the Labour Act, employers are required to make first aid available for their workers at the workplace. If the number of workers at a single location exceeds 200, the employer must appoint a qualified nurse to deliver first aid, or contract with a specialized

institution to provide such services. Under article 60, employers must provide a designated rest area for women at workplaces where there are more than 25 female workers.

*Right to form and join trade unions*

134. The Labour Act, promulgated under Royal Decree No. 53/2023, includes provisions concerning trade unions, sectoral unions and general federations of workers. Article 108 of the Act reads: “Workers may come together to form a trade union in order to promote their interests, defend their rights, improve their material and social conditions and represent them in all matters affecting them.” According to article 109, trade unions may come together to form a general federation of workers to represent them at local, regional and international meetings and conferences. Trade unions may also come together to form sectoral unions. Article 110 of the Act states that trade unions, sectoral unions and general federations of workers are to have independent legal personality from the date they are registered with the Ministry. They also have the right to conduct their activities in complete freedom and without external interference. The Minister is to issue decrees regulating the formation, operation and registration of trade unions, sectoral unions and general federations of workers as well as the mechanisms whereby members can be released from their professional duties to fulfil their union responsibilities. Lastly, under article 111 of the Labour Act, members of a trade union, sectoral union or general federation of workers may not be dismissed or penalized in any other way for exercising their union activities in accordance with relevant laws, regulations and ministerial decrees. As of the end of 2023, there were 327 trade unions and 7 sectoral unions in Oman. These figures compare with 306 registered trade unions and 6 sectoral unions in 2021 and 323 trade unions and 6 sectoral unions in 2022.

135. Article 73 of the Labour Act stipulates that employers may refrain from compliance with articles 70 and 71 of the Act in situations of seasonal work and in sectors that are identified and regulated by decree of the Minister. Under article 75 of the Act, women may be employed during nocturnal hours in circumstances and jobs and on occasions to be defined by decree of the Minister. Workers who are breastfeeding are to be granted one hour per day to care for their child, for a period of one year starting from the end of their maternity leave. The worker herself is to decide when to take the hour off, which is to be counted as part of working hours (art. 76 of the Act).

136. According to article 24 of the Labour Act: “Employers who employ 40 or more workers are required to appoint professionally qualified persons with disabilities of Omani nationality in posts commensurate with their condition. The proportion of such workers is to be determined by decree of the Minister. The Minister may amend the number specified in the preceding paragraph, having first obtained the approval of the Council of Ministers. Persons with disabilities who have been employed in accordance with the provisions of the preceding paragraph are to enjoy the same rights as other workers.”

137. Decree No. 125/2005 – which was issued under the previous Labour Act and concerns the employment in the private sector of persons with special needs – stipulates that employers with 50 or more workers must ensure that 2 per cent of their workforce is made up of persons with special needs, whose candidacy is put forward by the competent department. Employers are required to prepare a statement listing the persons with disabilities they have employed, using a form provided for that purpose. Persons with special needs may be employed only in jobs for which they have been trained or that they are capable of performing, as indicated in their registration.

138. The Ministry has encouraged the private sector to employ workers with disabilities, stipulating in Decree No. 362/2006 that, for employers who employ a worker with a disability, that worker is to count as two workers when calculating the legally prescribed rate of “Omanization” of private sector businesses.

139. The Labour Act provides security for workers with disabilities in the work environment. Article 12 (1) of the Act states: “The termination of a contract of employment on the part of an employer is to be considered as arbitrary dismissal if motivated on any of the following grounds: sex, origin, colour, language, religion, belief, social status or disability, or, for working women, pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding.”

140. The regulations governing vocational health and safety measures in businesses subject to the Labour Act, issued under Ministerial Decree No. 286/2008, also envisage protection for persons with disabilities. Under article 29 of the regulations, employers are under an obligation not to assign persons with disabilities to any work or professional duty that is incompatible with their ability to perform the necessary tasks safely and healthily. According to article 30, employers must take appropriate steps to ensure that working conditions, as well as tools, equipment and other means used by workers with disabilities, are duly adapted to the requirements of the task in hand and the nature of the disability and prevent or limit the stress or danger to which workers with disabilities might be exposed.

141. As concerns work in the government sector, the quota for persons with disabilities has been increased from 1 per cent to 2 per cent of the total number of positions to be filled in units of the administrative apparatus of the State. Recent projects in this regard include the “Sahem” initiative, the “One million hours of work” initiative and the use of temporary contracts.

#### *Rights of migrant workers*

142. The Government has introduced a series of important legislative amendments aimed at allowing migrant workers to move freely between employers. These include, notably, Decree No. 157/2020 amending certain provisions of the implementing regulations of the Foreigners’ Residency Act. Specifically, the Decree amends article 24 of the Act by abrogating the requirement for workers to obtain a no-objection certificate before moving to another employer. Also under a ministerial decree, article 29 of the Labour Act now sets forth the rules allowing non-Omani workers to move from one job to another, the procedures employers are required to follow to report a non-Omani worker’s change of employment and the obligations and penalties which employer and worker incur if they violate the provisions of the decree. It should be noted, furthermore, that instances where workers transfer their services to another employer without the consent of their current employer are also regulated under article 36 of Decree No. 180/2022.

143. Contracts of employment, wages, holidays, working hours, the employment of minors, the employment of women and industrial safety are all covered by the Labour Act. The Act also regulates workers’ representation, the establishment of trade unions, the settlement of labour disputes and the imposition of penalties for violations. These matters are also addressed in detail in decrees of the Ministry of Labour.

144. As a way of protecting the rights of both workers and employers, the law prohibits the recruitment of non-Omani workers without authorization from the Ministry of Labour, which has set conditions for recruitments of that kind, including the existence of a legal contract of employment. Under the law, foreign workers have the right to move freely and to change jobs. There is evidence to indicate that these measures have helped employers’ organizations regularize the status of 78,510 foreign workers.

145. The Ministry of Labour conducts random periodic inspections to monitor employers’ compliance with labour standards. There are currently 411 labour inspectors, 57 of whom are women, with university degrees in various fields, mostly in law.

146. As part of efforts to improve the effectiveness and capacity of labour inspectors, the Ministry of Labour has cooperated with the International Labour Organization (ILO) to run a series of training courses on fundamental labour-related principles and rights. Moreover, labour inspectors have been vested with the authority of judicial officials in the exercise of their functions.

147. The Ministry of Labour issued Decree No. 1/2011, which regulates the recruitment of non-Omani workers and the coordination with employment agencies in the workers’ countries of origin. The purpose of the Decree is to protect workers’ rights and prevent human trafficking.

148. In order to advance cooperation with labour-sending countries, Oman has signed memorandums of understanding with Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Viet Nam, Sri Lanka, Palestine, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Iran, Syria, Morocco and Qatar. Similar memorandums are expected to be signed with a group of African countries, while

others are being updated, and new ones are being signed with further countries of origin of migrant workers. The memorandums already signed with the aforementioned countries envision the exchange of information to prevent the illegal employment of workers and combat human trafficking and forced labour. They also include provision for the formation of committees from the two sides to review and implement the terms and provisions of the memorandum of understanding.

