



# Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

**Fifth periodic report submitted by Saudi Arabia under  
article 18 of the Convention, due in 2022\***

[Date received: 7 March 2023]

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



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## Introduction

1. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hereby submits to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women<sup>1</sup> its fifth periodic report<sup>2</sup> covering the period 2016–2022, submitted pursuant to article 18, paragraph 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and further to the recommendation set out in the Committee’s concluding observations<sup>3</sup> dated 14 March 2018 ([CEDAW/C/SAU/CO/3-4](#)).

2. The report was prepared by the standing committee for the drafting of reports,<sup>4</sup> which was established pursuant to Supreme Order No. 13084 of 27 Rabi‘ I A.H. 1436 (18 January A.D. 2015). The standing committee is a national mechanism comprising the relevant Government actors. Its function is to prepare reports submitted by Saudi Arabia with regard to human rights instruments, follow up on recommendations made by treaty bodies including the Committee, and undertake other relevant tasks.

3. The report includes general information that will help the Committee to understand the nature of the situation in Saudi Arabia, including geographic and demographic dimensions, the political and legal system and the economic and social situation. Action is currently under way to update the draft common core document in the light of the growing pace of reform and development in Saudi Arabia. The report includes information on implementation of articles 1–16 of the Convention and the concluding observations of the Committee. In the footnotes, reference is made to the relevant paragraphs of the concluding observations. On 30 April 2020, as recommended by the Committee,<sup>5</sup> Saudi Arabia submitted information on implementation of recommendations 16 (a), 26, 32 (b) and 62 (a) of the concluding observations.

## Reporting methodology<sup>6</sup>

4. The present report was prepared in accordance with the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties ([HRI/MC/2006/3](#)), the guidelines on reporting to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women ([HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6](#)), and the guidance note for States parties for the preparation of reports under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals ([CEDAW/C/74/3](#)). The standing committee consulted several government agencies that are not among its members but whose work is germane to the Convention and the Committee’s concluding observations. The standing committee also sought input from several civil society organizations as part of wide-ranging national consultations. It took care to give equal weight to positive aspects, difficulties and challenges. As is customary for reports in connection with human rights instruments, the drafting went through several stages, as follows:

(a) Follow-up to concluding observations: once the Committee had issued its concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic report of Saudi Arabia, the standing committee – as the national mechanism responsible for drafting country reports and following up on the recommendations of treaty bodies and other mechanisms – followed up on the implementation of the recommendations, took the

<sup>1</sup> Hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”.

<sup>2</sup> Hereinafter referred to as “the report”.

<sup>3</sup> Hereinafter referred to as “the concluding observations”.

<sup>4</sup> Hereinafter referred to as “the standing committee”.

<sup>5</sup> Para. 73 of the concluding observations.

<sup>6</sup> Paras. 70 and 75 of the concluding observations.

necessary action to address challenges, and exercised its other broad powers with a view to fulfilling its task in the fullest possible way.

(b) Preparation: at this stage, the focus was on equipping the actors responsible for preparing the report with the knowledge and skills required for reporting to treaty bodies in general and the Committee in particular. For that purpose, a number of workshops and focus groups were convened. In accordance with the technical memorandum of understanding concluded in 2012 between Saudi Arabia and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), numerous relevant training sessions and workshops were held.

(c) Data collection: as is customary, the secretariat of the standing committee prepared templates for requesting relevant information from the competent government agencies. In so doing, it drew on the provisions of the Convention, the guidelines and the Committee's concluding observations. Meetings were held with representatives of civil society organizations to discuss the information and gather information and views.

(d) Drafting: at this stage, the focus was on data collection and analysis, and gathering general information to help the Committee understand the overall situation in Saudi Arabia and specific information relevant to the Convention and the recommendations set out in the Committee's previous concluding observations. Appropriate technical terms were used to facilitate the Committee's consideration of the report.

(e) Review and national consultation: representatives of government entities, civil society organizations and concerned individuals took part in several workshops and focus groups to review and discuss the draft report. Numerous amendments were made to the draft report, which was then finalized.

## **I. General information**

### **A. Population**

5. As of mid-2020, Saudi Arabia had 35,013,414 inhabitants, of whom 20,231,425 were men and 14,781,989 were women. The population growth rate is 2.30 per cent and the population density is 17.9 persons per m<sup>2</sup>. Disaggregated data is currently being collected as part of the 2022 census of Saudi Arabia. The census was postponed owing to precautionary measures in view of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The census methodology is based on international best practices and the most modern technology, which brings together fieldwork and self-reporting. Researchers were provided with all the data collection tools, including smart tablets, which are now being used by the General Authority for Statistics for all field surveys. Records were also used, including the National Address Database, which is used by the Saudi Arabian postal service and gives detailed spatial coordinates and field numbers for all buildings. Quality standards are applied by central operations rooms and by an integrated quality team that monitors all data collection and treatment until the outcomes are compiled and published.

## B. Main economic, social and cultural indicators

Gross domestic product (GDP) growth in fixed prices (2010 = 100), third quarter of 2022	8.72%
Per capita GDP, third quarter of 2022, in current prices	30,249 Saudi riyals (\$8,066)
General cost of living index (inflation) in 2022	106.97
Change in cost of living index (inflation) in 2022	2.5%
Unemployment rate relative to the total population (age 15 and older), third quarter of 2022	5.8%
Unemployment rate for Saudi Arabian males, third quarter of 2022	4.3%
Unemployment rate for Saudi Arabian females, third quarter of 2022	20.5%
Neonatal mortality rate in 2020	3 per 1,000 live births
Mortality rate for children under 5 in 2020	7 per 1,000
Gross primary school enrolment rate in 2021	100.19%
Net primary school enrolment rate in 2021	95.49%
Workforce participation rate for the population aged 15 and older, third quarter of 2022	61.5%
Employment rate for the population aged 15 and older, third quarter of 2022	94.2%
Percentage of Saudi Arabian labour force relative to total labour force, third quarter of 2022	50.5%
Percentage of Saudi Arabian employed persons relative to total employed persons, third quarter of 2022	48.3%
Percentage of employed persons relative to total working-age population, third quarter of 2022	58%
Percentage of employed persons relative to total working-age population, third quarter of 2022	47.3%
Percentage of unemployed persons relative to total working-age population, third quarter of 2022	3.6%
Percentage of unemployed persons relative to total working-age population, third quarter of 2022	5.2%

## C. Political system

### General principles

6. Saudi Arabia applies the Islamic sharia in all its affairs, as enshrined in the Basic Law of Governance promulgated by Royal Order No. 90 of 27 Sha‘ban A.H. 1412 (2 March A.D. 1992). The Basic Law of Governance covers the form, principles and authorities of the State. Under article 1 of the Law, “The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a fully sovereign Arab Islamic State. Its religion shall be Islam and its constitution shall be the Book of God and the sunnah (traditions) of His messenger. Its language shall be Arabic and its capital shall be the city of Riyadh”. Article 5, paragraph 1 of the Law provides as follows: “The system of governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be monarchical”. As is stated in article 55 of the Law, the King is responsible for overseeing the application of the Islamic sharia, the law and public policy, and protecting and defending the country. Article 7 provides as follows: “The authority to rule over the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia derives from the Book of God and the sunnah of His messenger, both of which shall prevail over the present Law and all the laws of the State. Government in Saudi Arabia is based on principles and values that guarantee human rights and govern daily life, namely, justice, consultation

(*shura*) and equality, as provided in article 8 of the Basic Law, which provides as follows: “Government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be based on justice, consultation and equality in accordance with the Islamic sharia”.

### **Powers of the State**

7. The Basic Law defines the powers of the State. Article 44 provides that the powers of the State consist of the judiciary, the executive and the legislative branches, and that those powers shall cooperate in fulfilling those functions. Below is an overview of the principles that govern those powers and define their functions.

#### **The judiciary**

8. The judiciary in Saudi Arabia derives its authority and principles from the Islamic sharia, which sets out an obligation, makes justice the foundation of government, and guarantees judicial independence. Article 46 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates as follows: “The judiciary is an independent authority and judges, in their administration of justice, are independent and subject to no authority other than the Islamic sharia”. Article 1 of the Law on the Judiciary promulgated pursuant to Royal Decree No. 78 of 19 Ramadan A.H. 1428 (1 October A.D. 2007) provides as follows: “Judges are independent and, in their administration of justice, are subject to no authority other than the provisions of Islamic sharia and the legislation in force”. Article 48 of the Basic Law stipulates that the courts shall rule on the cases before them in accordance with the provisions of the Islamic sharia, as provided for in the Book and the Sunnah and in the laws adopted by the ruler that are not inconsistent with the same. Article 49 of the Basic Law provides that the courts in Saudi Arabia shall rule on all offences and disputes except for cases that fall within the competence of the Board of Grievances (i.e. the administrative judiciary). Responsibility for implementing judgments therefore rests with the King or his representative. Article 50 of the Basic Law provides as follows: “The King or his appointee are responsible for implementing judgments”.

9. The Law of the Judiciary provides for the establishment of courts of first instance, consisting of general courts, criminal courts, personal status courts, commercial courts, labour courts and courts of appeals. It also provides for a supreme court whose functions include overseeing the application and proper issuance of judgments, and a Supreme Council of the Judiciary. The Law specifies the functions and jurisdiction of those courts, the rights and obligations of judges, the process of auditing judges, and the functions of the Ministry of Justice and of clerks.

10. The Board of Grievances rules on administrative disputes. It provides for the establishment of an administrative court, and converts Board of Grievances courts into administrative courts, appeals courts and supreme courts. The Law sets out the functions of those courts and clarifies issues related to the appointment and rank of the judges.

11. Royal Order No. 240 of 22 Ramadan A.H. 1438 (17 June A.D. 2017) changes the name of the Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution to the Office of the Public Prosecutor, grants the Office full independence in the fulfilment of its functions, and connects it directly with the King. As part of the judicial power, the Office of the Public Prosecutor prosecutes offences, manages those prosecutions by initiating or closing proceedings, oversees enforcement, monitors and inspects prisons and detention centres, receives complaints from prisoners and detainees, and ensures that their prison sentence or detention is legitimate and can continue.

12. Royal Order No. 277 of 15 Rabi‘ II A.H. 1441 (12 December A.D. 2019) approves the regulatory and structural arrangements for combating administrative and financial corruption. The arrangements include merging the Oversight and

Investigation Authority and the administrative branches with the National Anti-Corruption Authority, in a new body to be named the Authority for Monitoring and Combating Corruption. A criminal investigation and prosecution unit was established within that Authority, with responsibility for criminal investigation and prosecution in cases involving financial and administrative corruption.

### **Legislative power**

13. The legislative power in Saudi Arabia consists of the King, the Cabinet and the Shura Council. Article 55 of the Basic Law provides as follows: “the King shall govern over the nation in accordance with the sharia and the provisions of Islam. He shall oversee the application of the Islamic sharia, the law and the public policy of the State, and shall protect and defend it”. The Cabinet, along with the Shura Council, adopts laws and regulations. Article 67 of the Basic Law provides as follows: “The legislative power shall put in place laws and regulations in a manner that creates a benefit or alleviates harm in the affairs of State, in accordance with the rules of the Islamic sharia. It shall fulfil its functions in accordance with the present Law and the laws regulating Cabinet and the Shura Council”.

### **Executive power**

14. The Cabinet manages the domestic and foreign affairs of State. It represents the executive power under article 19 of the Cabinet Law. Article 56 of the Basic Law provides as follows: the King is the head of the Cabinet and is supported in fulfilling his functions by the members of the Cabinet, in accordance with the present Law and other laws. The Cabinet Law defines the prerogatives of the Cabinet with regard to domestic and foreign affairs, and the regulation of and coordination with government bodies. It specifies the requirements expected of ministers, their prerogatives, the means for holding them to account, and all relevant matters”. Royal Decree No. 61 of 1 Rabi‘ I A.H. 1444 (27 September A.D. 2022), provides that His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the heir to the throne, is the head of the Cabinet notwithstanding article 56 of the Basic Law and the relevant provisions set out in the Cabinet Law. Article 58 of the Basic Law provides that ministers and heads of independent entities answer to the head of the Cabinet for the ministries and entities under their purview, and for ensuring the good performance of the legislative and executive powers and the principle of consultation. The King may, under article 69 of the Basic Law, convene a joint meeting of the Cabinet and the Shura Council.

## **D. Legal, institutional and human rights framework<sup>7</sup>**

### **Laws and regulations**

15. The laws of Saudi Arabia contain explicit provisions aimed at strengthening and protecting human rights. Foremost among those laws are the Basic Law, the Law on the Judiciary, the Law on the Board of Grievances and the Code of Criminal Procedure. Other relevant laws, including those on labour, health, education, social security and related laws, regulations, orders, decisions and regulations, set out detailed provisions enshrining the principles of the Basic Law. We will now give an overview of the human rights provisions in the Basic Law; an overview of the most prominent human rights laws, regulations and decisions adopted in Saudi Arabia in the period under review (2016–2022); and the most prominent legal amendments made during that period.

<sup>7</sup> Paras. 14, 24 and 26 of the concluding observations.

**Basic Law**

16. The Basic Law includes basic principles and provisions intended to strengthen and protect human rights. Taken as whole, those principles constitute the basic human rights framework. Article 26 of the Law provides as follows: "The State shall protect human rights in accordance with the Islamic sharia". The Law provides for a set of basic rights, including the right to justice and equality. Article 8 provides as follows: "Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be based on justice, consultation and equality in accordance with the Islamic sharia". As regards access to justice and equality before the law, article 47 provides as follows, "The right to litigation shall be guaranteed equally for citizens and residents in the Kingdom". The right to security is the cornerstone of all human rights, and its application must not impinge on the right to freedom. Accordingly, article 36 states categorically as follows: "The State shall provide security to all its citizens and residents on its territory. A person's actions may not be restricted, nor may a person be detained or imprisoned, except by virtue of the Law".

17. Regarding the right to private property and personal freedom, article 18 states as follows: "The State shall guarantee the freedom and inviolability of private property. Property may be seized only in the public interest and provided that the owner is fairly compensated". Article 37 provides as follows: "Residences shall be inviolable. They may not be entered or searched without the owner's permission, except in the cases set forth in the Law". Article 40 provides as follows: "Correspondence by telegraph and mail, telephone conversations, and other means of communication shall be protected and may not be seized, delayed, viewed, or listened to except in the cases set forth in the Law". Regarding social security and insurance, article 27 states as follows: "The State shall guarantee the right of citizens and their families in the event of emergencies, sickness, disability and old age and shall support the social security system and encourage institutions and individuals to participate in charitable work".

18. Article 28 provides that the State shall facilitate employment for every able person and shall enact laws to protect the rights of workers and employers. Regarding education, article 30 of the Law states as follows: "The State shall provide public education and shall be committed to combating illiteracy". On the right to health, article 31 of the Law states as follows: "The State shall be concerned with public health and shall provide health care to every citizen". On participation in cultural life, article 29 of the Law states as follows: "The State shall foster sciences, letters and culture and shall encourage scientific research, protect Islamic and Arabic heritage and contribute to Arab, Islamic and human civilization". The Law also recognizes freedom of expression and opinion. By virtue of the provisions of the Islamic sharia, which prohibit harming people and violating their dignity, and in accordance with international standards, make it a legal requirement to uphold freedom of expression and protect public order, national security and public health and morals. Article 39 of the Law provides as follows: "The mass media, publishing media and all means of expression shall use decent language and adhere to the laws of the State. They shall contribute to educating the nation and supporting its unity. Anything that is conducive to sedition and division, or that undermines the security of the State or its public relations or harms human dignity or rights, shall be prohibited. The ways to achieve those goals shall be set forth in laws". Regarding the right to an appropriate environment, article 32 states as follows: "The State shall endeavour to preserve, protect and improve the environment and prevent environmental pollution".

