



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

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

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under
article 18 of the Convention**

Second and third periodic reports of States parties due in 2014

United Arab Emirates**

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Introduction

1. Desiring to fulfil its international obligations, the State of the United Arab Emirates has prepared its second and third periodic reports of the States parties on the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The reports monitor the progress achieved in implementing the articles of the Convention and in addressing the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women during the period from the discussion of the first report in 2010 to end-2014.

2. This report was prepared under the general supervision of the General Women's Union, which represents women. It was prepared using a participatory approach involving representatives of all relevant federal and local government institutions and civil society institutions.

Report preparation methodology:

1. The General Women's Union formed working groups pursuant to official letters sent to 25 federal and local government institutions and civil society institutions. A total of 38 representatives of such institutions participated in the preparation of the report.
2. Immediately upon receiving the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, circulated the observations to each entity involved in preparing the present report. Each entity then prepared a report on the articles of the Convention taking into account the concluding observations.
3. A select committee comprising representatives of the working groups was formed to merge the reports of the concerned entities according to the guidelines for preparing the periodic reports.
4. The working groups approved the report and submitted it to the Department of Human Rights in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which took action in order to submit the report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Follow-up mechanisms:

1. The report will be published on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the General Women's Union.
2. The report will be printed and distributed to all State institutions as a guideline for continuous development.
3. Efforts will be made to establish a database of quantitative and qualitative indicators for monitoring progress in the implementation of the Convention.

Chapter One

The national context

1. Basic information

3. The United Arab Emirates was founded on 2 December 1971 as a federation including seven emirates, namely Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ras al-Khaimah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain and Fujairah. The capital of the State is in the city of Abu Dhabi.

4. The United Arab Emirates is located in the eastern portion of the Arabian Peninsula between longitudes 57.10°-51.35° and latitudes 26.25°-22.35° approximately. It is bounded by the Arabian Gulf (Islamic Republic of Iran) in the north, by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the west and by the Sultanate of Oman and the Gulf of Oman (Islamic Republic of Iran) in the south and east. The land border with the Sultanate of Oman extends from the Gulf of Oman in the east to Umm al-Zamul in the south.

5. The area of the State totals 71,023.6 km² and includes a number of islands. The area of the territorial sea of the State totals 27,624.9 km².

2. Population

6. According to the most recent census in 2010, the total population of the country was 8,264,070. Economic factors significantly affect population growth, especially in periods of accelerating booms, as in 2005-2010. The country's population rose from 2.4 million in 1995 to 4.1 million in 2005 according to the 2005 general population census.

Table 1

Estimated geographical distribution of the population of the United Arab Emirates in 2010

<i>Emirate</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
Abu Dhabi	204 108	200 438	404 546
Dubai	84 245	83 784	168 029
Sharjah	78 818	74 547	153 365
Ajman	21 600	20 586	42 186
Umm al-Qaiwan	8 671	8 811	17 482
Ras al-Khaimah	49 181	48 348	97 529
Fujairah	32 486	32 374	64 860
Total number of citizens	479 109	468 888	947 997
Total number of non-citizens	5 682 711	1 633 362	7 316 073
Total in the State	6 161 820	2 102 250	8 264 070

Source: National Bureau of Statistics.

3. Political system

7. The Constitution of the United Arab Emirates defines the goals and basic structures of the federation. It states that the federation exercises its sovereignty throughout the territory and territorial waters within the international borders of the member Emirates, while the member Emirates exercise sovereignty in their territories and territorial waters over all matters for which the Federation does not have competence under the Constitution. The people of the federation are one people and are part of the Arab nation. Islam is the official religion of the federation and Arabic is the official language.

8. The Constitution defines the division of powers between the federal and local authorities. Article 120 sets out the legislative and executive powers of the federal authorities, while article 121 defines the legislative functions that are exclusive to the federal authorities. Other functions are carried out by the member emirates. The federal authorities comprise the Supreme Council of the Federation, federal cabinet, Federal National Council and the federal judiciary.

4. Economic and social indicators

9. The United Arab Emirates pursues an open economic policy based on free trade and the free flow of capital and services. This policy is intended to develop the national economy, diversify its income sources and achieve balanced economic and social development for the State as a whole. The State's development policies have enabled it to become a leading country of the world and progress significantly in the area of human development, especially in the last decade. The 2011 Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Programme ranks the United Arab Emirates thirtieth among the 187 States covered by the report and first among the Arab states. This ranking reflects the Government's desire to improve living standards and economic and social conditions.

10. The report shows that the State has achieved real progress according to the gender equality measure of the Human Development Index. This progress stems from quantitative and qualitative changes in education and health. The report also shows that the State enjoys a high standard of living in general, the incidence of poverty and deprivation has fallen to a record low and adult literacy rates have risen. The advances made in health services are clearly reflected in all health indicators. These indicators point for example to declines in the infant and under-5 mortality rates, the percentage of babies with low birth weight and the maternal mortality rate. They also point to increases in number of children over the age of one who have been fully vaccinated against tuberculosis and measles and in the number of physicians per 1,000 people. The report states that health-care spending accounts for a very high percentage of the State's GDP compared to the high-income industrial countries.

Table 2
Social and economic development indicators

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>2006</i>	
Average per capita share of GDP (in thousands)	2010	UAE dirhams	132
		US dollars	36
Labour force (in thousands)	–	Males	No new data available
		Females	
		Total	
Labour force as percentage of total population	2009	Males	88.9
		Females	42.1
		Total	72.4
Unemployed persons as percentage of total labour force	2009	Males	2.4
		Females	10.8
		Total	4.8
Overall dependency ratio	2009		33.7
Old-age dependency ratio	2009		1.3
Child dependency ratio	2009		32.4
Population density (per km ²)	2010		116
Rural population as percentage of total population	–		No new data available
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	2010		293
Crude birth rate (per 1 000 of the population)	2010		9.64
Total fertility rate	–		No new data available
Crude death rate (per 1 000 of the population)	2010		0.9
Life expectancy at birth	–	Males	No new data available
		Females	
		Total	
Infant mortality rate (per 1 000 births)	2011		6.4
Illiteracy rate	2009	Males	4.8
		Females	6.1
		Total	5.3

Source: National Bureau of Statistics.