149. The Ministry of Labour issued Decree No. 270/2018 promulgating the regulations governing the reporting of the absence from work of non-Omani workers. Article 2 of the regulations stipulates that a report of absence cannot be submitted in any of the following circumstances:

- (i) If there is an ongoing labour-related, criminal, or civil dispute between an employer and a worker that arose before the worker's absence from work was reported.
- (ii) If the worker left the country before the absence from work was reported, and the employer was aware of the worker's departure.
- (iii) If the worker is taking a legitimate leave entitlement or is absent for another legitimate reason.
- (iv) If the employer has given the worker a no-objection certificate to transfer to another employer then reports the worker's absence from the place of work before the end of the statutory period for the transfer, provided that this does not exceed 30 days.

150. Article 9 of the Labour Act states that labour disputes arising from claims for rights envisaged in the Act and in the contract of employment are inadmissible if they are brought before the courts without first having been submitted for settlement to the competent administrative division of the Ministry. The role of that division, in fact, is to pursue a settlement between the parties concerned, in accordance with the provisions of the Labour Act, within a maximum of 30 days from the submission of the request.

151. Article 6 of the Labour Act stipulates that an employer may not withhold workers' passports or personal documents without the written consent of the workers concerned.

152. Article 14 of the Labour Act guarantees workers the right to leave the country at the end of their contract. It also envisages workers' right to remain if they have brought legal action to claim any of their rights, until a decision on their case is made.

153. The Ministry of Labour is in the process of drafting a decree to regulate the return of non-Omani workers to their countries of origin in cases where they are found to be unfit for work when they first arrive in Oman, where they are found to have falsified their qualifications or work experience, where they wish to return without a legitimate reason or where they leave their jobs in accordance with article 15 of the Labour Act.

154. Article 78 (2) of the Labour Act states that non-Omani workers have the right to a return ticket to spend their holidays in their country of origin, as stipulated in the contract of employment.

155. Ministerial Decree No. 189/2004, which governs working conditions for domestic workers, concerns matters such as recruitment authorization, employment contracts, medical examinations, work cards and employers' obligations to pay monthly wages and to provide adequate food, lodging and healthcare as well as travel tickets. The Decree also contains a definition of the workers' duties and of the mechanisms intended to settle any disputes that may arise between worker and employer in a manner that protects their rights and is consistent with the Labour Act.

156. Booklets have been drafted and published to provide workers with comprehensive information about their rights and to promote care and protection. The booklets, which also identify negative practices that can lead to human trafficking, have been translated into 14 languages and distributed among migrant workers.

157. A free 24-hour hotline (80077000) has been set up for domestic workers and foreign workers to register complaints, comments and reports regarding the Labour Act and its implementing regulations.

### **Equality among workers under current legislation**

158. The Labour Act is applicable to all workers without discrimination. It does not distinguish between workers who are citizens and migrant workers, or between men and women. The Act defines a “worker” as any natural person who works for an employer in return for a wage and under the employer’s management and supervision. As of December 2023, there were 853,204 migrant workers from 162 countries in the private sector. Also in December 2023, a total of 421,034 persons – 376,856 Omanis and 44,178 migrants – were working in the government sector.

159. Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the Labour Act concern the subject of labour disputes, including disagreements around contracts of employment. Under those provisions, complaints are first to be submitted to a labour dispute resolution department with a view to finding an amicable solution. If this fails, the matter is to be brought before the competent court. In the case of violations uncovered by labour inspectors in the course of their visits to facilities subject to the Labour Act, those responsible are duly referred to the competent authorities. Under article 13 of the Labour Act, cases brought by workers of any nationality are exempt from fees at all stages of the proceedings.

160. Data on labour inspections and complaints brought by workers between 1 January 2023 and 30 December 2023 show that 7,033 labour-related complaints were lodged by citizens and migrants. None of these cases concerned discrimination, but all had to do, in one way or another, with money, either the late payment of salaries, claims for overtime pay, end-of-service indemnities or plane tickets. Other cases concerned the withholding of passports. A total of 4,638 cases were settled amicably, while 5,940 were referred for adjudication to the courts.

161. As concerns the participation of members of ethnic and national minorities in the drafting, implementation and monitoring of legislation, policies and programmes that affect them, it should be noted that all groups that have entered Oman and established themselves there over time have come to be assimilated into society and have become an integral part of the social fabric. Their rights and duties are the same as those of others in Omani society, without discrimination. This is in addition to the aforementioned provisions concerning Omani and migrant workers, particularly their right to participate in matters affecting them via trade unions and general federations of workers.

162. On the subject of eliminating discrimination against women, article 23 of the Labour Act stipulates: “Employers are to treat all workers equally when the nature and conditions of the work they do are the same.”

163. There is no discrimination against women in the workplace, and the number of women in employment is increasing year after year. As stated, the number of Omani women in paid employment in the private sector has reached 122,467.

164. With the aim of reconciling women’s right to work with their social role, a body of rules has been enshrined in the Labour Act that is fully consistent with article 11 (2) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women:

- (i) Prohibiting any discrimination in the right to employment on grounds of marriage or motherhood.
- (ii) Granting workers of both sexes the right to three days of leave in the event of marriage (art. 84 (2) of the Act).
- (iii) Prohibiting the dismissal of female workers on grounds of pregnancy or motherhood (art. 12 of the Act).
- (iv) Granting workers who are breastfeeding one hour per day to care for their child, for a period of one year starting from the end of their maternity leave. The worker herself is to decide when to take the hour off, which is to be counted as part of working hours (art. 76 of the Act).

(v) Employing women during nocturnal hours only in circumstances and jobs and on occasions defined by decree of the Minister; likewise, women are to be employed in tasks that are dangerous, arduous or harmful to health only as stipulated by decree of the Minister.

(vi) Requiring employers to provide a designated rest area for women at workplaces where there are more than 25 female workers (art. 60 of the Act).

165. Article 41 of the Labour Act allows workers to leave their work without being bound by the notice period stipulated in article 38 of the Act, or before the end of the contract (if it is a fixed-term contract) while retaining all their rights, including the right to an end-of-service indemnity, and without prejudice to their right to compensation, after having notified their employer, in any of the following cases:

(i) If the employer or the employer's representative commits an act of fraud while the worker is under contract.

(ii) If the employer fails to pay the worker's wages for more than two consecutive months or fails to fulfil the fundamental obligations enshrined in the Act and the contract of employment.

(iii) If the employer or the employer's representative commits an immoral act against the worker.

(iv) If, while working, the worker is assaulted by the employer, the employer's representative or a supervisor.