### **The Law on countering terrorism and the financing thereof**

19. The Act was promulgated by virtue of Royal Decree No. 21 of 12 Safar A.H. 1439 (1 November A.D. 2017), as amended by Royal Decree No. 142 of 19 Shawwal A.H. 1441 (11 June A.D. 2020). It defines terrorist offences; addresses procedural matters concerning seizure, detention, appointment of lawyers, temporary release and the competent court for considering relevant cases; and defines offences and penalties. The Law updates the previous law on the topic and gives due regard to strengthening and promoting human rights in the context of counter-terrorism.

### **Law on audiovisual media**

20. The Law was promulgated by virtue of Royal Decree No. 33 of 25 Rabi' I A.H. 1439 (13 December A. D. 2017). In article 5, it prohibits actions designed to provoke strife, division and hatred among citizens, incite violence or threaten social peace. The implementing regulation of the Law was promulgated pursuant to Ministerial Decision No. 16927 of 4 Rabi' I A.H. 1440 (12 November A.D. 2018). It sets forth detailed provisions regulating the activities of the audiovisual media.

### **Law on the prevention of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and the Rights and Duties of persons living with AIDS**

21. The Law was promulgated by virtue of Royal Decree No. 41 of 16 Rabi' II A.H. 1439 (3 January A.D. 2018). In articles 2 and 3, it classifies AIDS as a contagious disease and seeks to protect the rights of those living with the disease, ensuring that they receive proper care and rehabilitation and are able to continue to exercise their rights to education and work. The Law requires health authorities to provide persons living with AIDS with health care, counselling and psychological support, while respecting their rights.

### **Anti-Harassment Law**

22. The Law was promulgated by virtue of Royal Decree No. 96 of 16 Ramadan A.H. 1439 (31 May A.D. 2018). It is intended to prevent and combat the crime of harassment, punish offenders and protect victims. It seeks to maintain the individual privacy, dignity and personal freedom guaranteed by the Islamic sharia and by the relevant laws. The Law requires the competent governmental and non-governmental actors to put in place the necessary measures to prevent and combat harassment in the workplace with a view to providing a workplace free from harassment for both sexes.

### **Law on juveniles**

23. The Law was promulgated by virtue of Royal Decree No. 113 of 19 Dhu al-Qa'dah A.H. 1439 (1 August A.D. 2018). It sets out the measures necessary for dealing with juvenile delinquents, including stop and search, arrest, investigation and prosecution, in a manner appropriate to their age; it also provides for behavioural assessment. Article 15 provides that, if the offence committed by a juvenile is punishable by death, it shall be sufficient for the perpetrator to remain in a facility for a period of not more than 10 years.

### **Labour Law**

24. The Law was promulgated by virtue of Royal Decree No. 51 of 23 Sha'ban A.H. 1426 (27 September A.D. 2005) and amended by virtue of Royal Decree No. 46 of 5 Jumada II A.H. 1436 (25 March A.D. 2015), Royal Decree No. 134 of 27 Dhu al-Qa'dah A.H. 1440 (30 July A.D. 2019) and Royal Decree No. 5 of 7 Muharram A.H. 1442 (26 August A.D. 2020). It makes it a requirement to safeguard the dignity

of workers and provide them with a healthy working environment. It explains the rights and obligations of each party to the labour relationship. With regard to the employer's duties to the worker, article 61 provides that employment cannot be forced, that wages must not be withheld in whole or part, that workers must be treated with respect, and that no words or deeds may be used that impinge on the worker's dignity or religion. Under article 8, the Law invalidates any other provisions that may contradict it, and also invalidates any waiver and any agreement to forego the rights set out therein so long as the labour contract remains valid, unless the resulting situation is more favourable to the worker. The Law has been amended to guarantee equality between men and women in rights and responsibilities and in conditions of service. The amendments provide that citizens have a right to work, and that others may exercise that right only once certain conditions set out in the Law have been met. Article 3 provides that citizens have an equal right to work without any discrimination based on sex, disability, age or any other grounds, whether while performing duties, upon appointment or when the vacancy is announced. Men and women have an equal retirement age of 60, provided that the two parties have not agreed for employment to continue beyond that age. Article 155 provides as follows: "Employers may not dismiss a female employee or threaten her with dismissal while she is on maternity leave". Women are no longer prohibited from being employed in mines and quarries. Article 149 of the Law, which banned the employment of women in dangerous or harmful jobs, has been rescinded. Article 150, which prohibited the employment of women at night, has also been rescinded.

### **Law on travel documents**

25. The Law was promulgated by virtue of Law No. M.24 of 28 Jumada I A.H. 1421 (28 August A.D. 2000) and amended by virtue of Royal Decree No. 134 of 27 Dhu al-Qa'dah A.H. 1440 (30 July A.D. 2019). The amendments provide for equality between men and women in the requirements for being issued a passport and travelling outside Saudi Arabia.

### **Civil Status Law**

26. The Law was promulgated by virtue of Royal Decree No. 7 of 20 Rabi' II A.H. 1407 (22 December A.D. 1986) and amended by virtue of Royal Decree No. 134 of 27 Dhu 1-Qa'dah A.H. 1440 (30 July A.D. 2019). Among the most significant amendments is that to article 30, removing the phrase "the place of residence of a married woman shall be the same as that of her husband, so long as their conjugal relation continues (...)" . Article 33 has been amended to grant women equal rights to men with regard to declaring births. Article 47 provides that responsibility for declaring a marriage, divorce, reconciliation, repudiation or mutually agreed dissolution of marriage (*mukhala'ah*) rests with the husband or the wife. It may also be declared by the father of the husband, the father of the wife, or one of their relatives. Article 50 has been amended to grant the husband and wife the equal right to request the family record from the Civil Status Department. Article 53 has been amended to allow women the same right as men to declare the death of a progenitor, descendant, spouse or any relative. Article 91 has been amended to read as follows: "For the purposes of the present Law, the head of the family shall be the father or the mother with regard to minor children".

### **Social Insurance Law**

27. The Law was promulgated by virtue of Royal Decree No. 33 of 3 Ramadan A.H. 1421 (29 November A.D. 2000) and includes sections on living allowances and occupational hazards. It also includes provisions on the types and amounts of compensation for workplace injuries. Article 38 of the Social Insurance Law was

amended by virtue of Royal Decree No. 134 of 27 Dhu al-Qa‘dah A.H. 1440 (30 July 2019) to ensure equality between men and women in the age of retirement, which was fixed at 60 for both sexes.

### **Traffic Law**

28. The Law was promulgated by virtue of Royal Decree No. 85 of 26 Shawwal A.H. 1428 (7 November A.D. 2007). Royal Order No. 905 of 6 Muharram A.H. 1439 (26 September A.D. 2017) provides for the application of provisions of the Traffic Law and its implementing regulation, including the issuance of drivers’ licences to men and women on an equal footing. That measure was one of the most prominent measures taken in the reporting period. The amendment came into effect on 10 Shawwal A.H. 1439 (24 June A.D. 2018).

### **Implementing regulation of the Labour Law**

29. The implementing regulation and its annex were adopted pursuant to Decision No. 70273 of the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, dated 11 Rabi‘ II A.H. 1443 (18 December A.D. 2018), as amended by virtue of Ministerial Decision No. 131235 of 7 Rajab A.H. 1443 (8 February A.D. 2022). The regulation includes a number of annexes addressing such areas as arrangements, facilitation in the workplace for persons with permanent or temporary disabilities, and workers with diseases that make them effectively disabled.

### **Social Security Law**

30. The Law was promulgated by virtue of Royal Order No. 32 of 4 Rabi‘ II A.H. 1442 (19 November A.D. 2020). Its purpose is to put in place the necessary measures to address cases of poverty in society; guarantee a minimum income that can meet the basic needs of every beneficiary, something that can be achieved by assessing minimum living requirements and providing appropriate support; provide social support and protection to beneficiaries, with a particular focus on those in greatest need and those most deserving; enable beneficiaries to achieve financial independence and become productive through rehabilitation and training; and put in place mechanisms to assist beneficiaries during crises and disasters.

### **Implementing regulation of the Law on juveniles**

31. The regulation was issued by virtue of Cabinet Decision No. 237 of 16 Rabi‘ II A.H. 1442 (1 December A.D. 2020). It prohibits the use of shackles and handcuffs when detaining juveniles; requires that juveniles and their guardians be informed of the reasons for the detention and the charges against them; and provides that juveniles have a right to a lawyer at every stage of questioning, investigation and prosecution.

### **Implementing regulation of the Social Security Law**

32. The implementing regulation was adopted by virtue of Decision No. 192891 of 25 Shawwal A.H. 1442 (6 June A.D. 2021). It urges beneficiaries who are able to work to seek employment; accept job opportunities brought to their attention by the Human Resources Development Fund and other bodies; submit to an annual medical examination; and enrol their children in education with a view to their social protection.

### **Law on evidence**

33. The Law was promulgated by virtue of Royal Order No. 43 of 26 Jumada I A.H. 1443 (30 December A.D. 2021). It specifies the means for providing legal evidence, including digital and other modern forms of evidence, and expediting

litigation; allows the parties to agree on specific rules with regard to evidence; and endeavours to apply international evidentiary standards.

### **Law on lawyers**

34. The Law was promulgated by Royal Order No. 38 of 28 Rajab A.H. 1422 (15 October A.D. 2001), as amended by Royal Order No. 66 of 15 Rajab A.H. 1443 (16 February A.D. 2022). It defines the legal profession, conditions for disbarment, and rights and duties of lawyers.

### **Law on the rights of, and care for, older persons**

35. The Law was promulgated by virtue of Royal Decree No. 47 of 3 Jumada II A.H. 1443 (6 January A.D. 2022). Article 2 of the Law provides that the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development shall coordinate with relevant parties to enable older persons to live in an environment that preserves their rights and dignity; raise awareness of those rights; support volunteering activities to help older persons; and rehabilitate public, commercial and residential facilities to make them suited to the needs of older persons. Article 4 provides that social care homes may house older persons only with their consent, or if a judgment has been handed down to that effect, or if the life or safety of the older person is in danger under certain criteria that are specified in the regulation.

### **Personal Status Law**

36. The Law was promulgated by virtue of Royal Decree No. 73 of 6 Sha‘ban A.H. 1443 (8 March A.D. 2022). It contains provisions regulating family relations. Its purpose is to safeguard the stability of the family as the fundamental unit of society; define the discretionary power of the judiciary with a view to strengthening legal stability and minimizing divergences; define a framework for relations among family members and the protection of their rights; and expedite the settlement of family disputes. The Law states that the minimum age for marriage is 18, but that a court may allow the marriage of a male or female person under 18 of that person has reached maturity, and if it has been shown, in accordance with established procedure, that the marriage is in their best interests. The Law further provides that women have a right to be provided for financially by their husbands, regardless of their own material situation. It provides that women have a right to dissolve a marriage contract of their own independent will, in a number of cases. It gives women the right to provide evidence of a divorce or reconciliation even if the husband does not agree. It requires the husband to give the wife fair compensation if he did not provide evidence of personal status changes, in a number of situations.

### **Law on protection from abuse**

37. The Law was promulgated by virtue of Royal Order No. 52 of 15 Dhu al-Qa‘dah A.H. 1434 (21 September A.D. 2013) as amended by virtue of Royal Decree No. 72 of 6 Sha‘ban A.H. 1443 (9 March A.D. 2022). It provides for protection from all forms of abuse; for victims to receive assistance, treatment, shelter, health care and psychosocial care; and for perpetrators to be held accountable and prosecution. It also provides for measures to raise awareness of abuse and its effects and to tackle social and behavioural aspects. The amendment to the Law adds a new paragraph to article 7, concerning the action to be taken when receiving reports of abuse. The Law now provides that victims of abuse or their representatives can enter their place of residence, have access to their identity documents and take their personal possessions. Article 12 has been amended to provide that cases of abuse should be followed up for no less than six months after being settled in court. Article 13 has been amended to double the penalty if the abuse victim is a person with a disability, a parent, someone

over the age of 60, or a pregnant woman who miscarried as a result of the abuse. The penalty is also doubled if the abuse took place in a place of work, education or worship, or was perpetrated by someone responsible for enforcing the Law, or occurred in connection with the use of a weapon.

### **Child Protection Law**

38. The Law was promulgated by virtue of Royal Decree No. 14 of 3 Safar A.H. 1436 (25 November A.D. 2014) as amended by Royal Decree No. 72 of 6 Sha‘ban A.H. 1443 (9 March A.D. 2022), and sets forth provisions necessary for the protection of children’s rights. It defines a child as any individual who has not reached the age of 18, in accordance with the Islamic sharia, the relevant laws and the international instruments to which Saudi Arabia is a party. It provides that, if the parents separate, the mother shall have the right to custody, and that she may be stripped of that right only by a court judgment. Article 19 has been amended to provide that the relevant actors shall put in place health-care, educational, mental-health and social programmes to rehabilitate children who have experienced abuse or neglect, and that the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development shall, when necessary, coordinate with the Ministry of Health to make the perpetrator of the abuse or neglect undergo mental health care or a rehabilitation programme, as appropriate. A new paragraph 3 has been added to article 23 stating that, with due regard for the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development shall follow up on the provisions of paragraph 1 of the article until the matter has been settled in court.

### **Royal orders, supreme orders and Cabinet decisions**

- Supreme Order No. 33322 of 21 Rajab A.H. 1438 (18 April A.D. 2017)

39. The Order allows women to access all government services and conclude their business without being required to obtain the approval of another person. It further supports the launch by the Human Rights Commission of educational programmes on the international conventions to which Saudi Arabia has acceded, as part of a comprehensive women’s rights awareness plan. Governmental and non-governmental actors have amended their regulations and procedures accordingly.

- Supreme Order No. 25803 of 29 Jumada I A.H. 1439 (15 February A.D. 2018)

40. The order provides for legal assistance to women and children in cases of abuse. It directs the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, in coordination with the Saudi Bar Association, to obtain a periodic list of the names and addresses of lawyers providing pro bono legal aid and to work with them, pursuant to paragraph 11 of article 13 of the statute of the Saudi Bar Association.

## **II. International human rights framework**

41. Cabinet Decision No. 237 of 5 Jumada II A.H. 1437 (14 March A.D. 2016) amends the statute of the Human Rights Commission to improve its independence and effectiveness. The Commission, which had previously been under the executive branch agencies, was brought directly under the King. A royal order was issued on 9 Dhu al-Qa‘dah A.H. 1441 (30 June A.D. 2020) reorganizing the Board of the Human Rights Commission at its fourth session to provide that women should account for 50 per cent of members. There are now 13 female members and 13 male members.

42. A number of governmental entities have been established. Approval has also been granted for the establishment of non-governmental organizations concerned with strengthening and protecting human rights or certain specific rights. The role of those

organizations is to complement the work of the government entities responsible for upholding human rights within a given purview. Those entities include the following:

#### **National Centre for the Development of the Non-Profit Sector**

43. The Centre was established by virtue of Cabinet Decision No. 618 of 20 Shawwal A.H. 1442 (1 June A.D. 2021) with a view to regulating, promoting and expanding the role of non-profit sector organizations in areas related to development. Those actions should broaden the scope of civil society and support the work of civil society organizations in numerous areas, including women's rights.