5. The United Arab Emirates in international indices

- a. Human Development Report: In The Human Development Report for 2013, the United Arab Emirates ranks second in the Arab world and 41st out of 187 countries.
- b. Gender Equality Index: The United Arab Emirates ranks first in the Arab world in the Gender Equality Index published by the World Economic Forum in 2013.

- c. Happiness and satisfaction index: The United Arab Emirates ranks first in the Arab world and 14th in the world (an improvement compared to previous years) in the 2013 report published by Columbia University's Earth Institute.
- d. Rule of Law Index: The United Arab Emirates ranks first in the Arab and Middle East region regarding order and security, criminal justice and absence of corruption in the 2012-2013 report.
- e. Corruption Perceptions Index: Transparency International's general report for 2013 ranks the United Arab Emirates first in the Middle East and North Africa region and 26th out of 177 countries.
- f. Competitiveness Index: The Global Competitiveness Report of 2013-2014, published by the World Economic Forum, ranks the United Arab Emirates third globally in government efficiency, third globally in public trust in politicians, fifth globally in absence of irregular payments and bribes and nineteenth globally overall.
- g. The World Competitiveness Yearbook for 2013 (published by the International Institute of Management Development) ranks United Arab Emirates first in the Arab world and eighth globally. The Emirates also received high rankings in the sub-indices of the yearbook, ranking first globally in government efficiency, fourth in economic performance and ninth in business efficiency.

6. The legal and institutional framework for the protection of women

11. Respect and protection of human rights is a primary foundation underpinning the State of the United Arab Emirates. Women enjoy such protection inasmuch as the State has been keen to provide a system for protecting and supporting the rights of women.

12. Concern for women is reflected in the political speeches of Emirati leaders. For example, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum — the President of the State, Prime Minister and Governor of Dubai — has repeatedly stated that women are a primary partner in development. A key statement of His Highness in this regard was his comment on the cabinet decision on women serving on the boards of directors of government companies and authorities: "The presence of women on these boards will provide greater balance to the boards' decisions and plans, inasmuch as women work in these companies and authorities and women are a significant segment of the public that interacts with them. They should be represented in decision-making. Women in the United Arab Emirates have strongly proven their effectiveness in various areas of work. Today, we provide them with a new impetus to serve in decision-making positions in all government institutions and bodies."¹

13. Similarly, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, stated the following in a speech to the Sixty-ninth Ordinary Session of the United Nations General Assembly: "... Based on our commitment to human rights principles... the Government of United Arab Emirates focuses its efforts on ending

¹ Mohammed bin Rashid, "Emirati women have strongly proven their effectiveness in the workplace," al-Khalij newspaper, 10 December 2012, <http://www.alkhaleej.ae/alkhaleej/page/fb8069c2-b0ff-4a6e-9546-498e679ffe8f>.

gender discrimination. We are therefore looking forward to playing an effective role in this regard in the United Nations to empower women and consolidate gender equality.”²

14. Legislation is a key foundation for protecting women. Lawmakers in the United Arab Emirates have periodically reviewed legislation to ensure that it is consistent with women’s needs and enables them to obtain their rights. New legislative developments are presented below in the present report’s treatment of the implementation of the articles of the Convention.

15. The State has also sought to establish national mechanisms to promote and empower women in federal and local government and civil society institutions. The following institutions promote, empower and protect women in the State:

- Ministry of Social Affairs.
- General Women’s Union (which includes five women’s associations at the State level).
- Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood.
- Family Development Foundation.
- Dubai Women’s Establishment.
- Supreme Council for Family Affairs.
- Shelters for women and children (in Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and Ras al-Khaymah).
- Dubai Foundation for Women and Children.
- Businesswomen’s councils in each emirate.
- Emirates Women’s Sports Committee.
- Fatima bint Mubarak Ladies Sports Academy.
- Emirates Association for Human Rights.

7. Statistics on Emirati women in 2014

- a. The cabinet includes four female ministers (Minister of Development and International Cooperation, Minister for Social Affairs and two Ministers of State). An Emirati woman holds the post of Secretary of the Cabinet.
- b. Emirati women hold seven (17.5 per cent) of the 40 seats in the Federal National Council and the post of first deputy speaker of the Federal National Council.
- c. Emirati women serve in the judiciary and in the Public Prosecutor’s Office. They include two judges in the court of first instance, two judges in the military court, two public prosecutors, 17 assistant public prosecutors, one marriage official and 22 judicial trainers.

² “His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed delivers the State’s statements to the General Assembly of the United Nations,” website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://mofa.gov.ae/Mofa/portal/f056d72d-0214-42b8-aed5-0fafa7500649.aspx>.