(v) If there is a serious risk to the health or safety of the worker, and the employer, though aware of the risk, has taken no measures to prevent it.

166. The Labour Act authorizes workers to have recourse to the competent labour dispute resolution bodies in order to claim their rights, as well as compensation for any harm they might have suffered. If they have been the victim of a physical assault, they may bring a criminal case against their employer before the Office of the Public Prosecution.

167. Article 6 of the Labour Act stipulates that an employer may not withhold workers' passports or personal documents without the written consent of the workers concerned. The Directorate General of Civil Status in Oman issues a residency card to migrants and an identity card to citizens for use in official business. This serves as proof of identity for migrants who are resident in the country, meaning that they are not required to keep their passports about their person in order to vouchsafe their legal entitlement to be in Oman.

168. Under the law, Omanis and foreigners have the same legal rights to move around freely, choose their place of residence and undertake legal transactions. Under the Foreigners' Residency Act, anyone working in Oman, whether male or female, has the right to bring their spouse and children to reside with them as "accompanying spouse".

169. The Ministry of Labour provides equal and fair opportunities for training in accordance with current law and, during the course of 2022, reviewed 35 of its training plans, thus benefiting 45,295 workers of both sexes.

170. The Ministry of Labour has rolled out several training courses linked to employment in the public and private sectors and has financed other training opportunities targeting specific career paths. Over the past two years, these initiatives have benefited 23,787 jobseekers. The Ministry is also seeking to bridge the gap between supply and demand by supporting a range of other training courses for jobseekers, linked to employment in the government and private sectors.

171. Training funded by the Ministry of Labour includes the following:

(i) Training linked to employment.

(ii) On-the-job training.

(iii) On-the-job training in small and medium-sized businesses.

(iv) Training linked to entrepreneurial skills.

- (v) Training linked to self-employment.
- (vi) Training linked to job replacement.
- (vii) Temporary contracts.
- (viii) Part-time work.

172. A total of 13,095 training and employment opportunities were made available in 2021 while, in 2022, funding was provided for 13,852 initiatives in the areas mentioned above.

173. The Ministry of Labour offers a training programme called “Inma” to develop the skills of persons enrolled in training courses linked to employment. More than 3,000 persons benefited from this initiative between 2019 and 2023.

174. The Government has launched a number of initiatives to develop training and employment policies for the public and private sectors. These are being implemented by the Ministry of Labour and aim to address challenges and bridge the gap between jobseekers and the real needs of the labour market. Among the most significant of these initiatives are training linked to employment, on-the-job training, training linked to entrepreneurial skills, training linked to job replacement, support for self-employment (small and medium-sized businesses) and the “Sahem” initiative.

175. In June 2022, the memorandum of understanding between ILO and the three parties involved in the production process regarding the implementation of the National Programme for Decent Work was extended for the third time for the three-year period 2023–2025. Under the agreement, technical support is provided across all areas relating to the world of work, in the form of training, workshops, seminars, research, etc. In its latest iteration, the agreement has three main areas of focus: employment, skills development and entrepreneurship; social protection; and international labour management standards. Using this as a basis, the Ministry of Labour has developed strategic development plans that aim to provide a decent working environment. The current plan for the implementation of the National Programme reaffirms commitment to the main areas of focus of the memorandum of understanding and prioritizes programmes for the development of human resources and social protection programmes, via inspections and other related activities. Article 141 of the Labour Act envisages the formation of a dialogue committee, which is to be headed by the Minister and is to bring together representatives of the three parties involved in the production process (government, employers and workers). The functions of the committee are as follows:

- (i) Studying proposals to regulate the labour market.
- (ii) Consolidating relationships between the parties involved in the production process.
- (iii) Examining developments in Arab and international labour standards which can be used to promote dialogue and advance relations between the parties involved in the production process.
- (iv) Cooperating to guide the efforts of social partners on the labour market with a view to boosting production, enhancing competitiveness and striking a balance between the interests of workers and of employers, thus reinforcing national efforts to achieve comprehensive and sustainable development.
- (v) Studying models prepared by the Ministry for a system of labour-related penalties and complaints.

#### *Right to housing*

176. Oman attaches great importance to the provision of adequate housing for its citizens. One expression of that concern is Royal Decree No. 42/2021, which regulates the allocation of government lands to enable citizens to build their own housing. According to article 3 of the Decree, priority in the allocation of land is to be given to families who neither own a house of their own nor possess residential land suitable for building.

177. The Social Housing Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 37/2010, regulates the mechanism whereby citizens can obtain housing units or housing loans and assistance. The

Act and its implementing regulations enable housing assistance to be provided to deserving families, to enable them to build or purchase a home. It also enables families living in remote areas to construct their own housing units.

178. Criteria have been developed to differentiate between families eligible for housing assistance, including weightings for situations of disability, in order to ensure that urgent cases are given priority. The application of these criteria has been automated in order to ensure that all assessments remain objective.

179. Oman has set up the Oman Housing Bank, which serves to provide mortgages on favourable terms and other banking facilities for persons who wish to construct, purchase, complete, extend or maintain their own private dwellings or who wish to purchase a plot of land on which to build a home.

180. Procedures under the legal framework regulating home ownership envisage equal ownership rights for persons of both sexes and persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has developed a variety of housing options for citizens, using digital platforms such as the “Amlak” platform, which provides a body of relevant online services.

181. A number of housing options are available for eligible individuals, such as the services: “Choose your plot”, “Plan your plot” and “Acquire your plot”. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning is shifting its focus from facilitating land ownership to the more sustainable goal of facilitating home ownership. To this end, it has developed the “Surooh” residential neighbourhood project, which offers various housing solutions and alternatives that are accessible to all segments of society, without discrimination. A housing programme was recently launched to accelerate access to subsidized mortgages for citizens registered with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and the Oman Housing Bank. The programme is being run in coordination with a number of local banks, and the mortgages are partially supported by the Ministry of Finance.

182. It should be noted that all services provided by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning in this regard are delivered on a basis of equality and under approved rules, without discrimination or favouritism for any particular group.

183. Regulations governing rental housing in Oman do not discriminate between tenants who are citizens and those who are residents of the country. The question of rentals is regulated under Royal Decree No. 6/89, as amended, which concerns the relationship between landlords and tenants of residential, commercial and industrial properties and the registration of lease agreements.

184. According to article 58 of the Labour Act, employers who conduct their business in particular zones (to be specified by the Minister) are required to provide their workers with suitable accommodation.

*Right to public health, medical care, social security and social services*

185. Article 15 of the Basic Law of the State – which was promulgated under Royal Decree No. 6/2021 – addresses the issue of social principles. According to that article, the State is to provide citizens with healthcare and with services to prevent and treat diseases and epidemics, just as it is to promote the establishment of private hospitals and clinics, under State oversight and in accordance with the law.