#### **Public Health Authority**

44. The Authority was established by virtue of Cabinet Decision No. 401 of 18 Sha'ban A.H. 1442 (2 March A.D. 2021) with a view to protecting and strengthening public health.

#### **Authority for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities**

45. The Authority was established by virtue of Cabinet Decision No. 266 of 27 Jumada I A.H. 1439 (13 February A.D. 2018). Its purpose is to deliver care for persons with disabilities and ensures they obtain their disability-related rights. It seeks to improve the services provided by government agencies to the disabled, help them access essential care and rehabilitation, improve prevention, define the role of each agency concerned with the welfare of persons with disabilities and, to that end, coordinate with stakeholders to ensure that the necessary measures are taken.

#### **National Centre for the Promotion of Mental Health**

46. The Centre was established pursuant to Cabinet Decision No. 685 of 27 Dhu al-Qa'dah A.H. 1440 (30 July A.D. 2019) with a view to crafting national programmes for the promotion of mental health, building a better life for all members of society on an equal footing, fostering positive engagement, and supporting the categories most vulnerable to mental health problems.

#### **Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property**

47. The Authority was established by virtue of Cabinet Decision No. 496 of 14 Ramadan A.H. 1439 (29 May A.D. 2018). It oversees intellectual property activities, which are a basic human right.

#### **Family Affairs Council**

48. The Council was established pursuant to Cabinet Decision No. 443 of 20 Shawwal A.H. 1437 (25 July A.D. 2016) with the task of overseeing family affairs. Article 6 provides that it shall establish such technical committees as are necessary, including one on childhood, one on older persons and one on women. Its statute was amended by virtue of Cabinet Decision No. 443 of 12 Sha'ban A.H. 1443 (15 March A.D. 2022) to connect it with the Council on Economic and Development Affairs with a view to improving its independence and effectiveness.

#### **King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre**

49. The Centre was established in May 2015 as an international centre to help those in need and assist victims of disasters around the world without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex, disability or any other grounds. It is the humanitarian and charitable arm of Saudi Arabia, and its purpose is to alleviate the suffering of humanity and make a dignified life possible. It works with United Nations bodies and

international non-profit organizations in beneficiary States, in all areas of relief and humanitarian work, including education, health, protection, shelter, early recovery, nutrition and food security. As at December 2022, Saudi Arabia had provided a total of \$86,424,682,466 in assistance. The Centre has provided a total of \$6,083,325,478 to 2,305 projects in such areas as food and agricultural security, health, support and coordination of humanitarian assistance, shelter and non-food items, multi-sector aid, early recovery, water and environmental recovery, protection, education, nutrition, logistics, emergency communications and charitable activities.

## **E. Vision 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals<sup>8</sup>**

50. This section reviews the most significant information and data concerning developments in the area of rights as part of Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. In several places, the report sets out detailed information and data connected directly or indirectly with the Goals.

51. Vision 2030 was adopted by the Cabinet in Decision No. 308 of 18 Rajab A.H. 1437 (25 April A.D. 2016) as a blueprint for the country's public policy, programmes and initiatives. Its purpose is to harness the country's resources in the context of three main themes, namely a vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation. Since its launch, several measures have been put in place to empower women and bolster their contribution to development. In recent years, Saudi Arabia has made considerable progress in that area. Women's share of labour market (workforce) participation has gone from 21.2 per cent in 2017 to 34.7 per cent in 2022. The average economic participation rate of women has gone from 17 per cent in 2017 to 37 per cent in 2022. The percentage of women in middle and senior administrative posts has increased from 28.6 per cent in 2017 to 39 per cent in 2021. For the first time, women participated in security activities during the hajj season in 2021 in several Ministry of Defence roles, including civil defence, passports and public security. Numerous reforms have been enacted to strengthen women's participation, without gender discrimination, in such areas as finance service access, wages, employment, working hours, the prohibition of dismissal during pregnancy, pay continuity during maternity leave, and participation in sports.

52. With regard to the Committee's call for the realization of substantive gender equality throughout the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Saudi Arabia has enacted wide-ranging human rights reforms in over the last few years. The area of women's rights has been at the heart of that process. Numerous laws, regulations and legal references have been adopted or amended to ensure that women can exercise their rights on an equal footing with men. Several entities have been established to address women's rights, including the Family Affairs Council described in paragraph 48 above, the National Observatory of Women's Participation in Development and the Gender Balance Centre. Several measures have been taken that have helped empower women and strengthen women's rights.

53. Several legal reference texts have been adopted or amended to uphold equality between women and men, particularly the Labour Law, the Law on travel documents, the Civil Status Law, the Social Insurance Law and the Traffic Law, as indicated in paragraphs 27–32. As a result, women can drive cars, obtain passports and travel out of Saudi Arabia on an equal footing with men; men and women have an equal right to register the family with the Civil Status Department; men and women have equal rights and responsibilities with regard to work and social insurance, including conditions of service. The age of retirement is now 60 for both sexes, and female

<sup>8</sup> Para. 69 of the concluding observations.

employees cannot be dismissed or threatened with dismissal while pregnant or on maternity leave, or while convalescing as a result of pregnancy or maternity.

54. The Ministry of the Economy and Planning is the entity responsible for following up implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Saudi Arabia. It has issued Supreme Order No. 7973 of 7 Safar A.H. 1443 (14 September A.D. 2021) establishing a steering committee to oversee the realization of the Goals, put in place a practical road map, and make periodic recommendations to improve the effectiveness of Saudi Arabia in that area. Five working groups have been established to ensure that all the Goals are covered comprehensively.

55. Cabinet Decision No. 790 of 28 Dhu al-Hijjah A.H. 1441 (18 August A.D. 2020) amends article 2 of the Social Development Bank Law to link the Bank organizationally to the National Development Fund, and give the Bank a range of funding options commensurate with the development stage and scale of the enterprise in question:

- Funding for start-ups: aimed at new enterprises, provides up to 300,000 riyals
- Outstanding projects: aimed at promising enterprises that are new or no more than 3 years old, provides up to 4 million riyals
- Excellence in trading: aimed at developing outstanding trade projects, provides up to 4 million riyals
- Business incubators and accelerators: aimed at enterprises that act as incubators and accelerators, provides up to 4 million riyals.

56. The Bank provides a set of social funding projects aimed at an important category of citizens, namely low-income individuals. The Bank gives them the opportunity to obtain concessional financing that enables them to meet obligations arising from their basic needs, whether at the individual or family level.

57. Relevant measures also include the establishment of an assistance programme to launch small enterprises for families in need, at a total cost of 2 billion riyals. A programme providing for family-run projects has been established, at a total cost of 1.5 billion riyals, to help garner capital, raw materials and other components that are needed to start the business. The Bank has concluded 13 agreements with the tertiary sector, for a total of more than 12 million riyals, so that family-run businesses can access financial and other services. The Bank has supported and empowered women through several programmes and services; it has provided more than 13 billion riyals to more than 300,000 women. Those initiatives have prompted a 400 per cent increase in the number of beneficiaries over the three years since 2019. Non-financial services include child care, training and capacity building. These are provided by the Department of Empowerment and Development, business and output incubators and the Dulani business centre, in cooperation with entrepreneurship training centres. Some 60,000 women across the country have benefited from the programmes.

58. Social security benefits have been increased by raising the minimum benefit per family from 1,000 riyals per beneficiary and 28 per cent for dependents to 1,100 riyals per beneficiary and 50 per cent for dependents. Programmes are in place to support and shore up social security. The most significant include the productive families programme; the renovation, mattresses and furniture programme; the satchel and school uniform programme; the discounted purchasing programme; and the electricity and water bill support programme. Some 3.5 billion riyals have been allocated for that purpose. The Takaful charitable foundation and the Ministry of Education support programme for students in need have been shored up, and 476 million riyals per year have been allocated for that purpose.

59. A citizen's account programme has been launched to address the expected effects of the economic reforms under Vision 2030. Cash sums have been paid to low- and medium-income male and female citizens on an equal footing, something that is a recognized best practice with regard to the right to development.

60. As a result of the measures taken by Saudi Arabia in the area of health, mortality rates for children under 5 have declined. As at 2020, the mortality rate for children under five was 7 per thousand live births. Reproductive health services are made available. The childbirth mortality rate has also declined; the maternal mortality rate as at 2018 was 11.9 per 100,000 births. The rate of AIDS has decreased, and treatment is available. In 2022, the rate of new HIV cases was 0.028 per thousand inhabitants. Saudi Arabia received an award from the World Health Organization for maintaining zero local transmission of malaria in 2021 and 2022.

61. The educational environment conducive to the empowerment of Saudi Arabian women has been overhauled and modernized to improve access to modern work opportunities in a range of areas, such as information and communication technology, health and medicine, tourism, sports, recreation, economics and finance, culture, art and heritage.

62. The Ministry of Health has been working with other health agencies on seven family planning initiatives under the aegis of the Committee on Demographic Policy. Family planning services bring benefits for women, families, children and society as a whole. They empower women and enable women and families to control reproduction, remain in education, participate in the workforce and public life, and minimize health risks to women, particularly in vulnerable categories. They help to improve infant health by spacing out pregnancies and births, giving children a right to breastfeeding, and making possible a greater focus on and investment in each child. Family time can be allocated to improve behavioural and intellectual development, improve educational achievement for each child, improve family satisfaction by limiting unwanted pregnancies, and hence reducing the financial and time burden on families. The following actions have been taken:

- Reproductive health and family planning have been merged into a single care model under the Ministry of Health
- Permanent and mobile clinics have been established in rural areas to provide family planning and raise awareness
- Family planning services have been included in basic insurance coverage
- Training and awareness-raising programmes on reproductive health and family planning in health care have been created and disseminated
- Medical curricula have been modernized for professionals in health care and related areas
- In order to ensure availability, a review has been conducted of the options for birth control and their distribution
- Guidelines have been developed for providing family planning counselling with a view to ensuring integrated service delivery
- Women can access contraceptives without conditions.

63. As regards the economic empowerment of women, 817,930 businesswomen have been listed in the company register in Saudi Arabia. There has been a 122 per cent rise in the listing of women in the company register from 2015 to 2021.

64. There are now 17 business centres for women across Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Business Centre is facilitating the process for starting, continuing and closing a

business. It provides all services and activities in accordance with international best practices. There are now 12 centres in 10 cities. Seven government agencies are represented at each centre, and 750 services are provided at the centres.

#### **Licences for consultancy services**

<i>Year</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>
No.	1 632	2 428	2 161	2 753

#### **Statistics for woman-led projects funded by the Saudi Development Bank**

Percentages, out of a total of 3.4 billion riyals at end 2020 (individuals – self-employed):

<i>Year</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>
Women	40.97	45.68	35.50	43.90
Men	59.03	56.32	66.50	56.10

Percentages, out of a total of 3.56 billion riyals at end 2020 (business funding – start-ups and established businesses):

<i>Year</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>
Women	26.52	30.41	35.19	49.16
Men	73.48	59.69	64.81	50.84

65. Various entities support women in business. Alongside material support, they provide advice, training, business development services and guidance. The entities include Small and Medium Enterprise Authority centres, the Prince Sultan Fund to Support and Empower Women, and the Aramco business centres (Waed). The Saudi Industrial Development Fund finances projects in industry, energy and mining. The Agricultural Development Fund provides funding in the area of agriculture and all forms of crops, apiaries, fishing boats, agritourism and sustainable rural development programmes.

66. The 2020 World Bank report entitled “Women, business and the law” classifies Saudi Arabia as the foremost world country in reforming laws and regulations on women. Saudi Arabia achieved a 100 per cent score in four indicators, namely mobility, workplace, entrepreneurship and pension. It achieved a 60 per cent on marriage, 40 per cent on parenthood and assets, and 25 per cent on pay. The aim of the report is to compare gender discrimination in the areas of development, the economy and entrepreneurship in 190 States. Saudi Arabia again ranked highly in the 2021 “Women, business and the law” report: it received an overall rating of 80 per cent, overtaking its previous rating of 70.6 per cent. That result places it at the forefront of the Middle East and North Africa region. The Kingdom achieved a 100 per cent rating in five indicators, namely mobility, workplace, entrepreneurship, pension and pay. It held its place in marriage, parenthood and assets.

67. In accordance with the strategic aims of Vision 2030, the Gender Balance Centre was established in 2021 with a view to developing and empowering human capacities and achieving equal opportunities in the workplace. The Centre works to achieve Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (“Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”) and to coordinate government agencies’ endeavours to ensure

gender equality in Saudi Arabia. For that purpose, it manages projects aimed at closing the gender gap. It organized training programmes, provides advice, conducts studies and makes administrative, organizational and strategic proposals to guarantee equal opportunities and gender balance.

68. In 2020, in recognition of the work done by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Saudi Arabia received an award for empowering women in the area of information and communication technology. The Ministry received an Equals in Tech Award in the Leadership in Tech category. The award is granted by the International Telecommunication Union, which is the United Nations agency responsible for information and communication technology. The aim of the award is to strengthen the digital gender economy by identifying inspirational models that stand out at the international level.

## **Part I (arts. 1–6)**

### **Articles 1–3<sup>9</sup>**

69. In accordance with the principle of equality enshrined in article 8 of the Basic Law, Saudi Arabian agencies have joined forces to prevent any discrimination against women that has the effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition of women's human rights. A broad legal prohibition is in place under the relevant laws, which guarantee equality and equal opportunities. Those laws include the Civil Service Law, the Labour Law and the Health Law. Several criminal laws, including the Law on combating trafficking in persons, provide for strengthened penalties when the victim is a woman.

70. The country's efforts to combat discrimination against women culminated in Supreme Order No. 33322 of 21 Rajab A.H. 1438 (18 April A.D. 2017), which states that the competent agencies must not require the approval of a male guardian when providing services to women or completing procedures for that purpose. Those provisions are conducive to the goal of eliminating discrimination against women in the law or in practice.

71. With a view to further strengthening and protecting human rights and keeping abreast of change, Saudi law is subject to regular and ongoing review to ensure consistency with contemporary developments and the country's obligations under international instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Shura Council examines laws and makes such proposals as it sees fit. In accordance with its statute, the Human Rights Commission also gives its opinion on human rights laws and participates in the consideration of draft laws to ensure consistency with international human rights standards in the light of the provisions of the Islamic sharia.

72. In their respective areas of responsibility, the competent authorities uphold women's rights without discrimination. They tackle discriminatory practices through such measures as monitoring, awareness-raising and redress. The Human Rights Commission ensures that the competent government bodies implement human rights law, identify violations of women's rights and take the necessary legal measures. It monitors government agencies' implementation of international human rights instruments to which Saudi Arabia has acceded, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and ascertains whether those agencies have taken the necessary measures.

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<sup>9</sup> Paras. 16, 18, 22, 54, 60 and 62 of the concluding observations.

73. The Family Affairs Council referred to in paragraph 48 above is responsible for considering women's issues and the formulation of strategies and laws to empower women in all aspects of life and eliminate discrimination against women. In coordination with the competent agencies, a draft national plan for women has been prepared as part of the National Strategy for Women in Saudi Arabia. The plan is consistent with Vision 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals and global indicators for women.