- d. Women serve in the Diplomatic Corps in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Three have been appointed as ambassadors — one to Sweden, one to Spain and one to the Republic of Montenegro. A woman serves as the consul to China. One woman holds the post of minister plenipotentiary, first class. Women hold the posts of first secretary (11 women), second secretary (16 women), third secretary (71 women), attaché (47 women) and advisor (three women).
- e. Emirati women have a prominent, effective presence in military and police work. Women may attain up to the rank of brigadier general in the Armed Forces.
- f. There are 21,000 female employers. Female business owners account for 10 per cent of the total private sector in the Emirates. They run projects worth 40 billion dirhams. Female business owners constitute 15 per cent of the members of boards of directors of chambers of commerce and industry in the State.
- g. Women hold 66 per cent of the positions in the Government sector, including 30 per cent of the senior leadership posts involved in decision-making.
- h. Women represent 15 per cent of the faculty members at the University of the Emirates.
- i. Women hold 60 per cent of the technical jobs in medicine, teaching, pharmacy and nursing. They also serve in the regular Armed Forces, police and customs.
- j. Women constitute 71.6 per cent of the students in government universities and 50.1 per cent of the students in private universities and colleges. They constitute 43 per cent and 62 per cent of students studying for master's degrees and doctorate degrees in private and government universities respectively.
- k. The life expectancy of females at birth is 80 years. The rate of maternal mortality due to pregnancy and childbirth was 2.45 per 100,000 live births in 2010. In 2008, 99.9 per cent of births occurred under comprehensive medical supervision.

8. Position of the United Arab Emirates on reservations to the Convention

16. The State of the United Arab Emirates proactively ensures equal opportunities and justice for its citizens. It therefore constantly monitors international best practices to achieve quality of life for all.

17. The State periodically reviews its international obligations, including its obligations under the Convention. It has circulated the Convention and the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to all federal and local government and civil society institutions for inclusion in their plans and operating strategies and to enable them to examine the possibility of formulating reservations in order to ensure consistency with the Islamic sharia. The State is examining ways to withdraw or restrict its reservations to the Convention by harmonizing domestic legislation and practices with the spirit of the Convention.

Chapter Two

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

1. Articles 1-3

18. The United Arab Emirates' ascension to the Convention affirms its desire to integrate women in sustainable development and surmount difficulties facing women's participation in various fields. Accordingly, the Emirati legislature has provided for the rights of citizens and non-nationals in national legislation without gender discrimination. It also periodically updates legislation consistent with new developments.

19. The United Arab Emirates' reservation to article 2 (f) of the Convention is not intended to be a reservation to the elimination of discrimination. Rather, the reservation concerns a few issues that deviate from social customs, traditions and practices and violate the immutable provisions of the Islamic sharia. Nonetheless, as explained below, the State endeavours assiduously to change any cultural patterns that discriminate against women in society.

20. The State has worked to strengthen awareness of the Convention. During 2011, a training workshop in women's rights was held for assistant judges and members of the Public Prosecutor's Office based on the training plan of the Department of International Cooperation and the Human Rights Office of the Department of Justice. The workshop covered the following areas:

1. A brief overview of the Convention and the obligations set forth therein;
2. The extent to which domestic laws are consistent with the Convention.

21. Another training workshop was held concerning the UAE's international obligations. It reviewed the following areas:

1. The conventions ratified by the United Arab Emirates;
2. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
3. The Convention on the Rights of the Child,
4. The obligations of the United Arab Emirates arising from its ratification of those conventions.
5. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

2. Article 4 — Special measures

22. Article 4 of the Convention provides for the adoption of temporary special measures to achieve gender equality. The United Arab Emirates has taken action to use this prerogative in order to uphold and strengthen the participation of women and equal opportunities to assume leadership positions. Since submitting its initial report, the Government has adopted a series of measures to strengthen women's participation in various sectors in implementation of the concluding observations of

the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. These measures include the following:

- a. Cabinet Decision 319/15F/22 of 2012, issued in session No. 15, promotes women's participation on the boards of directors of federal authorities, companies and institutions.
- b. The proportion of women in several sectors has been increased. For example, five women have been appointed to the Federal National Council; a woman was as first deputy speaker of the Federal National Council during the current parliamentary session, in order to support the political participation of women after only one woman won in the elections; and a woman was appointed to serve as Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations in 2013.
- c. The Government periodically reviews legislation and examines the needs of working women. For this purpose, an advisory committee has been established in the Federal Human Resources Authority to examine women's needs. The Human Resources Law was amended by Federal Decree-Law No. 9 of 2011, which focuses on the types of full-time, part-time and temporary full-time employment available to women and men alike.

3. Article 5 — Social and cultural patterns

23. Any observer of social and economic developments in the United Arab Emirates will appreciate the openness and harmony that prevail in society. The Emirati Government and people are proud of their national identity and cultural legacy. They are also open to the cultures of the world as a result of the diversity of foreign nationals residing in the country.

24. Women residing in the country enjoy all of the rights and duties of men, something that is clearly reflected in the activities of daily life. The Government is nevertheless working to preserve the gains made by women by strengthening the appropriate cultural patterns for future generations.

25. In this regard, civil society institutions have developed and implemented programmes to raise societal awareness of the role and rights of women, empower women in society and change the stereotypical roles of men and women in accordance with socially acceptable concepts. These programmes provide women with opportunities to participate in development. They enhance positive, constructive personal skills in the area of the family and relationships and promote the sharing of roles and responsibilities. Following are examples of such programmes:

- a. The Family Development Foundation has launched a series of programmes to promote a sound understanding of motherhood as an important social function. Both fathers and mothers are targeted in the "Parental Relationship Programme" and "Childhood and Adolescence Programme." These programmes instil a sense of joint responsibility in men and women for raising and nurturing their children. Another programme was launched in 2010 to promote men's role in the family by giving them positive, constructive personal skills to better understand themselves and others in order to create a healthy, stable family. As of 2013, the programme has reached 2,783 men. Three other programmes have also been launched:

“Enrichment of Marital Life,” “What Is Marriage” and “Licence for Married Life.” They present topics that clarify responsibilities and roles and promote equal sharing of household responsibilities and gender equality between husbands and wives in respect of status and responsibilities.