186. Article 21 of the Basic Law, which focuses on public rights and duties, stipulates that all citizens are equal before the law and have equal public rights and duties, without discrimination on grounds of sex, origin, colour, language, religion, confession, place of origin or social status.

187. Article 10 of the Act regulating the practice of the medical and paramedical professions, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 75/2019, stipulates that practitioners of the medical and paramedical professions must provide treatment humanely regardless of their patients’ financial or social status, nationality, belief or sex.

188. Legislators have ensured that the Basic Law of the State duly upholds the principle of equality of rights and duties and that it prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex or any

other grounds. This principle is reaffirmed in the Act regulating the practice of the medical and paramedical professions, which imposes a legal and ethical obligation on doctors to provide care to patients without discrimination on grounds of sex or on any other grounds.

189. On the basis of these principles, the Ministry of Health undertakes to provide healthcare services without discrimination on grounds of sex or on any other grounds that are contrary to law.

190. The tenth five-year health development plan for Oman reaffirms the commitment of the country's healthcare institutions to providing more comprehensive services, particularly with regard to sexual and reproductive health. The plan, which constitutes the first plan of action to prioritize health under the Oman Vision 2040, draws from the Health Vision 2050, from international and regional agreements and from the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. It includes 44 outcomes which the healthcare sector is to work to achieve over the next five years (2021–2025). The second of the 44 outcomes envisaged under the plan is “promote the health of girls and women of reproductive age and beyond”. This is to be achieved by maintaining healthcare coverage for women throughout pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum; increasing the use of birth spacing methods and consolidating gynaecological services in healthcare institutions. The sixth of the outcomes aims to increase the coverage of screening services for the early detection of breast and cervical cancer and to increase the availability of premarital medical examinations.

191. Oman has made significant progress towards enabling women to access high-quality healthcare services, including reproductive healthcare services. As of 2022, 99 per cent of births were taking place under medical supervision. Steps have also been taken to reduce morbidity and mortality rates among children and mothers, such as by increasing premarital medical examinations, introducing screening for deep-vein thrombosis during pregnancy and postpartum, and running an international training programme on the use of ultrasound in gynaecology and obstetrics.

192. In 2022, Oman gained international recognition from the World Health Organization (WHO) for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis, becoming the first Arab country in the Middle East to achieve that status. In 2021 and 2022, 99.9 per cent of pregnant women were tested for HIV.

#### *Right to social protection*

193. The Social Protection Fund was established under Royal Decree No. 33/2021. It is the official institution responsible for all social protection initiatives and programmes in Oman and is administratively and financially independent. Its function is to implement the Social Protection Act and other related legislation and to cooperate with stakeholders responsible for running protection, empowerment, integration, care and support programmes of all kinds, in order to ensure that those programmes benefit the target groups.

194. The goals of the Fund include improving quality of life, providing social protection and care, and promoting investment in society by developing and implementing socioeconomic policies. The Fund also monitors the sustainability, effectiveness, fairness, inclusiveness and stability of its programmes and policies, the extent to which they achieve national goals and visions in social protection, their impact on community values and the extent to which they safeguard the rights of current and future generations.

195. The Social Protection Act, which was promulgated under Royal Decree No. 52/2023 dated 19 July 2023, defines social protection benefits and different kinds of social insurance. It represents an unparalleled step towards ensuring a life of dignity and security for all groups in society.

196. Under a programme to benefit older persons, monthly financial support is provided to persons in Oman aged 60 and above. The programme aims to ensure a minimum level of cash-based social protection for this group and reflects a commitment to providing stability for all citizens, especially when their earning capacity is reduced in old age. The benefit – which amounts to around RO 115 – is disbursed on a monthly basis beginning in the month in which the recipient reaches the age of 60.

197. There is also a child benefit programme under which monthly financial support is provided to Omani children from birth until the age of 18. The programme aims to ensure a minimum level of cash-based social protection for this group in order to support their needs at this stage of their lives.

198. The Social Protection Act also gives prominence to the needs of persons with disabilities via a benefit programme under which monthly financial support is provided to Omani citizens whose disabilities mean that they require care and support. Their needs are determined via a case-assessment mechanism, and the benefit – an estimated RO 130 per month – is payable from the month in which the eligibility conditions are met.

199. Another benefit programme aims to provide monthly financial support to orphans and widows to help them cope with the challenges of losing a breadwinner. The benefit is available in cases where the shares of orphans or widows who are eligible for social insurance benefits are less than the value of this benefit, or in cases where they have no benefits at all. In this way, widows are entitled to the difference between the value of the benefit (RO 80 per month) and the value of the social insurance benefits they receive. Orphans receive a maximum of RO 80 each, depending on the number of siblings and whether one or both of their parents have died.

200. The Social Protection Act also envisages income-support benefits for lower-income families with fewer earning opportunities. Eligibility for such benefits depends on the family's income level and the earning capacity of its members, while the value of the benefit is linked to the number of family members and the total family income. The purpose of the benefit is to improve living conditions for such families.

201. One kind of social insurance envisaged under the Act covers risks associated with work-related injuries and occupational diseases. Irrespective of whether any incapacity resulting therefrom is temporary or permanent, the injured party is paid insurance benefits to cover the interruption or loss of income resulting from the misfortune, with the amount being calibrated according to the degree of incapacity. The insurance disburses daily allowances throughout the period during which the injured party is absent from work, until their partial or total incapacity can be confirmed. The insurance programme also envisions compensation or a pension, depending on the degree of incapacity, be it partial or total.

202. The Social Protection Fund is also responsible for job security insurance, which is social insurance programme that covers the risk of termination of service for reasons beyond the control of the insured party. It provides beneficiaries with income on a temporary basis to support them while they search for alternative employment.

203. In addition to this, the Fund runs a social insurance programme for working mothers during pregnancy and after childbirth, the aim being to ensure that they have sufficient time to rest and care for their child. The insurance programme also envisages paternity leave so as to enable fathers to support their families during this important stage. Another social insurance programme covers sick leave and other forms of unforeseen absence such as marriage leave, bereavement leave and leave to care for a sick relative. These forms of leave thus become an insurance-related right for the insured party, whenever the necessity for them is proven, rather than being an employment-related right, thereby protecting the rights of workers in such cases. A further programme of social insurance exists that serves to protect self-employed Omanis and others in similar situations against the risks of old age, disability and death. The Social Protection Act is applicable to all persons covered by its provisions, equally and without discrimination. Article 1 of the Act defines an insured person as anyone who is covered by some form of social insurance envisaged in the Act, whether mandatory or optional. This includes staff in units of the State administrative apparatus and other public entities, workers in the private sector, self-employed Omanis and others in similar situations, Omanis working in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council or abroad and others in similar situations and persons who have signed up for some kind of social insurance. The Social Protection Act envisages protection for the insured person and other beneficiaries, whose entitlements, according to article 9, cannot be seized or withheld except to pay alimony or debts owed to the State or to the Fund itself, up to a maximum of one quarter.