74. Royal Order No. 134 of 27 Dhu al-Qa'dah (30 July A.D. 2019) approves amendments to several laws with a view to strengthening women's rights in a range of areas. The following amendments were made:

- Article 2 of the Law on travel documents has been amended and article 3 has been removed. As a result, the implementing regulation has been amended to ensure that women can obtain a passport and travel out of the country on an equal footing with men.
- The Civil Status Law has been amended. Among the most significant amendments is that to article 30, removing the phrase "the place of residence of a married woman shall be the same as that of her husband, so long as their conjugal relation continues (...)" . Article 33 has been amended to grant women equal rights to men with regard to declaring births. Article 47 provides that responsibility for declaring a marriage, divorce, reconciliation, repudiation or mutually agreed dissolution of marriage (*mukhala'ah*) rests with the husband or the wife. It may also be declared by the father of the husband, the father of the wife, or one of their relatives. Article 50 has been amended to grant the husband and wife the equal right to request the family record from the Civil Status Department. Article 53 has been amended to allow women the same right as men to declare the death of a progenitor, descendant, spouse or any relative. Article 91 has been amended to read as follows: "For the purposes of the present Law, the head of the family shall be the father or mother with regard to minor children".
- The Labour Law was amended to ensure that men and women have equal rights, duties and terms of employment. Article 3 was amended to state that all citizens have the right to work, that there can be no discrimination on grounds of gender, age or any other form of discrimination in the workplace. Article 155 was amended to prohibit dismissing or threatening with dismissal a female employee during pregnancy or maternity leave, or while convalescing as a result of pregnancy or maternity.
- Article 38 of the Social Insurance Law was amended to make the retirement age of 60 equally applicable to men and women.
- A regulation on touristic accommodation has been adopted. Article 20 provides that citizen or resident women shall not be refused accommodation, provided that a legally accepted identity or residence document is shown.
- In 2018, women were allowed to enter sports facilities on an equal footing with men.
- The conditions for study have been amended. Women are now allowed to study outside the country without conditions or a male relative.

75. In view of its commitments as a founding member of the United Nations, particularly involving international peace and security, Saudi Arabia endeavours to implement the resolutions adopted by United Nations entities in their respective purviews, including Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). In Vision 2030, women are identified as an important source of social resilience. The Vision seeks to empower

women and enhance and leverage their capacities in order to build the country's future. Accordingly, Saudi Arabia has taken action to empower women in all areas. As is explained in paragraphs 103–108 below, its actions these include several areas pertaining to peace and security, particularly the following:

- Public security: women are participating in several security missions, particularly serving visitors and pilgrims on *hajj* and *umrah*. Female armed forces recruits have been appointed for police work and to protect the Two Holy Mosques. Women have been assigned to the Department of Criminal Evidence and its subsidiary bodies, and to conduct tasks related to administration and finance, human resources, internal review, information technology and legislation.
- Civil defence: women carry out tasks related to preventive detection, inspections, safety checks, preventive measures in facilities, human resource development, awareness-raising, safety guidance, oversight of volunteer services during the *hajj* and *umrah* seasons, developing laws and applications, and reviewing regulations and laws.
- Border guard: women are active at border facilities as inspectors, doctors and statisticians. They also carry out administrative tasks related to legal affairs, information technology, administration, finance and public relations.
- Directorate-General of Prisons: women participate in overseeing the management of female prisons and its guarding, transfer, protection, oversight and providing advice on security training and learning. They also work in managerial roles; prepare plans and curricula; work towards rehabilitation and reform; conduct studies and research within specialized departments; and help raise awareness.
- Combating drug trafficking: women help to support field teams with seizures and inspections; transferring female prisoners to the competent authorities; organizing seminars to support the competent authorities in prevention work; participating in events on prevention; and training female staff at the Anti-Drug-Trafficking Institute under the Department of Training.
- National Centre for Security Operations: women fulfil numerous functions, including managerial and technical activities, upholding standards and enacting change. They receive emergency communications and queries on the 911 number, and follow up operation room alerts from the field and transmit them to the competent authorities. They also play a role in compiling and analysing information, improving the numbers, strengthening processes and keeping the peace.
- Relief and humanitarian support in armed conflict zones: acting through the King Salman Centre, Saudi Arabia makes it a top priority to meet the humanitarian needs of vulnerable societies, particularly women and girls, and to empower those who are most vulnerable. For that purpose, it analyses United Nations reports on women and humanitarian needs in affected and least developed countries, and coordinates with partners in target States to undertake humanitarian and relief projects without discrimination, in accordance with humanitarian principles. Those actions are taken to alleviate the beneficiaries' suffering and help them to live a dignified life. With that end in mind, the Centre cooperates with United Nations and other international and local partners to carry out projects. It does so because women have a vital role to play in building societies and shoring up resilience. Saudi Arabia has helped support and empower women in various aspects of humanitarian and relief work in disasters and armed conflict. Since its establishment, the Centre has implemented 788

projects in 79 areas around the world, helping 109,644,690 women and providing a total value of \$520,686,055 in aid. Some 20 per cent of the Centre's employees are women.

76. The national environmental strategy was launched in 2018. It consists of 64 initiatives aimed at restructuring the environmental sector. Five environmental centres have been established, specializing in developing vegetation and combating desertification, developing wildlife, monitoring environmental compliance, waste management, and forecasting. An environment fund has been established to shore up the financial sustainability of the sector. Special environmental security forces have been established under the Ministry of the Interior to support the enforcement of environmental law.

77. Saudi Arabia has put in place policies to cut emissions. E-Government has been introduced, renewable energy projects have been implemented, and programmes have been introduced to promote energy efficiency and overhaul public transport. Saudi Arabia is putting in place programmes and mechanisms, most of which are led by women, to strengthen the role of the non-profit sector in innovation and creating solutions. The Crown Prince has announced a Saudi Green Initiative, which is aimed at reaching net zero by 2060 and reducing carbon emissions by 278 million tons a year by 2030. The Initiative will help strengthen the work done under Vision 2030 by bringing together all plans to achieve sustainability in the country, increasing reliance on clean energy, reducing carbon emissions, combating climate change, improving quality of life and protecting future generations in Saudi Arabia. It combines environmental protection, energy transformation and sustainability programmes to push through a set of projects aimed at building a sustainable future for all and bolstering the Middle East Green Initiative, which complements it at the international level. The latter is being realized in coordination with allied countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council and in the Middle East and North Africa region, along with other Governments around the world. The Green Middle East Initiative offers an incentive for action and a framework to take the lead in climate efforts in the region and beyond. The most prominent goals are as follows:

- Establishing a global clean energy investment fund to promote a circular carbon economy in the Middle East and North Africa, including nature-based solutions and technologies to capture and store or reuse CO<sub>2</sub> and hydrogen; Saudi Arabia has announced that it will contribute some 15 per cent of the total value of the fund, which is valued at \$15 billion over ten years by 2030.
- Clearing seas and oceans of plastics. The aim is to foster cooperation with States and international organizations to clear the sea and oceans of plastic waste, to find ways to manage the plastic cycle in developing countries and prevent them from reaching rivers and, hence, seas and oceans.
- Establishing a complex to capture and store or reuse carbon in the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council with a view to curbing carbon emissions in the region.
- Strengthening regional cooperation to manage emissions based on the circular carbon economy principle.
- Providing clean cooking fuels for some 750 million people around the world with a view to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals and curbing emissions.

78. With regard to the Committee's recommendation concerning military operations in Yemen, Saudi Arabia emphasizes that the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen is committed to the principles of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Coalition military operations are fully consistent with such principles. Coalition forces avoid targeting civilians, particularly women and

children, and civilian facilities in conflict zones. Moreover, they seek to protect them from the crimes committed by the Houthi militias, which include indiscriminate attacks, killings, torture, forced displacement and blockade. In addition, the Coalition has established strict rules of engagement that are consistent with the rules of international humanitarian law.

79. The Coalition has set up a fund to support voluntary humanitarian assistance. The fund disburses financial assistance to people affected by the ongoing military operations in Yemen.

80. From the first days of its operations in Yemen, the Coalition has placed a significant emphasis on humanitarian operations. It established an evacuation and humanitarian operations unit, which is responsible for all functions related to humanitarian action. The unit liaises with international governmental and non-governmental organizations to facilitate all movements of international humanitarian aid convoys to guarantee their safety during military operations. For that purpose, it coordinates directly and continuously with the legitimate Yemeni Government. Examples include the King Salman Centre projects in Yemen. As at 31 December 2022, there were 790 such projects at a total cost of \$4,197,072,536, and the Central Bank of Yemen had received \$3 billion in support.

#### **Special measures to accelerate equality (art. 4)<sup>10</sup>**

81. Saudi Arabia has taken several temporary special measures to accelerate equality in various areas. Those measures fall under the description of positive discrimination, and include necessary actions and best practices to empower women. They include the following:

- The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development has launched the Empowering Women initiative, whose purpose is to increase women's participation in the public and private sector at all professional levels, by placing women in senior leadership positions; investing in their skills and capacities; increasing the options available to them; and boosting their participation. The aim is to achieve gender balance; shrink the gap between women in terms of both quantity and level of employment; overcome obstacles to those goals; and foster human, economic and social development.
- Relevant initiatives include the Qurrah programme to provide child care for working women; the Wusul programme to provide them with transport; the Freelance Employment programme, which expands opportunities for women to earn income by applying their skills; the Part-Time Work programme and the Remote Work programme, which enable women to achieve a balance between work and family, and enable women in rural and remote areas to join the labour force. At the end of 2021, the Qurrah programme had 7,050 beneficiaries and the Wusul programme had 97,285. A programme to train women leaders has been launched in cooperation with the INSEAD business school; 958 women have been trained to date. The Institute of Public Administration is implementing a national programme to build and develop administrative skills with a view to empowering women leaders in the civil service. The programme seeks to boost their opportunities and capacities for leadership and increase their participation in decision-making roles.
- A Department for the Empowerment of Women has been established within the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development. Its purpose is to develop and implement projects to support women in the Saudi Arabian

<sup>10</sup> Para. 40 of the concluding observations.

workplace with a view to increasing female labour force participation and strengthening equal opportunities in public and private sector employment.

- Regulations for public child care centres have been enacted by virtue of Ministerial Decision No. 54694 of 13 Rabi‘ I A.H. 1443 (19 October A.D. 2021). The centres cater to children from newborns to age 10 in independent centres, and from newborns to age 6 in centres located at workplaces and residential buildings. They provide tailor-made educational and recreational services.
- A programme on empowering women has also been launched in the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology to improve women’s digital awareness; develop their digital skills, promote innovation and entrepreneurship; boost their involvement in the digital sector; and enable them to take on leadership positions in that sector. By the end of 2021, the programme had contributed to a 24.9 per cent increase in women’s participation in the communications sector.
- Action is being taken to promote the Group of 20 Alliance for the Empowerment and Progression of Women’s Economic Representation (G20 EMPOWER) and to improve women’s access to leadership positions by encouraging companies to commit to support women’s access to senior positions, and by encouraging additional companies to sign up. More than 29 companies in Saudi Arabia have joined the Alliance.

#### **Social and cultural patterns (art. 5)<sup>11</sup>**

82. The human rights awareness and instruction programmes organized by stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Information and the Human Rights Commission are designed to tackle and correct negative stereotypes and false impressions that amount to or can lead to discrimination against women. The Council of Senior Scholars strives to correct mistaken and misogynistic ideas by publishing statements in the media and on its social media accounts. Its members frequently appear as guests on television and radio programmes. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Da‘wah and Guidance plays an important role in this regard; its preachers and imams emphasize the need to correct such ideas. The King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue organizes meetings and programmes to raise awareness of women’s rights.

83. Curricula are continuously revised in accordance with domestic and international human rights standards. Care is taken to ensure that their content does not in any way lead to discrimination of any sort, including discrimination against women. During the reporting period, 185 cuts, 171 replacements and 77 amendments were made to curricula across education levels, in an age-appropriate manner. The changes were made to strengthen the values of tolerance, coexistence and a positive attitude to life, and to ensure that none of the content can be misused or misconstrued to result in any form of discrimination, including discrimination against women,

84. Quantitative and qualitative indicators are used to measure the impact of training and awareness-raising programmes. For example, girls’ enrolment in higher education has risen to 49.4 per cent of the total number. Some 54.5 per cent of Saudi Arabian teachers are now women.

85. The recommendations of the Human Rights Commission, which are set out in its annual reports on implementation, include qualitative statistics that can be used to assess the impact of training and awareness-raising. The Commission has made numerous recommendations on human rights, including women’s rights and the

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<sup>11</sup> Paras. 28, 30, 32 and 34 of the concluding observations.

elimination of discrimination against women. It follows up implementation of those recommendations in coordination with the competent bodies. The same applies to the recommendations submitted to Saudi Arabia under the universal periodic review mechanism, particularly in its third cycle. Numerous recommendations were made in connection with women's rights, eliminating discrimination against women, and empowering women. Most of those recommendations have been implemented. The statistics are connected with training and awareness-raising programmes. Various training programmes have been held within the framework of the memorandum of understanding concluded in 2012 between the Human Rights Commission, on behalf of Saudi Arabia, and OHCHR. There are more than 98 programmes designed to provide information on the human rights conventions to which Saudi Arabia is a party, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and on international human rights indicators.

86. In 2020, the King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue launched Nasij, a national programme to strengthen the values of moderation and cohesion by building a strong, tolerant community in a prosperous nation. The social dialogue component of the programme is aimed at all members of society; 392 sessions have been held for a total of 15,513 people. Five meetings, for a total of 80 people, have been held as part of the component on building societal coexistence. The Centre has organized 519 programmes, for a total of 27,471 people.

87. Civil society organizations in Saudi Arabia are a vital partner of governmental human rights bodies. Such effective cooperation has bolstered the measures taken to strengthen and promote human rights, including women's rights. Civil society organizations play an effective oversight role by receiving complaints, monitoring violations of women's rights, bringing them to the attention of the competent authorities, playing an advisory and awareness-raising role, and helping to prepare reports on human rights, including women's rights. That process is a valuable opportunity to review the situation in the Kingdom. Considerable efforts are made to raise awareness of women's rights, including the definition set out in the Convention. On 20 November 2021, in coordination with the Alnahda Philanthropic Society for Women, OHCHR organized a workshop for civil society organizations on drafting shadow reports.

88. Violence in all its forms, particularly violence against women and girls, is criminalized under Saudi law. The Law on protection from abuse adopted in September 2013 prohibits all forms of abuse. The Law seeks to tackle behaviour indicative of environments that enable abuse in society. Abuse is a crime that requires urgent intervention in view of the physical, psychological and social damage it causes. It often occurs in situations that are beyond control and where perpetrators cannot be brought to account. The law therefore obliges anyone who knows of a case of abuse to report it immediately. Thus an employee who knows of a case of abuse must inform his employer at once and the employer must inform the authorities or police as soon as he learns of it. The Law on abuse and the Child Protection Law together form a legal barrier to combat violence against women and girls.

89. The complaint reception centre established on 20 March 2016 receives complaints addressed to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development. The centre is open 24 hours and receives all reports of family violence on the emergency number 1919. The National Centre for Security Operations can also be contacted on 911 or the Kollona Amn application. Protection teams have been established in all areas and governorates to receive complaints. A report received by the centre is forwarded to one of the social protection teams found throughout the country. The centre completes the necessary procedures, provides assistance to victims and, if there is sufficient evidence of a crime having been committed, refers

the case to the Office of the Public Prosecutor to carry out the statutory process in accordance with Law on protection from abuse.