- b. Radio and television programmes have been made, including targeted media messages designed to eliminate stereotypes about roles, functions, responsibilities, role sharing in the family and gender equality. Many programmes and media materials are produced and presented throughout the year to counter discrimination against women. They host top female academics, journalists and specialists who discuss gender equality, the importance of strengthening the presence of women, domestic violence and changing erroneous stereotypes of women that limit them to specific roles in society.
- c. The newspapers also publish many reports on the status and achievements of women in the Emirates. These reports constantly stress the importance of supporting and empowering women in society. Domestic newspapers focus almost daily on women’s activities of all types and at all levels, particularly those that aim to eliminate discrimination against women.
- d. In January 2013, the Ministry of Education published a national curriculum for public and private education in the United Arab Emirates. The curriculum is designed to strengthen national identity, values and morals among students. It also consolidates the individual’s role in building a cohesive, stable family and promotes acceptance of cultural pluralism in society in a spirit of tolerance and acceptance of others on the basis of the equality. The ministry also periodically reviews curricula based on responses to a questionnaire on its website that allows interested persons to air their views on the curricula. Curricula also promote gender equality in subject-specific ways, including equality in language, in classes on Arabic language, Islamic education and social sciences, as well as the study of behaviour patterns between sexes. Illustrations are used as a teaching aid, and there is an equal focus on boys and girls. The curricula highlight gender equality in rights, responsibilities and expenditure, the equal right to petition the courts and be held accountable under the law, the equal right to material and intangible property, the role of women in society and the importance of gender equality in preserving and developing the nation and achieving prosperity.
- e. The Ministry of Culture and Community Development held a Conference on Community Cultural Values in 2011 to highlight community values, instil them in youth and enhance the ability of young people to communicate and interact culturally with other peoples.

4. Article 6 — Traffic in women

26. Article 6 of the Convention urges the States Parties to take appropriate measures to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women. The United Arab Emirates attaches the utmost importance to this issue. It has adopted laws that prohibit the trafficking and sexual exploitation of women in the State and impose deterrent penalties on offenders that commit violence against women and exploit children in prostitution. The United Arab Emirates has worked

to adopt the recommendations and concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The State's most salient achievements in this regard include the following:

1. Federal Law No. 51 of 2006 on Combating Human Trafficking. Articles 2-8 of the law mandate punishment of traffickers, particularly if the victim is a child or a woman. Several articles of the law were amended in 2012 to provide greater protection and guarantees for human trafficking victims.
2. The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking has developed a four-pronged strategy to combat human trafficking offences based on protection and prevention, prosecution and punishment, protection of victims and the strengthening of international cooperation.
3. The State has extended invitations to the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. In addition, bilateral agreements have been concluded with a number of states. For example, memoranda of understanding were concluded with the Republic of Armenia in 2009, Republic of Azerbaijan 2011 and Australia in 2013 with a view toward harmonizing views on combating human trafficking.
4. The State has established mechanisms to bring human trafficking suspects before the competent courts in the State. In recent years, the courts have imposed strict penalties on persons convicted of human trafficking offences, ranging from imprisonment of at least one year to life imprisonment and a fine. Law enforcement authorities work actively to detect human trafficking offences, arrest suspects and hand them over to the justice system for prosecution.
5. The concerned institutions have spread awareness about combating human trafficking offences. The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking organized a media campaign in late 2010 and early 2011 to combat human trafficking at Abu Dhabi International Airport and Al-'Ayn International Airport. The campaign was extended to cover the airports in Dubai during 2013. During 2011, the committee developed its own website (www.nccht.gov.ae) as a primary source of information, data and laws relating to human trafficking offences and as a means for individuals in society to communicate directly with the committee.
6. Provision of protection and support to human trafficking victims. Effective, fair, free care and protection programmes are provided for victims. Government shelters provide psychological, social, health, legal and rehabilitation services; hotlines for reporting abuse; family counselling programmes; follow-up services with all government and non-governmental institutions, embassies and consulates throughout the State; follow-up services to ensure victims return to their countries safely in coordination and partnership with international organizations and civil society organizations in the victim's country; appropriate material support; and educational and recreational programmes and activities to enable victims to master knowledge and skills for creating a decent life and better future for

themselves. There are now five shelters in the country. They are located in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah.

7. The competent authorities place a significant emphasis on statistics and indicators. The National Bureau of Statistics, in cooperation with other statistical bureaus in the Gulf countries, is currently considering the creation of a consolidated Gulf statistical system to compile, analyse and aggregate indicators of violence against women. In addition, the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children is currently conducting a study on violence against women.
8. In implementation of the Committee's recommendations for facilitating women's fair access to remedies, the Department of Justice in Abu Dhabi has established the Office of the Family Law Prosecutor. The office has jurisdiction to investigate and address juvenile offences and criminal offences occurring within a single family. It is also authorized to provide opinions in cases concerning families and the welfare of minors before the various courts in the situations set out in the law. The Department of Justice also provides attorney services and covers expert fees for persons of insufficient means.
9. The Ministry of Interior has adopted a number of measures to protect and assist domestic and support workers, including efforts to promulgate a special law that regulates the relationship of domestic workers with sponsors and labour-importing brokerage offices. The cabinet approved the law in its Decision No. 1/1F/1 of 2012. In addition, a uniform contract regulating the employee-employer relationship and stipulating the employer's responsibility for providing health insurance has been established. Specialized offices have been established in the dispute divisions in the Nationality and Residence Affairs Sector to receive labourers' complaints. The Dubai Foundation for Women and Children takes in female domestic labourers who are subjected to any type of abuse by any household member. Such cases are classified as domestic violence, and all care and protection services are provided to the victims.