*Right to education*

204. Legislation and policy in Oman reaffirm the right to free compulsory education and emphasize the principle of equal access to education for all persons. The Children's Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 22/2014, stipulates that children have the right to free education in State-run schools up to the end of post-basic education and that education is compulsory for all children until the end of the basic stage. The Act makes parents and guardians responsible for enrolling their children in school, ensuring their regular attendance and preventing them from dropping out. For its part, article 42 of the School Education Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 31/2023, stipulates that all children have an equal right to be schooled without discrimination on grounds of sex, origin, language, religion, religious community, place of residence or social status or any other grounds. Free education in State-run schools is enshrined in article 14 of the Act, while article 24 reaffirms the mandatory nature of basic education from grade 1 to grade 10. Article 2 of the School Education Act states that the primary goal of schooling in Oman is to achieve the comprehensive and integrated development of a pupil's character in all its intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical aspects. Article 3 of the same Act requires the Ministry of Education to achieve this goal by means of a system of schooling that is divided into stages corresponding to different levels of development. The system operates in such a way as to offer free educational opportunities to all persons residing in Oman (art. 24 of the School Education Act) as well as to improve the quality of education and to strengthen educational infrastructure with a view to achieving results that meet the aspirations of the Oman Vision 2040. The success of education in Oman, the concern for quality and the provision of the necessary budgets and financial resources are all duly reflected in the relevant indicators. Expenditure on education came to represent 5.4 per cent of the country's GDP in 2021 and 15 per cent of all government spending in 2022. In the Global Innovation Index 2023, Oman came to rank ninth in terms of government spending on education per student and second in terms of the proportion of graduates in science and engineering.

205. Under the School Education Act, the Ministry of Education is to guarantee a safe and welcoming school environment and to enable pupils to acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies appropriate to their specific level of schooling. The Ministry works to ensure free healthcare and free and safe transportation to and from school and home; it delivers services aimed at promoting pupils' mental, physical and social health; and it provides vocational counselling and guidance. Article 51 of the Children's Act states: "Children with disabilities are to enjoy all the rights envisaged in the Act, without discrimination on grounds of their disability." Article 52 of the Act reads: "The State is to provide care and habilitation for children with disabilities, in accordance with the Care and Habilitation of Persons with Disabilities Act. The State and the parents or guardian are to seek to enable the child concerned to access all relevant care and habilitation services."

206. According to the latest statistics released by the Ministry of Education for the academic year 2022/23, 2,380 pupils with disabilities of both sexes were receiving educational services, either in inclusive classrooms in State-run schools or in special education schools for disabilities of various kinds. In addition to this, on an annual basis the Ministry of Education sends students with disabilities to study in regular schools abroad, with 606 students, 42 per cent of them female, benefiting from that initiative in the academic year 2021/22. Part of the scholarships are awarded to students with specific disabilities (motor, visual, hearing and mental). Students with disabilities are also admitted to local institutions of higher education. The most recent indicators point to gender parity and equality in education in Oman. Any slight differences that do exist are due to the demographic composition of the population, where males are in a majority.

207. Administrators of the education sector in Oman seek to strike a balance between quantity and method, with a particular focus on the quality of educational services. The latest statistics show that overall enrolment rates in the final grade of primary school stand at 100.5 per cent, while overall enrolment rates in the final grade of the lower level of secondary school are 100.7 per cent. Thanks to policies and programmes to support students as they progress through different grades, in 2022, the percentage of out-of-school children stood at just 1.6 per cent for grades 1–4 and at 3.5 per cent for grades 5–10. The decrease in the proportion of children older than their grade level in basic education (grades 1 to 9) is an

indication of the effectiveness of policies, programmes, legislation and laws that aim to ensure that all children are enrolled in school. In 2022, the proportion of children older than their grade level was 0.003 per cent in the first stage of basic education (grades 1–4) and 0.04 per cent in the second stage of basic education (grades 5–10).

208. The commitment of educational institutions to the principle of equality is demonstrated by statistics on student admissions, which show equal admission rates for students of both sexes. The figures below show the admission rates for male and female students in the academic year 2023/24:

- Sultan Qaboos University: male, 1,626; female, 1,441
- University of Applied Sciences: male, 4,887; female, 4,995

209. Oman is determined to ensure that all young persons, as well as a large proportion of adults of both sexes, are literate and numerate. This intention is enunciated in article 13 (“Cultural principles”) of the Basic Law of the State, which stipulates: “The State is to provide public education and to work to combat illiteracy.” Thanks to considerable efforts on the part of the Ministry of Education, literacy in Oman has reached 97.6 per cent among persons aged 15 and above, and 99.4 per cent among persons aged between 15 and 44, according to data from 2022.

210. Oman believes in investing in children, who constitute the bedrock of society. The State therefore attaches great importance to early childhood development in its various social, health, educational and cultural ramifications. National efforts in this regard are regulated by the Children’s Act, the social work strategy 2016–2025 and the national strategy for childhood 2016–2025. Kindergartens – which are supervised by the Ministry of Social Development – play a major role in the development, health and welfare of children. As of 2022, there were 332 kindergartens attended by 7,537 children; this represents an increase of 61.2 per cent on 2015, when there were 206 kindergartens. The provision of preschool education is in the hands of the private sector, under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education. There are educational kindergartens in all governorates, and the Ministry runs pre-primary classes in remote areas where there are no private schools nearby. In the academic year 2022/23, the gross enrolment rate in preschool education reached 57 per cent, and the rate of participation in organized education (one year before enrolment in primary education) reached 81.5 per cent. The Ministry of Education is currently working to expand the provision of early education, in which regard it has issued Ministerial Decree No. 20/2023 for the formation of a committee and subcommittees and the development of a staged expansion plan, in pursuance of goal 93 of the tenth five-year plan 2021–2025.

211. The various authorities that work with children in Oman combine their efforts to promote sound nutrition and school health, notably thanks to cooperation between the Department for Health in Schools, which is part of the Ministry of Health, and the Department for Guidance and Awareness, which is part of the Ministry of Education. These two departments work together to provide a healthy environment and correct nutrition for schoolchildren. Health records show that the incidence of protein-energy malnutrition was 1.2 per 1,000 children under the age of 5 in 2019 while, according to the 2022 Annual Health Report, no malnutrition-related deaths have been recorded over the last five years.

212. The Ministry of Education upholds equality and non-discrimination by seeking to inculcate concepts of citizenship in school curricula for children of different ages. The Ministry has also published a number of documents that promote the principle of national cohesion and reject any division based on racial grounds. These documents include one on education for citizenship and another on the integration of children’s rights into school curricula. The Ministry has also participated in education-related initiatives at the international level.

213. It should be noted that the education sector has witnessed rapid growth over the past four decades and, as of the academic year 2022/23, there were 1,241 State-run schools attended by 741,334 students, in addition to 150,506 students in private schools. Furthermore, a total of 30,108 high school graduates were admitted to universities and colleges in 2022. Many of them are able to study free of charge, at State expense. In addition to this, there are literacy and adult education centres, as well as facilities to support continuing education.