90. Supreme Order No. 25803 of 29 Jumada I 1439 A.H. (15 February A.D. 2018) concerning legal assistance to women and children in cases of abuse, directs the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, in coordination with the Saudi Bar Association, to obtain a periodic list of the names and addresses of lawyers providing pro bono legal aid and to work with them, pursuant to paragraph 11 of article 13 of the statute of the Saudi Bar Association.

91. The National Family Safety Programme has an important role to play in this area. This is a national programme designed to protect the family from violence by offering prevention and support programmes, raising awareness, and building professional partnerships with specialists, governmental and non-governmental institutions and international organizations in order to ensure a safe environment for families in Saudi Arabia.

### **Anti-family-violence programmes provided by the National Family Safety Programme**

<i>No.</i>	<i>Programme</i>	<i>Number of beneficiaries</i>
1 –	Qissat al-Amal (Story of Hope) programme (Aimed at supporting and ensuring the recovery of women victims of violence)	443 52 trainers trained
2 –	Hunna al-Najah (“They are success”) preventive programme to empower women	2, 641 174 trainers trained
3 –	Adult protection centres in the health sector	57 protection teams established
4 –	Youth safety	600 volunteers
5 –	Building capacities of professionals who engage with violence	14,257 trainees
6 –	Workshop Women’s rights under the law	485

92. The Ministry of Justice has continuously organized numerous knowledge and enrichment events in several Saudi Arabian cities. The most recent iteration was on 3 Jumada II A.H. 1443 (6 January A.D. 2022). The events consisted of four platforms. The first, addressed electronic services, identified the main services provided by the Ministry. The second explained several laws related to women, the family and children. The third provided basic information to raise awareness of family status issues. The fourth highlighted the important function of reconciliation with a view to resolving problems amicably and without breakdown or litigation. Those initiatives are part of the Ministry’s activities under the National Transformation Programme.

93. As regards the recommendation that victims of sexual abuse not be punished, women and girls are not punished; instead, remedy is provided, in that the penalties set forth by law are imposed on the perpetrator, and the victims are given health care and social and legal assistance. Article 5 of the Law on combating trafficking in persons provides as follows: “The victim’s consent shall not be taken into account in any of the offences set forth in the present Law”. The victim has a right to compensation; article 16 of the Code of Criminal Procedure stipulates as follows: “The victim or their representatives or heirs may initiate a criminal action in respect of all cases involving a private right of action and prosecute such a case before the competent court. In such a case, the court shall notify the public prosecutor”.

### **Combating all forms of the trafficking and exploitation of women (art. 6)<sup>12</sup>**

94. The Law on combating trafficking in persons was adopted in 2009. Saudi Arabia has acceded to the conventions and protocols on combating trafficking in persons, and established an anti-trafficking committee bringing together representatives of relevant government bodies. A department has been established in the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development to combat crimes of trafficking in persons. Those developments have all contributed to the formation of a statutory and institutional framework that guarantees that everyone, without discrimination, is protected from crimes of trafficking in persons, including trafficking in women and the exploitation of prostitution. Medical, psychological and legal assistance are provided to victims, and compensation for damages and other forms of redress are made available. The Ministry has allocated a single consolidated telephone number (19911) to take complaints in eight languages, including complaints relating to trafficking in persons.

95. The Law on trafficking in persons is consistent with regional and international standards on combating trafficking in persons. It prohibits all the forms of trafficking described in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol). The Law defines the elements of the crime and the penalties, which can be as high as 15 years' imprisonment or a fine of up to 1 million riyals. The penalty is strengthened in cases when the victim is a woman or child. The Law also states that consent cannot be taken into account for any of the offences set forth in the Law. The most significant features of the Law are as follows. Trafficking in persons is prohibited in all its forms, including those involving coercion, threat, fraud, deception, abduction, exploitation of office or influence, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits, to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of sexual abuse, forced labour or services, begging, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, the removal of organs or the conduct of medical experimentation. Those provisions are consistent with general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration.

96. An icon on the Kollona Amn application interface has been created to receive reports of potential trafficking in persons. The application includes the following categories: forced labour, trading in sex work or begging, practices similar to slavery, and organ trafficking.

97. In January 2020, criminal chambers have been established within the competent courts in order for specialized judges to consider cases of trafficking in persons. In 2019, the Office of the Public Prosecutor established prosecutors' offices specialized in trafficking in persons, in which specially trained investigators and prosecutors can examine such offences.

98. A national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking in persons has been established. Its purpose is to document and follow up cases of trafficking in persons from the time when they are reported until the matter has been settled in the competent court. Employees in the competent agencies are given guidance on the procedures that should be followed at every stage under the Law on trafficking in persons. Several training programmes have been organized for the actors responsible for enforcing the Law. Some 3,000 people have been trained. The programmes are described in detail below.

<sup>12</sup> Paras. 36, 38 and 58 of the concluding observations.

99. A national team has been established to follow up reports and cases of trafficking in persons. It has more than 260 members belonging to the agencies represented in the national referral mechanism, namely the agencies represented on the committee, in addition to several relevant agencies and civil society organizations. The national team is subdivided into a central team in the Riyadh area and 12 branch teams in all regions of Saudi Arabia. The channels for reporting trafficking in persons offences have been expanded. Reports can now be made to the security agencies, the contact number of the Human Rights Commission, the email address of the team for receiving and following up on reports and the number of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development.

100. Recruitment centres have been opened in several labour-exporting countries. That step offers an additional guarantee to prevent and combat trafficking in persons. In addition to their other roles, the centres review the recruitment process to guard against all forms of trafficking in persons and human rights violations.

101. By virtue of Royal Decree No. 109 of 24 Shawwal A.H. 1438 (18 July A.D. 2017), assent was given to the memorandum of understanding and technical cooperation between the Human Rights Commission of Saudi Arabia and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The memorandum is intended to strengthen cooperation in preventing and combating trafficking in persons; help, care for, protect and shelter victims; develop activities and programmes; and develop national capacities. By virtue of Royal Decree No. 91 of 12 Sha'ban A.H. 1440 (17 April A.D. 2019), assent was given to the memorandum of understanding and technical cooperation concluded on 19 November 2018 between the Commission and the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons of the United States Department of State.

102. Numerous training programmes have been organized for parties responsible for implementing the Law, as detailed above. These address best practices in detecting and monitoring cases of trafficking in persons, including prosecuting the perpetrators and assisting the victims in accordance with the Law. Cooperation is under way with IOM to put in place intensive training programmes on the national referral programme.

### **Training programmes on combating trafficking in persons**

No.	Programme name	Regions	Number of beneficiaries	Date
1	Seminar concerning international and domestic standards on trafficking in persons offences, in cooperation with OHCHR, coinciding with the World Day against Trafficking in Persons.	Riyadh Jeddah Dammam	110 95 95	29/6/2019 30/6/2019 1/7/2019
<b>Total</b>			<b>300</b>	<b>1 day per seminar</b>
2	Training programme on actions to inquire into and investigate trafficking in persons, in cooperation with OHCHR	Riyadh Mecca Dammam	140 150 150	22/12/2019 12/1/2020 26/1/2020
<b>Total</b>			<b>440</b>	<b>4 days per programme</b>
3	Human rights and trafficking in persons programme	Eastern region Eastern region Riyadh Riyadh	25 25 25 25	15/12/2019 14/10/2019 23/12/2019 22/3/2020

No.	Programme name	Regions	Number of beneficiaries	Date
	Jawf		25	27/1/2020
	Ha'il		25	27/1/2020
	Medina		25	3/2/2020
	Mecca		25	24/3/2020
<b>Total</b>			<b>200</b>	<b>5 days per course</b>
4	Workshops on human rights and trafficking in persons	Jawf Dammam Qasim Northern border Jazan	100 300 100 100 100	3/2019 3/2019 3/2019 3/2019 3/2019
<b>Total</b>			<b>700</b>	<b>1 day per workshop</b>

### Training programme for Public Security officials

No.	Programme name	Regions	Number of beneficiaries	Date
1	Seminars on human rights and trafficking in persons	Medina Riyadh Bahah Najran Ha'il Tabuk Asir	70 90 95 50 50 80 60	3/2019 3/2019 3/2019 3/2019 4/2019 4/2019 4/2019
<b>Total</b>			<b>495</b>	<b>1 day per seminar</b>
2	Training sessions on human rights and trafficking in persons	Mecca Qasim Qasim Asir Asir Medina Bahah Najran Northern border Jazan Riyadh	25 25 25 25 25 25 25 25 25 25 25	14/10/2019 2/12/2019 9/12/2019 28/10/2019 4/11/2019 16/12/2019 21/10/2019 27/1/2020 27/1/2020 27/1/2020 23/9/2019
<b>Total</b>			<b>275</b>	<b>5 days per programme</b>

103. The Office of the Public Prosecutor has held workshops and specialized courses on human rights and trafficking in persons for a total of 612 prosecutors. The Office has also held workshops on the rights of older persons and children for some 150 members of competent agencies.

104. The Office has established a committee to examine criminal patterns in trafficking in persons cases, identify obstacles to enforcement of the Law and possible remedies, and consider a mechanism to protect the victims. Chambers have been established in all branches of the Office to investigate cases of trafficking in persons.

105. Owing to those efforts, Saudi Arabia has made considerable progress in combating trafficking in persons on the ground, and its position with regard to the global trafficking in persons indicators has improved.

106. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development receives various reports on its consolidated telephone number 19911 from migrant labourers, including domestic workers. A Wage Protection Programme has been launched to ensure that labourers' wages are paid on time through local banks. Numerous actions have been taken to strengthening and protecting the rights of female domestic workers. Examples include the awareness-raising measures undertaken by the Ministry, the Human Rights Commission, the National Society for Human Rights and other civil society organizations. The anti-trafficking committee has taken action to monitor the underlying causes of, and responses to, offences involving economic and sexual exploitation. The Ministry and the Commission also fulfil an oversight role. In view of the fact that abuse, exploitation and violence against foreign female workers, particularly domestic workers, can take place with no accountability, a range of steps have been taken. The following are among the most significant:

- Developing contractual mechanisms: relevant offices and companies are being trained in concluding contracts with migrant workers. Training is offered on the forms of trafficking in persons, and definitions of and standards for relevant activities. Care is taken to ensure that companies meet the required standards to obtain a licence, and that they coordinate with the embassies of countries with which cooperation agreements have been concluded.
- Developing monitoring and oversight of practitioners: a programme to support domestic workers has been launched. It consists of an electronic system which clearly and transparently sets out the employment procedures involving a domestic worker up until the time they leave Saudi Arabia after their contract ends. The programme is managed with input from the competent agencies in the Kingdom and beyond. The procedures that are documented from the domestic worker's arrival in Saudi Arabia to the end of their contract have been automated. Care is taken to ensure that their rights are protected, transactions are monitored, and contracts and wages are documented.
- Developing mechanisms for support and protection: as is detailed above, complaints and reports are received on the consolidated number 19911. In addition, booklets and pamphlets are published informing domestic workers of the redress measures that are available when their rights are violated. Such measures include a mechanism to receive reports, and ways to access legal aid and translation. Reports can be received from individuals, offices, companies and embassies concerning any violation of the rules in force. If violations of labour rights are identified, field teams are dispatched to address the situation in accordance with established mechanisms.

107. Numerous workshops have been held in countries of origin to raise awareness of domestic workers' rights, and to ensure they know their rights as soon as they arrive in Saudi Arabia. Publications in the local languages are handed out. Prepaid call cards are given out at airports and can be used to send text messages detailing workers' rights and the mechanism for receiving reports and legal advice. Workers are given the number of the communications centre of the Ministry, which provides services in several foreign languages.

108. Inspectors from the Ministry undertake field visits to places of work to determine levels of effective compliance with the provisions of the Labour Law and its implementing regulations, including those pertaining to working hours, wages, social services and protection against occupational accidents, illnesses and injury. They also ascertain the enforcement of ministerial decrees issued in implementation of the Labour Law. An employer compliance manual has been prepared to clarify what businesses have to do to comply with the Labour Law and raise the level of awareness of businesses and workers. Operations rooms have been established to support labour inspectors and improve enforcement of the Law.

#### **Field visits conducted by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Affairs**

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total violations	28 931	71 891	65 822	136 712	24 420
Total visits	388 788	689 887	845 512	1 312 736	1 301 791

109. The Ministry has held several workshops and training sessions to improve employee capacities in the area of combating trafficking in persons. More than 1,600 shelter centre workers and work inspectors benefited from the training in 2021.

## **Part II (arts. 7–9)**

### **Women's participation in political and public life (arts. 7 and 8)<sup>13</sup>**

110. Every citizen of Saudi Arabia, male or female, has a right to participate in political and public life by participating in decision-making, voting or standing for office in institutions with an elected membership or management. As regards women's participation in political life, article 43 of the Basic Law provides that every citizen, without discrimination, has the right to address the authorities on matters of concern to them. Saudi Arabian women have been participating in the Shura Council. Initially, six women were appointed as non-full-time advisors. The number was then gradually raised. By virtue of Royal Order No. 44 of 29 Safar A.H. 1434 (11 January A.D. 2013), women became members of the Council, with a minimum quota of 20 per cent. Women have become chairs and members of several Shura Council committees. There are now 97 women working at the Council. The Human Rights Commission has 12 female members, or 50 per cent of the total.

111. Owing to the action taken to empower women, Saudi Arabian women have been appointed to governmental, academic and other posts. They have leadership positions in several ministries and government agencies. The proportion of women in senior and mid-level posts has risen from 28.6 per cent in 2017 to 39 per cent in 2021.

112. Since January 2018, the Office of the Public Prosecutor has recruited qualified women on an equal footing with men. The same is true of the Directorate of Public Security, which has opened the door for women to be recruited to a number of military roles.

113. As at the end of 2022, the number of female staff members at the Ministry of Justice had increased to 3,782. The number of female lawyers has increased from 618 in 2019 to 3,036 at the end of 2022. As at the end of 2022, there were 2,833 trainee lawyers. Women are now able to obtain a licence to fulfil some of the functions of a court clerk.

<sup>13</sup> Para. 56 of the concluding observations.

114. Saudi law gives women the opportunity to represent their Government at the regional and international levels. They can be ambassadors or work at Saudi embassies, consulates and missions. They can chair or take part in regional and international conferences and events. Saudi Arabian women have taken up senior international posts and work for international and regional organizations, including the United Nations and its specialized agencies. They also work for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

115. With regard to the Committee's reference to peaceful practices, it should be noted that such practices are not criminalized in Saudi Arabia. Under Saudi law, the right to such practices is guaranteed so long as they are carried out in an objective context that does not prejudice national security, public order, public morals, public health, the rights and reputation of others and other necessary restrictions stipulated in international human rights law. The claim that individuals have been detained or imprisoned for exercising their freedoms or defending their human rights are completely untrue. The reason for their detention or imprisonment is that they have been accused or convicted under Saudi law, including for actions prohibited under international human rights law. Article 38 of the Basic Law provides as follows: "Penalties shall be individual. Offences and penalties must be based on a sharia provision or a legal provision. Punishment may be imposed only for actions subsequent to the entry into force of the legal provision". Article 36 of the same Law stipulates that individuals may be arrested, detained or have their freedom restricted only as provided for by law. Article 3 of the Code of Criminal Procedure stipulates as follows: "No criminal penalty shall be imposed on any person unless they have been found guilty of an act that is prohibited under the sharia or the law, following a trial conducted in accordance with the sharia".