5. Article 7 — Political life

27. The United Arab Emirates seeks to observe best practices in regulating and coordinating the relationship between the Government and citizens. It has established channels for participation and constructive dialogue to ensure citizens' participation in areas.

28. Women continued to participate in political life in the State in the fifteenth legislative term (2011-2015), accounting for seven of the 40 members of the Federal National Council. In addition, a woman holds the post of First Deputy Speaker of the Council.

29. The Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs carries out a number of awareness-raising activities and initiatives to promote a culture of political participation in society and, in particular, to develop Emirati women's political awareness in order to enable them to participate effectively in various areas of national life. To this end, it has concluded cooperation agreements and signed memorandums of understanding with a number of relevant national institutions —

such as the University of the Emirates, the Ministry of Education, the Federal National Council and women's organizations — with a view to organizing joint awareness-raising activities, including the following:

- An activity entitled “Rights and duties of women in the Federation” (28 November 2013).
- A forum entitled “Building political awareness among university students” (28 November 2013).
- A lecture for female students in the Higher Colleges of Technology in Fujairah on 15 May 2013.
- A lecture for female students of al-Wasl School in Dubai on 20 March 2013.

30. The Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs also published a two-volume book entitled the *Culture of Political Participation — Consolidation and Empowerment* (in Arabic), which covers the main activities organized in 2012 by the Department of Political Development under the Ministry. The first volume addresses electronic publications on empowerment, which have been widely disseminated. The second volume addresses the Forum for Building Political Awareness among University Students.

31. The 42-member Consultative Council of the emirate of Sharjah has seven female members. Sharjah's 17-member municipal council has two female members.

6. Article 8 — International representation

32. The United Arab Emirates provides for the participation of women in decision-making. Government institutions and organizations whose work involves women's issues endeavour to build the capacities of women to enable them to hold various leadership posts.

33. The Dubai Foundation for Women and Children, for example, cooperates with the Mohammed Bin Rashid Programme for Leadership Development in providing the United Arab Emirates Women Leaders Programme to strengthen the leadership capacities of the best of Emirati female officials.

34. Emirati women have thus become qualified to represent the Government abroad in a number of regional and international organizations, including in the following positions:

- Member, Executive Board of the Arab Women Organization.
- Chair, Arab Women's Organization.
- Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations in New York.
- Member, Executive Committee for Women's Sports in the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf.
- Representative of the Government as ambassadors to a number of States and as staff members at several embassies abroad.
- Representative the State at regional, Arab and international conferences as official spokespersons and conference participants.

7. Article 9 — Acquisition of nationality

35. Article 9 of the Convention calls on the States Parties to grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality, including the granting of women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.

36. The United Arab Emirates has taken action to adopt the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Article 8 of the United Arab Emirates Constitution states that the citizens of the United Arab Emirates shall have a single nationality specified by law and shall enjoy the protection of the federal government while abroad in accordance with internationally recognized principles.

37. Federal Law No. 17 of 1972 on nationality, residence and passports, as amended by Law No. 10 of 1975 and amendments thereto, regulates all matters pertaining to the acquisition and retention or forfeiture of nationality. It grants women the right to acquire and retain nationality according to certain requirements. A woman's nationality is not forfeited by marriage to a non-citizen, unless the woman so requests. Under article 14 of the Law, "A woman who is a national ex lege or by naturalization and who marries a person holding foreign nationality shall retain her nationality and shall not lose it unless she has taken her husband's nationality."

38. Under article 17, paragraph 2 of the Law, "A female citizen ex lege who acquired the nationality of her foreign husband who then dies or abandons or divorces her may regain her nationality provided she renounces the nationality of her husband. Her children from that husband may apply to acquire the nationality of the State if their ordinary residence is in the State and they have expressed their desire to renounce the nationality of their father."

39. On 2 December 2011, His Highness the President of the State issued royal directives requiring the granting of United Arab Emirates citizenship to the children of female citizens married to foreigners in accordance with the following provisions:

- The children of female citizens are to be treated as original citizens without discrimination in respect of education, health and employment.
- Such children are entitled to apply to acquire nationality upon reaching the age of 18 years.

40. Ministry of Interior statistics indicate that 2,047 children of female citizens have been granted United Arab Emirates nationality since the decree was issued. The decree also covers the children of female citizens in cases where the fathers' paternity has not been demonstrated and in cases of children of unknown parentage. National legislation, particularly the Constitution, grants freedom of movement to individuals and prohibits any form of restriction on such movement. Under the law, possession of a passport is an individual right, and a passport may be confiscated only pursuant to a judicial ruling.

8. Article 10 — Education of women

41. The United Arab Emirates places a particular emphasis on education and human resource development without gender discrimination. It works assiduously to provide all possibilities and resources for developing the educational environment

qualitatively and quantitatively. The State adopts educational curricula collaboratively through brainstorming sessions. The Vice-President of the State and Prime Minister engage representatives from the field of education — including teachers, physicians, school principals, students and parents — in the ministerial retreats organized by the Cabinet to discuss new ideas in education and health.

42. The Government attaches importance to providing universal education. In 2012, the cabinet approved a draft law making education compulsory at all levels for all children in the State, including citizens and non-nationals, up to the age of 18. Non-nationals obtain full or partial support for the education of their children through benefits received as employees in the public or private sector in the State. Educational projects receive top priority among social development projects, with 9.8 billion dirhams being allocated for general, university and higher education (21 per cent of the total federal general government budget for FY 2014).

43. Federal and local government and private institutions participate in supervising education in the State. Generally, the Ministry of Education, Abu Dhabi Education Council and the Knowledge and Human Development Authority develop educational curricula in accordance with national policy, which is based on the needs and aspirations of all components of Emirati society. Male and female pupils at all three educational levels are equal. The capacities of males and females in each age group are taken into account at each level. Male and female pupils at a given level are evaluated according to harmonized standards that apply to all students at that level, regardless of sex.