214. Figures released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information in 2022 indicate that the illiteracy rate among adults (persons of both sexes over 15 years of age) has fallen to 2.6 per cent of the total population. This compares with a figure of almost 4.14 per cent in 2019. The same trend is visible among young persons of both sexes aged between 15 and 44, among whom the illiteracy rate has fallen to 0.4 per cent, as compared to 0.58 per cent in 2019. Public spending on education in 2023 amounted to RO 1,257,689 billion, which is equivalent to 10.4 per cent of total government spending.

215. The Higher Education Act promulgated under Royal Decree No. 27/2023, the Unified Admission Regulations promulgated under Ministerial Decree No. 65/2017 and the Qualification and Training Regulations promulgated under Ministerial Decree No. 244/2015, as well as other legislation and regulations governing higher education, guarantee equal rights for all persons and contain no provisions, conditions or requirements that entail racial discrimination.

216. There are 64 colleges and universities in Oman, including 28 private establishments. Most of these educational institutions offer four-year university degrees, with the exception of engineering, which is a five-year programme, and medicine, which is a seven-year programme. The others offer two-year university degrees. Since 1999, the Government has been working to develop higher education in order to meet the needs of a growing population. According to statistics from the Unified Admission Centre for the academic year 2022/23, 70.7 per cent of high school graduates go on into higher education.

217. There is an ongoing process, involving both general education and the media, to raise awareness about racial discrimination. Prior to 2003, school curricula already addressed human rights, including racial discrimination; since that year, however, this topic has received greater attention with the introduction of human rights concepts, values and principles into school curricula of different levels. The Ministry of Education has begun drafting a document on the integration of the concepts surrounding human rights and children's rights into the syllabus. The document focuses on a number of key areas, notably human rights education at all levels of schooling and learning from similar experiences at the regional and international levels.

218. The definition of children's rights and human rights used by the Ministry of Education is entirely based on the "Charter of children's rights and human rights", which was incorporated into the curriculum for grades 1-4 at the start of the academic year 2008/09. There is also a project to publish a booklet – entitled "My rights" and also aimed at grades 1-4 – intended to raise awareness about rights among children, both Omanis and residents. In addition to this, a range of other topics has also been introduced into the curriculum, including Islamic culture, Arabic language, social studies, life skills, science, mathematics, information technology, English language, sports, music and art.

### **Educational policy for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination**

219. Oman ensures that the provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination are duly applied in both State-run and private schools by upholding the principle of equality for the following categories:

(i) Article 9 in section II of the regulations for students in State-run schools reads: "Category I: Non-Omani Arabic-speaking students. They enjoy full educational rights on an equal footing with citizens. As such, they may be admitted and enrolled in State-run and international schools under the same conditions as those applicable to Omani students." This is what this article has to say about the admission and enrolment of students in different stages of education. According to the academic yearbook for the academic year 2022/23, there are 741,334 students enrolled in State-run schools and 150,506 students in private schools.

220. Category II concerns non-Arabic-speaking students: Since they are unable to understand Arabic, which is the language of instruction in State-run schools, the Ministry allows such students to attend their own schools, which are governed by special provisions contained in the regulations for international schools, issued pursuant to Ministerial Decree No. 4/2006, as subsequently amended by Ministerial Decree No. 189/2008, Ministerial

Decree No. 191/2009 and Ministerial Decree No. 315/2010. In the academic year 2022/23, there were 57,054 non-Omani students, who represented 7.5 per cent of the entire student body.

### **Eliminating discrimination among students in private schools**

221. Article 31 of Ministerial Decree No. 26/2006, as amended by Ministerial Decree No. 287/2017, stipulates that non-Omani students enrolled in an international school may transfer to a State-run school, subject to the approval of the Ministry. Students with disabilities are accepted into special education schools under the conditions and the admission system applicable to all children of residents in the Sultanate of Oman. Programmes for the integration of students with disabilities and students with learning difficulties are implemented in schools throughout Oman. The programmes are run in all educational directorates and are available on a basis of equality to students of both sexes. In the academic year 2022/23, there were 1,805 students with disabilities and students with learning difficulties of both sexes, distributed across 245 schools. The curriculum in State-run schools aims to instil values and principles of tolerance, equality and freedom of thought and belief, without discrimination or distinction.

222. School curricula in Oman are underpinned by the country's educational philosophy, which is drawn from the Basic Law of the State and views all people as equal, without any discrimination or distinction on grounds of race. Curricula for the first stage of schooling focus on equality and non-discrimination, and on coexistence among persons of different nationalities. To that end, they use texts and images that show families from different backgrounds and individuals of different skin colours and appearance engaging in joint activities. This is intended to demonstrate acceptance of others regardless of their nationality, and coexistence with others regardless of their appearance or hue. Emphasis is also laid on equality between males and females, by including references to persons of both sexes performing tasks that demonstrate the partnership between them.

223. Subjects such as social studies and Islamic education, as well as the texts used to teach the Arabic language, all include references to human rights, peace, openness to other civilizations, acceptance of differences and cultural diversity and international cooperation. This is consistent with the provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, particularly articles 5, 6 and 7.

224. A textbook for students in grade 11, entitled "This is my country", also addresses matters such as cultural diversity, openness to other civilizations and acceptance of cultural differences. These concepts are all presented in a positive light as a call for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination.

225. Textbooks for social studies in grades 5 to 10 also focus on the subject of tolerance.

### *Promoting a culture of non-discrimination in education*

226. Audiovisual and print media coverage of educational, cultural, social and other issues, as well as news programmes do not discriminate in any way but address students of all categories and both sexes.

227. Outstanding educators – of both sexes and from different segments of society – are honoured and celebrated for their competence and ability without discrimination on grounds of colour, sex, race or any other grounds.

228. The Ministry of Education in Oman exercises its functions while maintaining equality among students, regardless of any ethnic differences, in accordance with the norms of society and humanitarian principles.

229. In enactment of the principle of education for all, all registered students (Omanis and foreigners) have the opportunity to participate in international studies and national examinations.

230. The principle of equality and non-discrimination among all groups in the school community is upheld in all educational activities.

*Right to participate in cultural activities*

231. A body of cultural principles is enshrined in article 16 of the Basic Law of the State, which aim to raise and improve the general level of culture, promote academic thought, stimulate a spirit of inquiry and meet the needs of socioeconomic planning. Those same principles also aim to create a generation with well-grounded morals, a generation that is proud of its homeland and its heritage, that seeks to protect the advances the nation has made and that encourages the dissemination of science, arts, literature and academic research.