### **Participation of women in given roles, 2022**

<i>Area</i>	<i>Percentage or number of female participation</i>
Shura Council	20 per cent of total Shura Council seats allocated to women
Board of the Human Rights Commission	50 per cent of total membership of the Board allocated to women
Office of the Public Prosecutor	200 female staff at the Office of the Public Prosecutor 282 female managers attached to the Office of the Public Prosecutor 238 female trainees
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic functions	154 female Saudi Arabian diplomats 33 women in Ministry of Foreign Affairs leadership posts 144 female managers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Security and military sectors	8,377 women
Ministry of the Interior and its subdivisions	9,976 women

116. Several initiatives have been launched to support and empower women in the area of culture and various trades, including taking part in conferences and participating effectively in the work of the Ministry of Culture. There are 584 women working at the Ministry, or 45 per cent of the total staff. Some 25 per cent of

leadership posts in the Ministry are occupied by women. The Ministry has launched several initiatives on women's work and empowering women. These include marking awareness-raising international days. For instance, the entire month of October has been dedicated to raising awareness of breast cancer and the importance of screenings. Other initiatives include flexible hours for parents in the first week of school, transport, maternity leave and activities to empower women in the culture industry. The female participation rate was 75 per cent for the national day celebration, 53 per cent for the educational programmes initiative and 50 per cent for International Youth Day.

### Female participation in the area of culture

Area	Participation rate
Women in the area of heritage	Female professionals registered in the national Saudi Crafts programme and other crafts: 3,732, or 84 per cent Number of women participating in activities in crafts: 394
Women's participation in literature and publishing	20 participants in the authors' forum, and more than 80 female speakers in literary meetings Eight woman-owned entities are registered with the Child and Juvenile Literature Accelerator Three woman-owned cafes have been empowered through the Literature Partner Project
Activities and contributions to cultural content	From April 2021 to March 2022, 19 activities took place with 745–850 registered female participants.

### Nationality (art. 9)<sup>14</sup>

117. The Saudi Nationality Law sets out the conditions for the acquisition, loss and revocation of nationality. The law does indeed take *jus sanguinis* through the father as the basis for birth nationality, as a general rule. However, as an exception on humanitarian grounds, *jus soli* can be recognized in the case of a child born in Saudi Arabia to two unknown parents. *Jus sanguinis* through the mother can be recognized, as an exception, if the woman is a Saudi Arabian citizen at the time of the child's birth and the father is of unknown nationality or stateless. The law has been amended several times. Articles 12 and 17 have been amended to strengthen the right of a Saudi Arabian woman to retain Saudi Arabian nationality if her Saudi Arabian husband acquires a foreign nationality, or if she marries a foreigner. Article 12, as amended, provides that when a male Saudi Arabian citizen acquires a foreign nationality – if he has been permitted to do so – and she is eligible for her husband's nationality under the law of the new State of nationality, she does not necessarily lose her Saudi Arabian nationality, unless she decides to do so and declares that she has adopted her husband's new nationality. Article 17, as amended, provides that a Saudi Arabian woman does not lose Saudi Arabian nationality by marrying a foreign man, unless she decides to do so and declares that she has taken her husband's nationality, and she is eligible for that nationality under the law of that country. Article 18 provides as follows: "A Saudi Arabian woman married to a foreigner may reclaim her Saudi Arabian nationality upon the termination of her marriage after she returns to reside in

<sup>14</sup> Para. 42 of the concluding observations.

Saudi Arabia". The law does not distinguish between the two sexes with regard to the acquisition of Saudi Arabian nationality through the normal and exceptional channels.

### Part III (arts. 10–14)

#### Education (art.) 10<sup>15</sup>

118. Articles 13 and 30 of the Basic Law of Governance provide that one of the objectives of education is to provide young people with knowledge and skills and to prepare them to be useful in building their society. Those articles also stipulate that the State is responsible for providing public education and is obliged to combat illiteracy. Education in the Kingdom is compulsory pursuant to Cabinet Decision No. 139 of 26 Rabi' II A.H. 1425 (14 June A.D. 2004), which stipulates that education shall be compulsory for those aged 6–15 years. In addition, the Saudi Arabia is striving to combat illiteracy by implementing the Adult Education and Literacy Law, which was promulgated by Royal Decree No. 22 of 9 Jumada II A.H. 1392 (21 July A.D. 1972), article 2 of which is aimed at eradicating illiteracy among all citizens of all social groups. With regard to free education, article 233 of the General Education Policy of the Kingdom, which was promulgated by means of Cabinet Decision No. 779 of 16–17 Ramadan A.H. 1389 (26–27 November A.D. 1969), affirms that education of all types and at levels is free of charge. Everyone enjoys the right to education on an equal basis, in keeping general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education.

119. Some of the aims that are set in Vision 2030 include closing the gap between higher education outputs and labour market requirements, developing public education and directing students towards appropriate career and vocational options and providing them with the opportunity to be retrained and move between various educational tracks. The goal is that at least five Saudi universities will be among the top 200 universities at the international level by 2030. This goal will be achieved by developing advanced educational curriculums that are focused on teaching basic skills, developing talent and building character. The role played by teachers will be strengthened and their training enhanced. In addition, a comprehensive database will be created in order to monitor the academic career of students, from early education to advanced stages. The National Transformation Programme, which is one of the programmes that are set out in Vision 2030, includes several initiatives related to respecting, protecting and honouring the right to education for all, including providing an educational structure that covers the children of migrant workers, with a view to expanding international schools and universities and providing high-quality education to the children of migrant workers by obtaining the relevant international accreditations, increasing educational options and facilitating admission procedures.

120. The importance that the Kingdom attaches to education in Vision 2030 has resulted in a number of rapid developments and reforms, including providing sustainable educational opportunities for all; promoting equality of opportunity, free education and equality in education; curriculum development; enhancing teacher performance, educational supervision, school buildings and equipment, and tools and methods of measurement and evaluation; strengthening educational guidance and counselling; giving due attention to persons with disability; and ensuring compulsory schooling for students with disabilities. In 2020, more than 192 billion Saudi Arabian riyals were budgeted for the Ministry of Education, universities and the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation.

<sup>15</sup> Paragraph 44 of the concluding observations.

### Statistical estimates for education in Saudi Arabia for the year 2020

Level of reading and writing ability among those in the 15–24 age group	99.5%
Gross enrolment percentage, primary education	94.82%
Percentage completing elementary education	99.5%
Net enrolment percentage, intermediate education	98.38%
Percentage completing intermediate education	93.13%
Net enrolment percentage, secondary education (2019)	96.46%
Percentage completing secondary education	98%
Percentage of Saudi students enrolled in higher education	70.63%
Expected number of years that a student will spend receiving an education	14 to 16 years

### Statistical indicators for women in education (2021)

No. of Saudi women teachers	288,570 (54.5% of all teachers)
No. of female students in public education	3,119,505 female students (49.4% of all students)
No. of female student in private schools	32,751 female students (43.8% of all students)

121. As at the end of 2020, there were 29 public universities and 54 private universities and colleges. Pursuant to Ministerial Decision No. 89263 of 17 Shawwal A.H. 1438 (11 July A.D. 2017), an initiative was launched by the Ministry of Education enabling female students to take physical education classes. The aim of the initiative is to build and equip 500 gyms each year to promote the health of female students. The Lifelong Education Initiative (“Istadamah”) is a national development initiative that is aimed at eradicating illiteracy and enabling individuals to take advantage of a range of educational and training opportunities. The targets of this initiative are adults of both sexes in the 15–50 age group.

122. Following the launch of Vision 2030, women’s athletic teams have been established for the first time. As of 2020, there were 25 such teams. A total of 72 Saudi Arabian women athletes, the largest ever contingent of women athletes in country’s history, participated in the fifth Arab Women’s Sports Tournament, held in Sharjah in 2020. They won 12 medals.

123. Action was taken to ensure continuity of education during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Numerous alternative forms of access to education were made available, including the Madrasati portal and the Ayn educational channels, of which there are 24. In cooperation with non-governmental organizations, families in need were given computers and calling cards. In addition, a mobile unit was dispatched to help beneficiaries learn how to use the platform.

124. The Education and Training Evaluation Commission was established by virtue of Cabinet decision No. 108 of 14 Safar A.H. 1440 (23 October A.D. 2018). The Commission is the competent authority with regard to the evaluation, measurement

and accreditation of qualifications in education and training in both the public and private sectors, with a view to improving the quality and efficiency of those sectors and enhancing their contribution to the country's economy and development. The Commission carries out its work by developing institutional and programmatic evaluation and accreditation systems for education and training, and by evaluating the performance of schools, higher education institutions and training institutions.

125. The strategic plan of the Ministry of Education within the National Transformation Programme includes measures aimed at improving the recruitment, training, qualification and development of teachers, as well as a comprehensive framework for the continuous professional development of teachers and educational leaders, with a view to qualitatively improving teacher performance and educational leadership. Other aspects of the strategic plan include systematizing professional development processes; an initiative aimed at reducing the administrative burden on teachers and educational leaders, in order to ensure that they can focus on the educational process, as well as cutting costs and improving the quality of support services by separating all non-educational services from education departments and offices and schools and placing them in an independent unit; and a project to train teachers abroad, with the aim of sending 5,000 teachers over a five-year to countries with advanced educational systems. In 2020, a total of 47,830 training programmes were offered to teachers and 2,452,979 trainees participated in those programmes.

126. The Kingdom is currently executing a timebound plan to construct model buildings that are in line with educational requirements and can meet the steady increase in the number of male and female students in classrooms at all stages of education. Saudi Arabia is striving to address the needs of persons with learning difficulties, including by strengthening diagnosis, follow-up and evaluation mechanisms; developing appropriate mechanisms to ensure that such persons do not drop out of school; monitoring compliance with the statutory requirements concerning compulsory education; increasing the number of workshops and laboratories in schools; focusing on the provision of social services in schools; matching the outputs of higher education with the needs of the labour market as part of the effort to implement Vision 2030; and developing a healthy diet for male and female students in schools.

127. At the regional and international levels, Saudi Arabia has been involved in humanitarian and relief work in support of the education sector in several countries. It has provided assistance to support many educational institutions and programmes that help those affected by crises to continue pursuing education. As at December 2022, the total amount of assistance that Saudi Arabia has provided to the education sector stood at \$8,170,625,889. That figure covers all humanitarian and development assistance categories, including educational assistance provided through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre, which, as at December 2022, amounted to \$210,829,842 in support of 112 projects.

### **Employment (art. 11)<sup>16</sup>**

128. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development has launched initiatives aimed at protecting and promoting the right to work. The most notable of those initiatives are the Labour Nationalization Programme (Nitaqat 1), the enhanced Labour Nationalization Programme (Nitaqat 2) and the Wage Protection Programme. The aim is to ensure that the wages agreed upon between the worker and the employer are paid consistently. With regard to occupational risks, the Ministry issued regulations concerning the Department of Occupational Safety and Health Management. Those regulations were adopted pursuant to a ministerial decision

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<sup>16</sup> Paragraph 46 of the concluding observations.

issued on 10 Sha‘ban A.H. 1439 (26 April A.D. 2018). In addition, the establishment of the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health was approved pursuant to Cabinet Decision No. 379 of 7 Rajab A.H. 1443 (8 February A.D. 2022).

129. In addition to the above, Saudi Arabia has focused on expanding and increasing job opportunities for Saudi women. Many decisions aimed at increasing and protecting women’s employment have been taken, including, most notably, decisions to regulate women’s work in factories and commercial complexes; the feminization of some shops; the creation of family parks; the initiative to expand women’s work and opportunities available through direct employment, employment mechanism programmes; programmes to address the challenges facing women’s employment and support services; programmes to develop and implement laws and regulations concerning women’s work; and assiduous efforts to achieve equality between women and men with regard to rights and duties at work, including equal pay for work of equal value and quality.

130. Modern modes of work have been introduced, including teleworking, self-employment and flexible work, and they are available to workers of both sexes on an equal basis. The introduction of those three modes has created more job opportunities for women.

### **Statistics on modern modes of work and women’s utilization of those modes**

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Percentage, from programme initiation to the fourth quarter of 2022</i>	<i>No.</i>
Remote work programme	Women’s contracts comprised 91 per cent of the total contracts	80 622 women contractors
Remote work programme	The percentage of documents issued by the platform for women amounted to 59.09 per cent of the total	1 187 945 work documents
Flexible work programme	Flexible work contracts for women accounted for 41.40 per cent of all contracts	68 448 women contractors

131. The Women’s Empowerment Initiative was launched as part of the effort to implement Vision 2030 with the aim of increasing the participation rate of women in all government sectors and at all job levels by taking advantage of their energy and capabilities, expanding their work options, increasing their participation in order to ensure equality of opportunity between the sexes and assuming senior structural leadership positions in government agencies. A baseline of 39.8 per cent has been set for the index of Saudi Arabian women in the civil service. As at the end of 2022, women comprised 42 per cent of the civil service. One of the most significant endeavours that has been carried out as part of this initiative is the Achieving Gender Balance project, the aim of which is to issue a guide on gender balance and to launch a national platform for women leaders.

132. The unemployment rate for Saudi Arabian women dropped from 33 per cent in the first quarter of 2017 to 21 per cent in the first quarter of 2021.

133. With regard to the Committee’s recommendation on ensuring access to paid maternity leave, article 151 of the Labour Law provides that working women have the right to maternity leave with full pay for a period of 10 weeks, which they can take as they wish, commencing at a maximum of four weeks before the anticipated date of delivery, which must be established by means of a medical certificate issued by a health-care authority. It is absolutely prohibited to have a woman engage in work in the six-week period following delivery. A woman may extend her maternity leave

for a period of one month without pay. If the child is born with an illness or disability and his or her health condition requires that she or he receive constant attention, the mother has the right to an additional month of leave with full pay following the end of her maternity leave, and she has the right to extend such leave for a period of one month without pay.

134. In addition, article 155 of the Labour Law provides that an employer may not dismiss or issue a warning to a woman when she is pregnant or on maternity leave, including for the duration of any illness that arises when she is either pregnant or on maternity leave, provided that the illness is established by an endorsed medical certificate and that the woman's absence does not exceed 180 days, whether continuously or cumulatively, over the course of a year.

135. With regard to equal pay for men and women for work of equal value, under the regulations governing the civil and military services, there is no discrimination between men and women in respect of remuneration for work of equal value. In addition, there is no discrimination between the sexes in the military and civilian pension systems with regard to the amount of the pension, because pensions are based on wages. Article 1 of the Civil Service Code, which regulates public-sector employment, provides that "merit shall constitute the basis for selecting public service employees." All male and female employees in the public sector are subject to the same public service rules and regulations governing recruitment, transfer, promotion, training, wages, leave, health care, job security and retirement. They have access to the same remedies at various levels and may file complaints against any form of discrimination.

136. Efforts have been made toward achieving full equality between men and women with regard to obtaining support while searching for employment. Women now receive the same subsidy as men and the Human Resources Development Fund provides the same level of training and employment support to women and men who work in the private sector, including with regard to the amount of support offered for training costs and wages and the duration of such support.