44. The curricula for the three types of educational content — knowledge, values and skills — are the same for both sexes, as are the various activities, learning strategies, methods and evaluation tools. For example, all 12th-grade pupils who study the Ministry of Education's curriculum are required to take a harmonized national examination that entails the same requirements, time limits, subjects, classroom environment, proctoring, evaluation and grading, with no difference whatsoever between the two sexes.

Table 3
Distribution of pupils according to sex and educational level

<i>Level</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>2009-2010</i>	<i>2010-2011</i>	<i>2011-2012</i>
Kindergarten	Male	64 159	67 210	69 671
	Female	60 816	62 557	65 332
	Total	124 975	129 767	135 003
Cycle 1 — grades 1-5	Male	168 505	171 412	186 250
	Female	159 156	164 036	176 424
	Total	327 661	335 448	362 674
Cycle 2 — grades 6-9	Male	108 693	110 345	113 413
	Female	103 574	105 254	107 611
	Total	212 267	215 599	221 024
Secondary	Male	60 435	63 842	66 371
	Female	63 717	66 125	68 764
	Total	124 152	129 967	135 135

<i>Level</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>2009-2010</i>	<i>2010-2011</i>	<i>2011-2012</i>
Religious education	Male	839	854	628
	Female	0	0	0
	Total	839	854	628
Technical education	Male	2 540	3 044	3 746
	Female	178	515	1 014
	Total	2 718	3 559	4 760

Source: National Bureau of Statistics.

45. The Ministry of Education equips school buildings for boys and girls according to specific specifications and standards applicable to classrooms, learning resource rooms, facilities and fences that protect the privacy of buildings. The Ministry maintains school buildings according to the laws in effect. It contracts services to companies that apply and comply with health, security and safety requirements and standards. Schools for girls are equipped to provide for their needs and privacy.

46. In academic year 2011-12, there were 1,185 government and private schools with a student population of 859 224 male and female students at all academic levels. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, there were 270,918 students in public education at all levels in 2011-12, 52.2 per cent of whom were females. The State provides space for expatriate communities to construct schools.

47. Higher educational opportunities are available for all non-nationals in government and private universities. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research effectively manages operations for sending students abroad for study to meet the development requirements of society. It regulates the activity of higher education institutions, ensures the quality of educational outputs and promotes scientific research and innovation according to high competitive standards.

9. Article 11 — The field of employment

48. The State of the United Arab Emirates ensures that women are strategic partners in development. It works assiduously to create an employment environment that attracts women by enabling them to reconcile their family and employment responsibilities. The flexibility provided by human resource laws regulating labour relations in various institutions have boosted women's labour force participation rate.

49. The State's guarantee of this right is set forth in the Minister of Labour's Decision No. 3 of 2009 on work permits for persons sponsored by their relatives. The decision entitles the wife and daughter of a person granted legal residence in the country to apply for jobs that are advertised and to obtain work permits based on the sponsorship of their relatives (husband/father).

50. Regarding the Committee's observation that the principle of equal pay for work of equal value does not exist, we affirm to the Committee, as we stated in the previous report, that Emirati legislation guarantees the right to equal remuneration. Under article 32 of the Labour Law, "A working women shall be granted a wage

comparable to that of a man if she does the same work.” The law guarantees gender equality in respect of wages, bonuses, allowances and severance pay. It also grants women several preferential advantages consisting of the right to receive fully paid leave in the circumstances and cases that require her to perform her other social duties concerning pregnancy and reproduction.

51. In this regard, we wish to highlight the Ministry of Labour’s initiative to establish a Wage Protection Office under Cabinet Decision No. 688 of 2008. That decision concerns the implementation of the ministry’s plan to monitor protection of wages and work hours, the implementation of a plan to transfer labourers’ wages through banks and other financial institutions and communication with labourers to receive complaints on the non-payment of wages in full or in part. In this regard, we affirm to the honourable Committee — based on records of the Wage Protection Office, labour inspection reports and reports of the Labour Dispute Resolution Department and labour welfare offices — that no complaints concerning wage inequality or discrimination were observed or recorded; all complaints received concerned failure to pay wages on time, failure to pay overtime wages or incorrect wage calculations.

52. Under Federal Decree-Law No. 11 of 2008 on Human Resources in the Federal Government, wages are set in all state institutions according to fixed rules based on the application of systems for the analysis and evaluation of functions. This is reflected in Federal Law No. 9 of 2011 on Human Resources, article 20, which stipulates: “All ministries shall have a uniform schedule of grades and salaries issued by decision of the Cabinet based on the Authority’s recommendation according to a series of rules, which shall not include whether the holder of the position is male or female, but shall rather pertain entirely to the job functions themselves, the qualifications required to fill the job and the degree of responsibility borne by the employee regardless of gender.

53. As regards the Committee’s observations about freedom of movement, United Arab Emirates labour policies and legislation guarantee women freedom of movement and affirm the State’s commitment to protection of the rights of labourers, who are viewed as partners in development. This is achieved through laws and policies that regulate the employment of labourers, protect labourers’ rights and ensure an appropriate work environment for them. The United Arab Emirates has made major strides in affirming guarantees and rights for foreign workers in national legislation based on the highest international standards to ensure a decent living for such workers and their family members within a tolerant society. This is reflected in the social, economic cultural, health and educational situation of foreign workers and their family members in the Emirates, which is consistent with many provisions of the Convention. The concept of migration for settlement in the context of the Convention does not apply to the United Arab Emirates’ policy on temporary labourers who do not intend to settle permanently in the State, inasmuch as the presence of temporary labourers in the State at certain times is linked to the implementation of specific projects.