232. Given the importance of academic research as a way of reinforcing sustainable development and of meeting scientific and technological challenges, the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation – acting under Royal Decree No. 98/2020 which regulates its functions – works to encourage research and innovation with a view to meeting the development needs of the community. The Ministry oversees its own academic research centres and is working in coordination with other stakeholders on a national research plan that is consistent with the requirements of socioeconomic development planning. The plan, which is being rolled out in a manner intended to incentivize research, envisages research programmes, monitoring of those programmes and support for individual innovation and research projects, in line with the priorities set forth in the plan itself. Companies and other institutions in the private sector are also being encouraged and supported to participate in various areas of academic research. In addition to all this, efforts are being made to create the necessary research infrastructure.

233. Cultural communication and dialogue between civilizations are key factors for building a global society that is free from negative stereotypes that affect social progress. In 2007, the National Commission for Education, Science and Culture, which is part of the Ministry of Education, adopted a “cultural communication” project in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). The initiative – which aims to promote dialogue and to change reciprocal negative perceptions between Arab and Western cultures – entails annual trips to Oman for groups of young persons aged between 17 and 19 from Arab and other countries. In a statement released on 16 December 2010, UNESCO praised the initiative as a groundbreaking step for civil society in the world.

234. The aim of the school curriculum in Oman is to raise citizens with a mindset that embraces diversity and difference in the world. It focuses on the quality of the information students receive, thereby enabling them to better engage with the local and global environment.

235. Oman provides opportunities for the entire population, including women, to participate in recreational activities, sports and cultural life. The Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth decreed that a seat on sporting federations had to be reserved for women in the period 2020–2024, thereby boosting the development of women’s sport. In 2022, a total of 100,612 women benefited from the activities available in sports centres. Two specialized clubs have also been set up, the Women’s Club for Sports and Cultural Creativity, established in October 2021, and the Al-Amal Sports Club, in addition to seven women’s committees in existing sports clubs. Around 20 clubs have women’s sports teams participating in programmes run by the Department for Women’s Sports.

236. Omani women have ranked highly in both local and international sporting tournaments, while women’s presence in the media has also increased, with women’s voices and perspectives becoming more prominent. In 2023, the Department for Women’s Sports, which is part of the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth, cooperated with the Oman Bowling Committee to run the fifteenth Women’s Bowling Championship. The initiative was part of efforts to boost women’s sports and to provide an opening for members of private and government institutions to participate in sporting activities. In addition to this, the first women’s indoor soccer league has been launched, as part of the plans of the Oman Football Association to promote and develop women’s soccer. Seven women’s sports clubs are participating in the indoor league for the 2022/23 season.

237. Oman is committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities are able to participate in sporting activities. In order to empower such persons in this regard, a department for para-athletics has been created in the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth. The department

seeks to encourage persons with disabilities of both sexes to engage in sporting activities and showcase their abilities, in a manner consistent with their state of health and physical fitness. The department also helps to train coaches and leaders to monitor and run sporting activities for persons with disabilities.

238. Collaboration between government institutions and teams of young volunteers has served to greatly advance women's culture. In 2021, the "Creative mornings" team entered into strategic collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth to launch the "Oman women's wiki". The purpose of the initiative is to enrich digital content about Omani women who play influential roles in development, increase their online presence and place their biographies on the Arabic version of Wikipedia.

*Right of access to public places*

239. The Tourism Act, issued pursuant to Royal Decree No. 69/2023, regulates tourism in Oman. According to the Act, a tourist is a person who travels for leisure from their place of residence for a period of not less than one night and not more than one year. Article 6 of the Act stipulates that any natural or legal person may use, exploit, lease, operate or manage any tourist area, tourist site or government-owned tourist land, or part thereof, having first obtained the approval of the Ministry. The Ministry, in fact, is responsible for concluding operating contracts in that regard, in accordance with the relevant regulations. The Act makes no distinction between citizens and foreigners; therefore, all public facilities in Oman, including transportation, hotels, restaurants, cafes, places of entertainment, clubs, theatres and parks are open to all persons without exception.

240. In enactment of the general principle of equality and non-discrimination among citizens, as enshrined in the Basic Law of the State, access to public places such as beaches, parks and gardens is open to all persons, with no restrictions on any particular group. Several regulatory decrees have been issued to protect such places and to regulate visits without imposing any discriminatory provisions. These include Municipal Ordinance No. 32/97 for the protection of facilities belonging to the Municipality of Muscat and Decree No. 197/2006 promulgating regulations for the protection of public facilities belonging to the then Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources.

*Measures to prevent conflicts that provoke racial discrimination and to promote understanding and tolerance*

241. As mentioned earlier, the Basic Law of the State upholds the principle of equality, notably in article 21, which stipulates that all citizens are equal before the law and have equal public rights and duties, without discrimination on grounds of sex, origin, colour, language, religion, religious community, place of origin or social status. According to article 42, all persons who are legally resident in Oman enjoy protection of their person and property, in accordance with the law. They are, moreover, obligated to comply with national legislation and laws, and to observe the values of society and respect its traditions and sentiments. In confirmation of this principle, article 96 of the Basic Law stipulates: "All laws, proceedings that have force of law, royal decrees and regulations must conform to the provisions of the Basic Law of the State." Thus, national laws must uphold this principle if they are to be enforced, and no State institution may issue regulations, decrees or instructions in contravention thereof.

242. In line with the foregoing, the Children's Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 22/2014, upholds the right of children not to suffer discrimination on grounds of colour, sex, origin, language, religion or social status or any other grounds. Article 38 of the Act stipulates that the system of education in Oman is to be based on the values of equality among individuals and non-discrimination on grounds of religion, sex, ethnicity, race, social origin, disability or any other discriminatory grounds. In accordance with the Children's Act, article 48 of the School Education Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 31/2023, prohibits students from promoting any beliefs or ideas that could affect the unity and values of society. Similarly, article 54 of the Act prohibits members of the teaching body from promoting any beliefs or ideas that might affect the safety and security of the State, the unity and values of society or the goals of education.

243. The Criminal Code, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 7/2018, outlaws any action that encourages religious or sectarian strife or discord. Article 108 of the Code envisages a term of imprisonment of between 3 and 10 years for anyone who arouses religious or sectarian discord or strife, or feelings of hatred, animosity and dissonance among the population, or who incites others to do so. The same penalty is applicable to anyone who holds a meeting, seminar or conference for the purposes mentioned in the previous paragraph or who, knowing those purposes, participates in such events. The offence is aggravated if committed in a place of worship or an official facility, in a public place or at a public gathering, or if it is committed by public officials during or in connection with the performance of their duties, or by a person in a position of religious authority.

244. The Decree ratifying the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was published in the Official Gazette on 26 October 2002. This completed the process that consolidated the legal status of the Convention and made it part of national law, as explained earlier.

245. The contents of the Convention have been addressed in a series of seminars, workshops and round tables which have been held by the competent authorities in coordination and cooperation with international organizations.