137. With regard to the private sector, article 3 of the Labour Law provides that citizens have an equal right to work without discrimination on the basis of sex, disability, age or any other grounds, including with regard to performance, hiring for a position or the advertising of a position, as well as with regard to wages. Under Ministerial Decision No. 2370/1 of 18 Ramadan A.H. 1431 (28 August A.D. 2010), all discrimination with regard to wages is prohibited. A number of general regulations are set out in Article 34 of Ministerial Decision (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development) No. 84447 of 27 Rabi' II A.H. 1439 (14 January A.D. 2008), amending the uniform Labour Regulation. Pursuant to those regulations, any discrimination in wages between male and female workers for work of equal value is prohibited. Moreover, in the first paragraph, it made clear that it is not necessary to secure a permit from the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development or any other party in order to employ a woman. It should be noted that Saudi Arabia is a party to the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), of the International Labour Organization. Working women are protected by the Labour Law, including with regard to wages, paid leave, end-of-service remuneration and so forth. Women also benefit, on the same basis as men, from the protection provided by the unemployment insurance programme (Sanid), as well as from programmes that support workers while they search for employment, including in respect of the amount of support offered and its duration, and training programmes offered to job seekers. In addition, women workers receive support from the Human Resources Fund and receive pensions through the social insurance system.

138. Several programmes have been launched, including the “Qurrah” programme to provide day care services for the children of working women; the “Wusul” programme to provide transportation support for working women; the self-employment support programme, which provides greater opportunities for women to increase their incomes in accordance with their skills; and the part-time and remote work programmes, which enable women to achieve a balance between work and family. In addition, women in rural and remote areas have been enabled and can now participate in the labour market. As at the end of 2022, the number of beneficiaries of the “Qurrah” programme stood at 9,528, while 62,166 women were benefiting from the “Wusul” programme as at the end of 2022.

139. The Human Resources Development Fund (Hadaf) has launched a number of initiatives, including the “Tamhir” programme, which is a training programme for Saudi graduates of local and foreign universities and graduates of institutes and colleges holding technical, health and administrative diplomas. The aim of this programme is to provide participants training in government institutions and distinguished companies in the private sector, so that they can acquire the expertise and skills that they need to participate in the labour market. In 2022, the number of women beneficiaries in the programme was 46,308. Another of those initiatives is the “Durub” platform, which a national e-training platform for developing the capacities and raising the skill levels of the national work force, both men and women, and providing them with skills that will help them find and hold a suitable job that meets the needs of the country’s labour market. In 2022, women comprised 61 per cent of all trainees. The Human Resources Development Fund, through its employment support programme, provides financial support for targeted qualitative employment. A total of 172,527 women benefited from that programme in 2022. In addition, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development has been working in partnership with the governmental, private and non-profit sectors to develop tools that enable women from the neediest groups to participate in the labour market. Since the launch of the Social Security Beneficiaries Empowerment Programme in 2016, a total of 117,144 women social security recipients have been empowered through training, employment, support and financing for projects.

140. In order to promote the rights of foreign workers, including women, an initiative to improve contractual relationships was launched as part of Vision 2030. The aims of this initiative are to improve the labour market, increase employment, improve productivity, help attract talent from around the globe and promote and protect human rights.

**Job mobility service:** This service allows an expatriate worker to transfer to another company 12 months after his or her initial entry into the country without requiring the approval of the first employer. Such transfer must be done in accordance with controls that protect both parties to the contractual relationship once the conditions have been satisfied.

**Final exit service:** This service allows an expatriate worker, while his or her employment contract is valid or after its automatic termination, to submit a final exit request through the “Abshar” automated platform. The worker has the right to leave the country without obtaining the consent of the employer, in accordance with controls that protect both parties to the contractual relationship that have been agreed upon with the work team.

**Exit and return service:** This service allows an expatriate worker, while his or her employment contract is valid, to submit an exit and return request through the “Abshar” platform. The worker has the right to leave the country without obtaining the consent of the employer, in accordance with controls that protect

both parties to the contractual relationship that have been agreed upon with the work team.

141. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development has launched the “Ma‘an” monitoring platform for reporting violations of labour regulations. This platform is an electronic service that is used to monitor and report inspection violations and labour market violations in the private sector. The aim is to create a participatory work environment through joint supervision carried by citizens and the Ministry, with a view to bringing about a work environment in which there are no violations. Moreover, under the Anti-Harassment Law that is mentioned in paragraph 22, the relevant private sector and governmental authorities must develop the necessary measures to prevent and combat harassment in the work environment, with a view to establishing a work environment in which both sexes do not experience harassment.

#### **Health care (art. 12)<sup>17</sup>**

142. Efforts continue to improve the delivery of health-care services on the basis of need, while observing the principle of equality. These efforts have been focused on the following areas: maternal and childcare; immunization programmes; health care for persons with disabilities, the elderly and students; mental health care; health care for victims of accidents, emergencies and disasters; epidemic and infectious disease control; treatment of chronic diseases; organ transplantation and other components of a comprehensive health-care system and support infrastructure. In 2022, the budget of the Ministry of Health was 111,954,079,210 riyals, or more than \$29 billion. In addition to those services, the following health-care services are offered to women:

- Premarital services: These services include advice and counselling for those who are about to get married, as well as tests for genetic diseases that can produce birth defects as a result of consanguineous marriage.
- Preconception services: These services raise awareness of the importance of family planning and provide preventive services and medical advice to women who wish to become pregnant.
- Services during pregnancy: These services including providing health care to pregnant women and monitoring them during pregnancy, with a view to providing medical advice and detecting risk factors. According to a World Health Organization report, 98.5 per cent of pregnant women had at least four appointments, a number that is in line with the approved protocol.
- Childbirth services: All births take place in health-care facilities, with 99.3 per cent of births attended by qualified medical staff.
- Postnatal services: The health of the mother and newborn are monitored in two primary appointments following delivery that are aimed at the early detection and reduction of postpartum complications. The necessary vaccinations are administered to newborns and counselling is provided on breastfeeding, diet and family planning services.

143. The number of primary health-care centres has increased in all governorates of Saudi Arabia. As at December 2022, there were 2,131 health-care centres across the country’s regions, governorates and villages. Those centres provide primary health care for all beneficiaries without exception. In 2022, primary health-care services were available in all of the country’s main cities, and basic health-care services were available in 93.9 per cent of population centres, including remote ones.

<sup>17</sup> Paragraph 48 of the concluding observations.

144. In 2020, the under-five mortality rate decreased to 7 cases per 1,000 live births. Reproductive health services have been made available. As a result, the maternal mortality rate declined to 11.9 per 100,000 live births in 2018. The rate of HIV infection has declined and HIV treatment is available. In 2022, the rate of HIV infections stood at 0.028 per 1,000 persons. In addition, Saudi Arabia received awards from the World Health Organization for having recorded zero endemic cases of malaria in 2021 and 2022. The Saudi Patient Safety Centre was established in 2017. The Centre is the national authority for all matters relating to patient safety and prevention of medical errors. The Centre is formulating a national strategy for patient safety in line with the health sector initiatives of the National Transformation Programme. The National Centre for Mental Health was established pursuant to Cabinet Decision No. 685 of 27 Dhu al-Qa'dah A.H. 1440 (30 July A.D. 2019) with a view to developing national programmes for the promotion of mental health, building a better life for all members of society, fostering positive engagement and supporting those who are most vulnerable to mental health problems.

145. The Ministry of Health is also working to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, through:

- Early detection of sexually transmitted diseases by conducting premarital screening for such infectious diseases as HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C.
- Early detection of infectious diseases in pregnant women.
- Early detection of infectious diseases prior to surgical procedures.
- Early detection of infectious diseases prior to employment.
- Vaccines for such sexually transmitted diseases as hepatitis B and vaccinations for the human papillomavirus are included in the basic vaccination schedule.
- Treatment of diagnosed hepatitis C cases.

146. At the regional and international levels, Saudi Arabia has been involved in humanitarian and relief work in support of the health sector in several countries through the provisions of various types of support. As at December 2022, the total amount of assistance that Saudi Arabia has provided in support of health-care programmes amounted to \$9,097,524,916. That figure includes assistance provided through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre, which, as at December 2022, amounted to \$1,116,363,604 in support of 781 projects.

147. Labour force data for all health-care sectors in the country show that, as at the end of 2021, women comprised 52 per cent of the entire health sector workforce, with women representing 36 per cent of doctors, 77 per cent of nurses, 22 per cent of pharmacists and 37 per cent of paramedics.

148. With regard to the Committee's observation concerning the requirement for women to obtain permission from a guardian in order to obtain health-care services, it should be noted that women in Saudi Arabia can obtain all health-care services without having to obtain prior approval.

149. Saudi Arabia took several measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including various precautionary measures that were aimed at preventing the spread of the pandemic, and it provided high-quality health care to those who contracted COVID-19. A committee that included all relevant government agencies was formed to serve as a national mechanism for addressing all issues related to combating and controlling the epidemic. From early on, Saudi Arabia took precautionary measures to control the pandemic. In January 2022, the country was ranked second on the Bloomberg COVID-19 resilience index.

150. During the pandemic, Saudi Arabia monitored the health condition of all sectors of society, including, in particular, pregnant women and working women, and gave priority, in the early stages of the immunization effort, to women and female health-care workers who were pregnant or breastfeeding. It ensured that women were able to receive primary and emergency at all health-care facilities and through virtual clinics, telemedicine and remote medical visits.

151. Telemedicine services were provided to citizens and residents. The number of beneficiaries of such services totalled 523,637 persons, or 56 per cent of all beneficiaries.

152. A number of policies, protocols and manuals were developed on how to deal with women infected by the virus and who are pregnant, have recently given birth or are breastfeeding. A remote work policy was instituted for workers, in particular women with special circumstances. Other items that were developed include, for example, a guide for pregnant women infected by the coronavirus, a guide for mothers infected by the coronavirus who have recently given birth and a guide for mothers who were breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees of the Ministry of Health, in particular women with special circumstances, were able to work remotely.

153. During the pandemic, a large number of women were provided with medical care at home and had the COVID-19 vaccine, whether the first, second or booster dose, administered at home. COVID-19 laboratory tests were made available to everyone, with tests for women comprising more than 40 per cent of all tests that were conducted.

154. The executive plan for volunteering in the health sector in response to the pandemic was approved by Royal Decree No. 48311 of 15 Sha‘ban A.H. 1441 (8 April A.D. 2020), and a committee, the membership of which included several government agencies and civil society organizations, was established to follow up on the implementation of that plan. The committee’s priorities included the launch of a unified electronic platform for volunteering in the country’s health sector and the launch of a qualification and training programmes for volunteers, so that they can actively participate in the response to the pandemic and support health-care workers. As at the end of 2022, there were more than 183,391 volunteers in various regions. Women volunteers number 86,759, or 47 per cent of the total, and women have taken advantage of more than 20,274 opportunities to volunteer. A total of 141,816 women volunteers, or 46 per cent of the total number of volunteers, were trained.

155. Efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic culminated with the issuance of a directive from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, on 6 Sha‘ban A.H. 1441 (30 March A.D. 2020) to provide all citizens, residents and those in violation of the residency system with treatment free of charge and without any legal consequences.

156. On 10 Rabi‘ I A.H. 1442 (27 October A.D. 2020), the Cabinet issued Decision No. 168 approving the disbursal of 500,000 riyals to the families of health sector workers who died because of the COVID-19 pandemic, regardless of whether the deceased worked for the government or the private sector, was a civilian or member of the military, or was a Saudi or non-Saudi.

157. At the regional and international levels, Saudi Arabia, in its capacity as President of the Group of 20 (G20), called for an extraordinary virtual summit meeting in order to discuss ways of combining efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the conclusion of the summit, which was held on Thursday, 26 March 2020, a final communiqué was issued that included pledges and commitments made by the leaders of the G20 countries aimed at responding to the epidemic and limiting

its spread. Saudi Arabia has also provided assistance to several countries, including by securing medical devices and supplies from several international companies in order to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The efforts of Saudi Arabia culminated in the announcement that the Kingdom, in its capacity as President of the G20, had pledged to give \$500 million to international organizations in support of global efforts to respond to the pandemic. Saudi Arabia has called on States, non-governmental organizations, charitable institutions and the private sector to support international efforts aimed at closing the funding gap facing the COVID-19 response. According to the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, the funding gap is estimated to be more than \$8 billion. In view of global needs, Saudi Arabia provided financial support in the amount of \$433,758,862 to the COVID-19 pandemic response, including through various projects and other contributions. That amount also includes \$380,797,099 provided by the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre in response to the urgent appeal that was made to intensify global efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Saudi Arabia, through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre, provided health assistance to Yemen, including medicines and preventive and therapeutic medical supplies valued at \$73,496,541, to help that country respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Social and economic life (art. 13)<sup>18</sup>**

158. Cabinet Decision No. 790 of 28 Dhu al-Hijjah A.H. 1441 (18 August A.D. 2020) amends article 2 of the Social Development Bank Law such that the Bank is now linked organizationally to the National Development Fund. The Bank provides a variety of funding options that are commensurate with the development stage and scale of the enterprise:

- Financing for start-ups: aimed at new enterprises, with financing up to 300,000 riyals.
- Financing for excellence projects: aimed at promising enterprises that are new or no more than 3 years old, with financing up to 4 million riyals.
- Financing for excellence in trading: aimed at developing outstanding trade projects, with financing up to 4 million riyals.
- Business incubators and accelerators: aimed at enterprises that act as incubators and accelerators, with financing up to 4 million riyals.
- Social finance programme: The Bank offers a package of social funding products that are aimed at an important category of citizens, namely, low-income individuals. The Bank gives them the opportunity to obtain concessional financing that enables them to meet obligations arising from their basic needs, whether at the individual or family level.

159. Several programmes have been put in place to strengthen women's socioeconomic participation, including programmes to help establish small enterprises for families in need, at a cost of 2 billion riyals. A programme providing for family-run projects has been established, at a total cost of 1.5 billion riyals, to help garner capital, raw materials and other components that are needed to start the business. The Bank has concluded 13 agreements with the tertiary sector, for a total of more than 12 million riyals, so that family-run businesses can access financial and other services. The Bank has supported and empowered women through several programmes and services; it has provided more than 13 billion riyals to more than 300,000 women. Those initiatives have prompted a 400 per cent increase in the number of beneficiaries over the three years since 2019. Non-financial services

<sup>18</sup> Paragraph 50 of the concluding observations.

include child care, training and capacity building. These are provided by the Department of Empowerment and Development, business and output incubators and the Dulani business centre, in cooperation with entrepreneurship training centres. Some 60,000 women across the country have benefited from the programmes.

160. The Social Development Bank provides a package of social funding products that are aimed at an important category of citizens, namely low-income individuals. The Bank gives them the opportunity to obtain concessional financing that enables them to meet obligations arising from their basic needs, whether at the individual or family level.

161. The Talat Award for Women 2020, which is overseen by the Family Affairs Council, boosts women's profile and creates solutions for women in several areas. It encompasses all regions of Saudi Arabia and engages with a range of social categories to design and refine development programmes. At its first session, the programme generated 430 ideas for projects from all regions and governorates of the country; 160 of the people involved underwent project management training, and 26 projects received funding from the Social Development Bank.

162. A programme for family-run projects has been established, at a total cost of 1.5 billion riyals, to help families secure the capital, raw materials and other items that are needed to start the business. A programme called "Citizen's account" has been launched to address the expected effects of the Vision 2030 reforms. Cash sums are paid to medium- or low-income individuals. Women account for 41 per cent of the beneficiaries who are single, 11 per cent of those who are heads of household, and 16 per cent of the total number of beneficiaries.