54. The State has not yet ratified International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 87 on freedom of association and protection of the right to organize and ILO Convention 98 on the right to organize and collective bargaining. It has not done so for reasons pertaining to the foreign labour importation requirements which it is developing and for reasons pertaining to its demographic situation. The

residency of foreigners in the State for employment purposes is temporary and linked to employment contracts. In the large majority of cases, residency does not exceed a few years, after which the workers return to their home countries. Also, non-nationals account for 80 per cent of the population of the State. These factors are peculiar to the United Arab Emirates labour market, requiring the careful devising of an innovative model for worker representation and collective bargaining terms. The Government continues to examine available alternatives. We hope soon to arrive at an appropriate formulation. The Labour Law and relevant national legislation provide broad protection to workers and guarantee their rights. The State has ratified bilateral agreements with countries that send workers. These agreements provide for the protection of the rights of such workers throughout the contractual work cycle, including recruitment, preparation for travel to the State, temporary residence and preparation for returning to and reintegrating into their societies.

55. As part of its efforts to develop legislation guaranteeing freedom to organize, the State promulgated Federal Law No. 2 of 2008 on Non-Governmental Public-Welfare Associations and Organizations. This law permits all groups in society to form public-welfare associations to express their views in a legal, regulated manner that does not conflict with the public interest. Under this law, the State guarantees all workers in the territory of the State the right to establish professional associations to represent them, with membership open to all citizens and non-national residents of the State.

56. Regarding collective bargaining, the Labour Law, Chapter 9, regulates the right to collective bargaining and collective bargaining mechanisms in collective labour disputes. The law stipulates the formation of labour reconciliation committees in each labour department. The committees' primary function is to reconcile workers and employers in collective labour disputes. Workers exercise their right to collectively bargain with employers through these committees. Recently, a court was established in the Abu Dhabi Department of Justice with jurisdiction to examine disputes involving support service workers.

57. In addition, the Ministry of Labour has established nine labour welfare offices in the worker cities, which are the areas of the highest concentration of foreign workers in the State. These offices facilitate communication among the three stakeholders in production and reconcile between workers and employers, especially workers who wish to collectively bargain with employers concerning a problem. The labour welfare offices play a conciliatory role in mediating between employers and workers to resolve collective labour disputes. If the two parties cannot agree to a resolution, a complaint is referred to the judiciary for a decision. The Ministry of Labour conducts field visits to worksites to ascertain that facilities comply with occupational health and safety requirements. It conducted 135,297 such visits in 2013.

58. Generally, the State does not impose any prohibition on associations or unions that represent workers. Federal Law No. 2 of 2008 on Non-Governmental Public-Welfare Associations and Organizations entitles all segments of the Emirati population to form representative associations to express their views in a legal, regulated manner that does not conflict with the national interest. The Law defines a public-welfare association as any group with a permanent organization that has at least 20 founding members. The minister may allow an exception allowing for an association that has only five members who are founders.

59. Under the aforesaid Law, the State guarantees all workers in its territory the right to establish professional associations to represent them. Membership in such associations is open to all citizens and non-national residents. The law grants the founders of any such association the freedom to establish the association's bylaws, membership requirements, membership types, membership admission and dismissal procedures, members' rights and duties, method for forming the board of directors, the board's authorities and working methods, the association's resources and their use, the method for monitoring expenditures, and the requirements and rules for the voluntary dissolution of the association and disposal of its funds.

60. As regards employment in the Government sector, in 2010, the Federal Authority for Government Human Resources announced the formation of a Committee for Women Working in the Federal Government. The committee prepares studies and surveys with a view to supporting and providing for the needs of women who work in the Federal Government. The committee studies regulations and legislation concerning women's affairs. It proposes initiatives and recommendations for supporting working women, raises institutional awareness of the importance of the role of women and supports and promotes the establishment of women's committees for female workers in government authorities and institutions. In addition, government enterprises provide childcare at 38 worksites.

61. As regards raising women's awareness of their rights and duties, the Department of Labour Guidance under the Ministry of Labour raises awareness of the Labour Law and implementing decrees. It provides guidance to workers and employers concerning the ministry's procedures and policies. It also provides training courses for female workers in the languages which they speak, particularly in low-skilled jobs and in sectors with a large number of female workers.

62. The Federal Authority for Government Human Resources published a Code of Professional Behaviour and Civil-Service Ethics. The Cabinet adopted the Code by Cabinet Decision No. 15 of 2010 with a view to creating an institutional culture that supports the professional values of government employees, develops a sense of responsibility and promotes adherence to high morals in dealing with subordinates, colleagues and the public. This Code applies to all civil servants in the State. The Authority has organized a web-based compulsory programme providing training in the goals, values and concepts covered by the Code. All civil service employees were required to register for the course, complete it and pass a final examination by 1 November 2012. The paragraph 6 of the Decision requires civil servants to respect the rights of their superiors and colleagues at work at all times in an atmosphere free of discrimination, harassment, violence and obscene or indecent language.

63. The Ministry of Labour facilitates women's participation in small enterprises. In cooperation with local government, it seeks to promote youth enterprises and medium enterprises by exempting them from certain fees and bank guarantee requirements. It conducted 371 inspection visits to monitor small and medium enterprises. In addition, a number of local decrees and laws set forth measures to support youth, small and medium enterprises to promote their sustainable development, and to maintain an inventory of such enterprises for each Emirate.