246. The Convention, moreover, has been reviewed and discussed on radio and television programmes on subjects such as “women and the law”, “public prosecutors and society”, “legal readings”, “dialogue with young persons”, “families”, “the status of women in the Holy Qur’an” and “religion of compassion”. The subject will continue to be addressed from various angles in upcoming programming cycles. As a general rule, the Government has taken a decision to publish all ratified international treaties.

247. As concerns the work of national institutions, the Oman Human Rights Commission plays an important part in raising awareness about the Convention. Its role in this connection is not limited to publishing its own annual report on its activities, it has also issued a number of educational pamphlets on human rights more generally. Civil society, including non-governmental organizations, plays a similar role by educating the public in human rights through seminars and workshops. It also issues publications that explain the Convention in a simplified manner that is easily understandable to the public at large, citizens and residents alike.

248. Government bodies seek to guarantee the principle of equality in all matters. Oman remains committed to the treaties and covenants to which it has acceded, and which uphold equality and non-discrimination between persons. These include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which Oman acceded under Royal Decree No. 46/2020, and which obliges States Parties to guarantee that the rights enunciated therein can be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Another treaty is the Arab Charter on Human Rights, to which Oman acceded under Royal Decree No. 16/2023, and which obliges signatory States to guarantee to every person within their jurisdiction the right to enjoy the rights and freedoms set forth in the Charter, without discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, opinion, thought, national or social origin, wealth, birth or physical or mental disability.

249. The bodies responsible for raising awareness about offences of racial discrimination run programmes to educate people about the Criminal Code, which outlaws any act of racial discrimination. Article 108 of the Code designates any call for racial discrimination as a serious offence. The State itself is determined to set the highest example in combating all forms of discrimination; accordingly, all State agencies seek to avoid any practice by any institution that involves, encourages, supports or protects discrimination.

## Annex 1: List of the authorities represented on the national team that drafted the present report

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- 1 Ministry of the Interior
  - 2 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
  - 3 Supreme Council of the Judiciary
  - 4 Ministry of Education
  - 5 Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs
  - 6 Ministry of Social Development
  - 7 Ministry of Labour
  - 8 Sultan Qaboos University
  - 9 Office of the Public Prosecution
  - 10 Oman Human Rights Commission
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## Annex 2: Civil society organizations involved in the preparation of the report

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- 1 Representatives from Omani women's associations
  - 2 General Federation of Workers
  - 3 Children First Association
  - 4 Omani Society for Writers and Literati
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## Annex 3: Education statistics

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2022/23</i>
High-school graduates admitted to universities and colleges	108 30
Sultan Qaboos University	308 14
Private universities and colleges	791 56
Universities and colleges abroad	375 8
University of Technology and Applied Sciences	460 34
College of Banking and Finance	798 1
Oman College of Health Sciences and Higher Institute of Health Specialties	432 1
Sharia College	932 2

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>
<i>1. State-run</i>			
<i>Basic education (State-run schools and special education)</i>			
Schools	182 1	203 1	241 1
Students	870 678	659 707	884 741
Classes	495 23	471 24	382 25
Teachers	137 57	411 57	988 58
Grades 10–12			

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2020/21</i>	<i>2021/22</i>	<i>2022/23</i>
Percentage of male students in secondary education	55	57	59
Percentage of female students in secondary education	45	43	41
Student-teacher ratio	12	12	13
Student-class ratio	29	29	29
Adult learning centre		7	6
<i>Adult education</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>
Students in adult education centres	700 12	972 5	775 6
Percentage of women	20	28	30
Literacy centres	4	5	5
Students	295	124 3	623 2
Percentage of women	96	49	79
Current expenditure of the Ministry of Education (RO billions)	170.03 1	270.1 1	235.8 1
<i>2. Private</i>			
<i>General education</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>No.</i>
Schools	662	881	994
Students	529 78	761 129	506 150
Classes	199 6	424 9	979 10
Teachers	340 8	534 12	607 13
Students per school	9	10	11
Students per class	12.6	13.7	13.7
Obtained general diploma			

#### **Annex 4: Government sector staff holding senior, middle and line management roles as of December 2023**

<i>Job title</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Deputy minister	31	3	34
Assistant mufti	1	0	1
Governor	8	0	8
University chancellor	1	0	1
Deputy university chancellor	2	1	3
Assistant deputy university chancellor	2	0	2
Chief executive officer	11	2	13
Deputy chief executive officer	5	0	5
Secretary-general	6	0	6
Assistant secretary-general	6	0	6
Mayor	2	0	2
Counsellor	102	14	116
Head of a ministerial bureau	26	0	26
Assistant head of a ministerial bureau	11	4	15
Supervisor-general	3	0	3
Head of department	20	3	23
Director general or equivalent	261	36	297
Assistant director general or equivalent	163	33	196
Ambassador	85	8	93

<i>Job title</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Dean of faculty (academia)	11	3	14
Assistant dean of faculty (academia)	22	18	40
Expert	122	25	147
Head of province	64	0	64
Deputy head of province	87	0	87
Departmental director or equivalent	1 532	310	1 842
Assistant departmental director or equivalent	795	178	973
Head teacher	332	511	843
Deputy head teacher	288	566	854
Assistant head of province	51	0	51
Head of division or equivalent	3 832	1 347	5 179
<b>Total</b>	<b>7 842</b>	<b>3 059</b>	<b>10 901</b>

<i>Job title</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Chief executive officer	3	0	3
Secretary-general	5	0	5
Expert	83	25	108
Head of department	3	1	4
Mayor	2	0	2
Head of department	20	2	22
Head of division	2 694	817	3 511
Head of bureau	1	0	1
Head of a ministerial bureau	19	0	19
Assistant head of a ministerial bureau	10	4	14
Ambassador	78	6	84
Dean (academia)	3	1	4
Departmental director	11	4	15
Departmental director	1 043	181	1 224
Assistant departmental director	607	144	751
Director-general	190	27	217
Assistant director-general	133	31	164
Head teacher	324	468	792
Departmental director	1	0	1
Assistant mufti	1	0	1
Assistant dean (academia)	1	0	1
Deputy head teacher	309	547	856
Assistant head of province	56	0	56
Counsellor	55	7	62
Counsellor	26	0	26
Supervisor-general	5	0	5
Deputy chief executive officer	1	0	1
Deputy head of province	146	0	146

<i>Job title</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Head of province	56	0	56
Agent	29	2	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 878</b>	<b>2 264</b>	<b>8 142</b>
<i>National workforce</i>			
<i>Professional categories</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Directors in the public administration and the private sector, and investors	13 043	5 487	18 530
<i>National workforce</i>			
<i>Professional categories</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Directors in the public administration and the private sector, and investors	11 689	4 894	16 583
<i>Persons with disabilities working in the public and private sectors</i>			
<i>End of year</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
2022	3 472	517	3 989
2023	3 336	507	3 843
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 808</b>	<b>1 024</b>	<b>7 832</b>