163. As a result of the action taken to empower women, there was a 112 per cent increase from 2015 to 2021 in the number of commercial licences issued to women. The total number of such licences was 817,930. In 2021, the Ministry of Commerce issued 139,754 licences to women, the greatest increase to date. In 2015, that figure was 65,912.

164. The Social Insurance Law was promulgated by virtue of Royal Order No. 32 of 4 Rabi' II A.H. 1442 (19 November A.D. 2020). Its purpose is to put in place the necessary measures to address cases of poverty in society; guarantee a minimum income that can meet the basic needs of every beneficiary, something that can be achieved by assessing minimum living requirements and providing appropriate support; provide social support and protection to beneficiaries, with a particular focus on those in greatest need and those most deserving; enable beneficiaries to achieve financial independence and become productive through rehabilitation and training; and put in place mechanisms to assist beneficiaries during crises and disasters. In cooperation with the Ministry of the Economy and Planning, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development is currently developing a plan to overhaul the social protection legislation, with a focus on three main points, namely equality among citizens in access to social assistance; promoting flexibility through social insurance; and fostering employment opportunities through the labour market.

165. The Alimony Fund Regulation was promulgated by virtue of Ministerial Decision No. 679 of 15 Dhu al-Qa'dah A.H. 1438 (7 August 2017). As is stated in article 3, the purpose of the Fund is to make payments to beneficiaries without delay. In accordance with article 4 of the Regulation, the Fund makes payments to anyone awarded them pursuant to a judicial ruling, which has been enforced only in cases of impoverishment. It makes payments to anyone who has been granted such a ruling but whose case is still before the courts. The Fund then recovers the amount due for the beneficiary in accordance with the alimony ruling.

166. In order to support the private sector in strengthening economic development to support the Government's efforts to combat COVID-19, a programme has been launched with funding totalling 50 billion riyals, which are provided through the Saudi Central Bank. The programme includes funding for small and medium enterprises, in several components. The first is a deferred payment programme. A total of 30 billion riyals have been set aside for banks and financing companies to provide for a six-month deferral of payments due from small and medium enterprises. The second is a programme to finance loans. It provides 13.2 billion riyals in concessional financing for small and medium enterprises, in the form of six-month loans from banks and financing companies to small and medium enterprises. The third is a finance guarantee programme, which provides 6 billion riyals to banks and financing companies so that they can waive fees owed by small and medium enterprises, with a view to reducing the cost of loans for companies that benefited from such guarantees, and supporting extended funding for six months.

167. Decision No. 142906 of the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, dated 13 Sha'ban A.H. 1441 (6 April A.D. 2020) amends the implementing regulation of the Labour Law. A new paragraph 41 has been added concerning contractual relations between workers and employers if the State, acting on its own initiative or on the recommendation of a competent international organization, takes measures with regard to a situation or circumstance that requires the reduction of working hours, or takes precautionary action to prevent that situation or circumstance from escalating.

#### **Rural women (art. 14)<sup>19</sup>**

168. As a result of the reforms and developments across the country under Vision 2030, many rural areas have become urbanized, and living standards for women there have improved. In addition, many villagers have moved to populous cities and governorates. Villagers and migrants to urban areas, including women and children, retain all their rights and developmental advantages. The present section of the report sets out the most significant efforts made in that context.

169. The Sustainable Rural Development Programme is intended to improve the rural and agricultural centre to raise the living standards of small-scale farmers and rural families, improve capacities and productivity, and strengthen their way of life and food security. The Programme also seeks to develop several other sectors, with a particular focus on the comparative advantages of specific rural areas.

170. Development programmes and health policies and programmes have helped to enhance the level of health-care services provided to residents of rural areas to achieve urban-rural parity with regard to the right to health and health-care services. In order to realize those goals, medical campuses and specialized hospitals have been expanded and strengthened, in keeping with a fair distribution to make them as easily reachable as possible for patients and their relatives. Ten hospitals were opened in 2021, increasing capacity to more than 1,500 beds in the regions of Saudi Arabia, and 87 emergency rooms have been opened across the regions. In 2021, one million people benefited from the "A doctor for every family" project, which matches individuals and their families with a single primary care doctor.

171. Primary health-care centres have been established in all regions. As at December 2022, there were 2,131 such centres spread across the regions, governorates and villages of the Kingdom. Under Vision 2030, there has been a move towards converting hospitals and health-care centres into government enterprises in order to

<sup>19</sup> Paragraph 52 of the concluding observations.

strengthen capacities and raise productivity. A Saudi Patient Safety Centre has been established.

172. A Special Programmes Agency with several departments has been established in the Ministry of the Economy and Planning. It is led by a woman and is directly connected with the Minister. The Agency follows up on regional development activities. Its most important responsibilities are as follows:

- Analysing and assessing current policies and practices
- Defining and implementing development goals and initiatives consistent with Vision 2030
- Coordinating with regional councils across the country and providing support for the formulation of regional development strategies and plans
- Formulating and clarifying a governance model for development and planning in Saudi Arabia
- Implementing data collection mechanisms and compiling reports based on key performance indicators and regional development initiatives
- Defining guiding principles for urban planning in the regions, in coordination with regional councils

173. In all regions and governorates, there are government-run social development centres and development committees overseen by the non-profit sector. The purpose of those bodies is to ensure that local societies undergo social development grounded in the needs of women. Numerous social, cultural, training-related, recreational, sporting, health-related, agricultural and environmental programmes are in place. These help meet the needs of local societies and ensure their safety and security. There are now 40 social development centres and 519 social development committees across the regions.

## **Part IV (arts. 15 and 16)**

### **Equality before the law (art. 15)<sup>20</sup>**

174. Article 8 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates that governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be based on justice, consultation and equality in accordance with the Islamic sharia. Accordingly, equality before the law is a well-established constitutional principle in Saudi Arabia. Any person living in the territory of Saudi Arabia whose right to equality before the law is violated may resort to remedies such as the courts, government agencies, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and so on.

175. The laws of Saudi Arabia give women the right to enter into contracts and manage property on an equal basis with men. Article 18 of the Basic Law of Governance provides as follows: “The State shall guarantee the freedom and inviolability of private property ownership. Property may be seized only in the public interest and provided that the owner is fairly compensated”. An adult woman has full financial independence and liability. She may dispose of movable and immovable property, manage her financial affairs, engage in all commercial and economic activities, conclude sale and purchase contracts, lease, mortgage, bequeath and gift directly. She is free to obtain government financing for commercial enterprises, open bank accounts, obtain financing and establish and manage companies of all types. She is entitled to participate in the Chamber of Commerce councils and committees

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<sup>20</sup> Paras. 20 and 62 of the concluding observations.

throughout Saudi Arabia. The implementing law contains provisions to ensure the stability of rights and transactions between individuals, and men and women are equal in rights and duties in that regard.

176. Saudi law guarantees access to the courts on an equal footing. Article 47 of the Basic Law of Governance provides as follows: “The right to litigation shall be guaranteed equally for citizens and residents”. Laws, decisions and instructions issued by the judicial authorities contain provisions to facilitate access to the judiciary and to promote the principle of equality before it. Instructions have been issued that fall under the description of positive discrimination. They include the empowerment of women with respect to marital matters and following the dissolution of the marriage contract. They allow women to file lawsuits in their domiciles or at the nearest court, as an exception to the rule contained in article 36 of the Law of Procedure before the Sharia Courts, which requires that lawsuits be filed in the defendant’s country. Family cases before personal status courts are considered single-session cases. Consideration of such cases should not take longer than one week, as the Law of Procedure before Sharia Courts governs all matters related to divorce proceedings, including custody, alimony and visitation, with the aim of expediting family cases. In addition, the issuance of two marriage certificates, one for the husband and the other for the wife, was made mandatory in order to promote women’s right to access justice. The recent promulgation of the Personal Status Law will help to accelerate the resolution of family cases and enhance the predictability, stability, consistency, quality and efficiency of judicial rulings.

177. Civil society organizations, in cooperation with judicial bodies in Saudi Arabia, have also helped support women. The Mawaddah Association, through the legal incubator programme, has established the Mashwarah Fund, the first charitable fund for pro bono legal aid. The aim of the Fund is to offer a range of legal aid services, such as free verbal and written legal counsel and the provision of volunteer lawyers to plead before the judiciary on behalf of indigent clients, on a pro bono basis.

178. Supreme Order No. 27808 of 15 March 2017 (referred to in the present report) concerns the study of domestic violence cases. The Order contains a number of instructions, most notably: review of relevant laws; proposal of appropriate amendments in order to manage domestic violence cases and simplify procedures; and support for courts of first instance, personal status courts and criminal courts through a sufficient number of researchers and specialists in sociology and psychology to ensure that professional advice is given to judges in domestic violence cases.

179. Supreme Order No. 25803 of 29 Jumada I A.H. 1439 (15 February A.D. 2018) concerning legal assistance for women and children in cases of abuse instructs the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, in coordination with the Saudi Bar Association, to obtain a periodic list of the names and addresses of lawyers providing pro bono legal aid and to work with them, in accordance with paragraph 11 of article 13 of the statute of the Saudi Bar Association.

180. On 24 June 2018, implementation began of Supreme Order No. 905 of 6 Muharram A.H. 1439 (26 September A.D. 2017) approving the application of the Traffic Law and its implementing regulations, including the issuance of driving licences for both men and women. From then until 20 January 2020, a total of 174,624 driving licences were issued to women in Saudi Arabia, 84.8 per cent of who were Saudi citizens. The areas of Riyadh, Mecca and the Eastern Province accounted for 90 per cent of all licences issued to Saudi women.

181. The Ministry of Justice has operationalized the justice system and enabled beneficiaries to continue legal and judicial procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic without interruption, under the slogan “remote justice”.

182. The Office of the Public Prosecutor has launched a remote investigation and video interrogation project, which (during the pandemic) allows the accused to be interrogated at the detention site without having to be brought to appear in person before the investigator so as to safeguard the health of the detainee and prevent contact with others.

#### **Marriage and family relations (art. 16)<sup>21</sup>**

183. Every person has the right to marry and to choose a spouse in accordance with the provisions of Islamic sharia, which requires the consent of both parties. Saudi Arabia attaches great importance to this right because of its important role in the formation of the family and society. Article 10 of the Basic Law of Governance provides the following: “The State shall aspire to promote family bonds and preserve Arab and Islamic values. It shall take care of all individuals and provide the appropriate conditions for the development of their talents and skills”.

184. The Personal Status Law issued by virtue of Royal Decree No. 73 of 6 Sha‘ban A.H. 1443 (9 March A.D. 2022) contains provisions on family relations and is aimed at maintaining the stability of the family as the fundamental social unit. It defines the discretionary power of the judiciary with a view to strengthening legal stability and minimizing divergences; defines a framework for relations among family members and the protection of their rights; and expedites the settlement of family disputes.

185. Article 9 of the Personal Status Law prohibits the certification of a marriage contract between spouses under 18 years of age. The court may allow the marriage of a male or female person under 18 years of age if that person has reached maturity and the marriage has been shown to be in their best interests in accordance with the procedures established for that purpose. In particular, a medical report and a psychosocial report must be produced that show that the marriage does not pose a danger to the girl, in order to safeguard her best interests.

186. Article 127 of the Personal Status Law provides the following: “Custody is a duty of both parents for the duration of their marriage. If they separate, custody shall be granted to the mother; otherwise, it shall be granted in line with the following order: the father; the mother’s mother; the father’s mother. In all other cases, the court shall decide what is in the child’s interest”.

187. In accordance with Circular No. 1049 of 20 Jumada II A.H. 1439 (8 March A.D. 2018) issued by the President of the Supreme Judicial Council, custody of a child shall be granted to the mother without any need for the filing of a case, provided that there is no dispute.

188. Both mothers and fathers are treated as heads of the family. Article 91 of the Civil Status Law, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 7 of 20 Rabi‘ II A.H. 1407 (December 21 A.D. 1986) and amended by Royal Decree No. 134 of 27 Dhu al-Qa‘dah A.H. 1440 (30 July A.D. 2019), provides as follows: “For the purposes of the present Law, the head of the family shall be the father or mother with regard to minor children”.

189. The Decision of the Minister of Justice of 19 Jumada II A.H. 1441 (13 February A.D. 2020) added an article to the implementing regulations of the Law of Procedure before the Sharia Courts that helps preserve and protect the family by establishing a mechanism (conciliation or judicial ruling) to address custody, alimony and visitation issues prior to the separation of the couple within a period not exceeding 30 days from the date of the first session.

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<sup>21</sup> Para. 64 of the concluding observations.

190. The Office of the Public Prosecutor established family reconciliation units in 2018 and family and juvenile prosecution services in 2019. The cases referred to these have been entrusted to staff with relevant specializations and qualifications, and social workers have been brought in to hold conciliation sessions. The Office of the Public Prosecutor has also launched the Children's Affairs Unit, which works with the relevant authorities to ensure that the best interest of the child is taken into account and to protect children's rights through the application of all legal procedures in cases involving child victims. The Unit monitors social media for any potential exploitation or neglect of children, follows up on children-related cases with the relevant authorities and follows up on non-compliance with custody, alimony or visitation orders.

#### **Data collection and analysis<sup>22</sup>**

191. Royal Order No. 24004 of 12 Rabi' II A.H. 1441 (9 December A.D. 2019) was issued on the development of databases at government agencies concerned with human rights. Those databases will help to measure progress in the promotion and protection of human rights, including with respect to the country's fulfilment of its obligations under the human rights conventions to which it is a party, including the Convention. The Human Rights Commission is the body tasked with monitoring the implementation by government agencies of the human rights conventions to which Saudi Arabia is a party. It coordinates with the General Authority for Statistics and other relevant authorities in the analysis, dissemination and facilitation of access to human rights-related data, which is collected in a systematic and scientific manner through surveys and administrative records. Work is currently underway to create national human rights indicators, with participation from all stakeholders.

#### **Technical assistance<sup>23</sup>**

192. In November 2019, the National Recommendations Tracking Database was launched in cooperation with OHCHR. As an initial stage, the database was used to monitor the implementation of the Convention, the recommendations of the Committee and the efforts and measures taken by Saudi Arabia in that regard.

#### **Reservations to the Convention<sup>24</sup>**

193. Saudi Arabia reviews, on an ongoing basis, its obligations under the human rights conventions to which it is a party, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It was shown in the previous reviews that the general reservation of Saudi Arabia has no practical effect on the purposes and objectives of the provisions contained in the Convention. With regard to the reservation to article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention, Saudi Arabia clarifies that, under the Nationality Law, children take on the nationality of their fathers, as the Law follows the principle of single nationality and does not provide for dual nationality. Accordingly, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has expressed a reservation to article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention. In addition, for the purposes of social protection, they are treated as Saudis when it comes to education, medical treatment and access to cash and in-kind social security support. They also count towards private sector employee nationalization quotas.

<sup>22</sup> Para. 66 of the concluding observations.

<sup>23</sup> Para. 71 of the concluding observations.

<sup>24</sup> Para. 10 of the concluding observations.

**Amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention<sup>25</sup>**

194. Royal Decree No. 90 of 5 Sha‘ban A.H. 1440 (10 April A.D. 2019) approved the deletion of the phrase “for a period of not more than two weeks” from article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, thus joining those States parties that have agreed to that amendment.

**Ratification of other treaties<sup>26</sup>**

195. Saudi Arabia is a party to five major United Nations human rights conventions: the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is also a party to three optional protocols: the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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<sup>25</sup> Para. 12 of the concluding observations.

<sup>26</sup> Paras. 67 and 72 of the concluding observations.