10. Article 12 — Health care

64. The World Health Organization ranks the United Arab Emirates 27th globally in health system performance. The Emirati Ministry of Health strives to ensure that

government and private hospitals, primary health-care centres, clinics and mother and child units and centres in the State provide advanced health services to all citizens, non-nationals and visitors. The local authorities, such as the Abu Dhabi Health Authority, Abu Dhabi Health Services Company (Sihhah) and Dubai Health Authority, regulate medical centres and the health services which they provide. In most cases, government hospitals provide treatment to citizens of the State free of charge and to foreigners possessing health cards at low prices. All non-nationals, including support workers (domestic workers), may participate in one of the health insurance systems, which offer various tiers and benefits. The State requires all domestic workers to obtain a health card authorizing them to obtain services in government hospitals. The draft law regulating the employment of support workers, which is in the final stages of approval by the competent legislative authorities, requires employers of domestic workers to provide health care and the necessary treatment to female domestic workers in the event of illness.

65. Generally, economic and social changes in the United Arab Emirates have led to an improvement in the health of individuals, including women. There is no difference in the health services provided to men and women. There are programmes that promote the health of women throughout their lives based on the National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood and the Health of Women and Children. The strategy seeks to exceed international indices of women's health through health programmes and projects that promote women's health and services for mothers and children. The Ministry of Health Provides such services throughout the State to female citizens and non-national's by the in collaboration with the health authorities of the Emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the medical services of the Armed Forces and oil companies, private sector health institutions and a number of government and non-governmental institutions, including the General Women's Union, Family Development Foundation, women's associations and several civil society organizations. The State is committed to strengthening the position of woman. Its Constitution guarantees equal rights for men and women.

66. The State recorded the following mother and child health indicators, which are comparable to those of the advanced countries:

1. Ninety-nine per cent of births occur in hospitals under comprehensive medical care.
2. Fifty hospitals provide obstetric services.
3. Life expectancy at birth for female citizens in 2010 totalled 80 years.
4. Infant mortality fell from 7.68 per thousand live births in 2000 to 6.43 in 2010.
5. The maternal mortality rate associated with pregnancy and childbirth was 2.45 per 100 000 live births in 2010.
6. The newborn mortality rate was 4.92 per 1000 live births in 2008.
7. The infant mortality rate fell by 44 per cent from 11.4 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 6.4 in 2011.
8. The under-five mortality rate fell by 63 per cent from 14.05 per thousand live births in 1991 to 8.6 per thousand in 2010.

9. Only three cases of maternal mortality due to pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum complications were recorded in 2010.

10. The rate of underweight children totalled 9 per cent in 2009.

67. The FY 2014 health sector budget, which totalled 3.7 billion dirhams or 8 per cent of the total federal general government budget for that year, funded the provision of the highest level of health care services to citizens and non-nationals and boosted the health care sector's global competitiveness. Government institutions work to provide a range of treatment and prophylactic services to women, including the following:

1. A premarital examination and genetic counselling programme.
2. Motherhood care, including care and monitoring of mothers during pregnancy, early detection of risk factors during pregnancy and postpartum care for mothers
3. Childhood care provided by a consolidated programme for all children without gender discrimination, including care for children below the age of five and a national inoculation programme.
4. Nutrition Programme; Mother-and-Child-Friendly-Hospital Programme, which prepares and implements the policy on nutrition for infants and young children and nutrition for mothers during pregnancy and lactation; Mother-and-Child-Friendly-Hospital Initiative; and the United Arab Emirates Code of the Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.
5. National Programme for the Early Detection of Breast Cancer. Since its establishment in 1996, the programme has provided the following services to women:
 - Breast cancer prevention awareness;
 - Training in self-examination skills;
 - Publication and distribution of pamphlets, brochures and posters;
 - Early screening of women from the age of 40, who are invited to undergo a clinical examination each year and mammogram every two years; analysis of cases; and counselling of women under the age of 40 years with high cancer-risk factors.

68. Under the National Programme, as of the end of 2013, 122,251 mammograms had been performed, 119,000 women had been educated and trained in breast self-examination, 1,450 physicians and 1,830 nurses had been trained to implement the programme and 41 campaigns to raise women's awareness had taken place.

69. A database has been established containing information on the categories of women examined. The disease detection rate was 5.7 per thousand women examined. Two booklets on the programme's results and achievements have been published in English.

70. Three published reports covering 1999-2006, 2007-2010 and 2011-2012 show a disease detection rate per 1,000 women examined of 6.3, 5.4 and 7.0 respectively.

71. The State is also concerned with the health of adolescents, as adolescence is a key human development stage involving rapid physical growth and development

that require health and psychological support and an increased intake in several food groups. The Ministry of Health has developed an adolescent care programme to promote the health of male and female adolescents and youth and to meet their health and psychological needs. In addition, the academic curricula take a scientific approach to reproductive health and sex education, including, for example, a ninth-grade textbook that is part of the international Harcourt series.

72. The State supports the provision of qualified workers to the health sector by creating higher education opportunities in areas of specialization that benefit this vital sector. Emirati women have benefited immensely from the many educational opportunities provided by the State. A high proportion of women study medicine and health at the medical schools in the Emirates. The following institutions have medical faculties: the University of the Emirates, Higher Colleges of Technology, the Dubai Medical College for Women, the Gulf Medical University, the Ras al-Khaymah Medical and Health Sciences University, University of Sharjah and Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Dubai. The figures for female enrolment as of 2011 are as follows:

- Ras al-Khaymah College of Nursing: 80.76 per cent;
- University of Sharjah/College of Health Sciences/Department of Nursing: 86.7 per cent;
- Abu Dhabi Technical College: 100 per cent;
- School of Nursing: 80 per cent;
- Fatima College of Health Sciences: 98.2 per cent.

73. Civil society organizations play a role in strengthening health awareness among different segments of society. In particular, women's organizations make many efforts to promote women's health according to international standards, for example, in the area of meeting new health challenges posed by non-infectious diseases. In this regard, civil society associations collaborate with the Ministry of Health and the health authorities in implementing the State's strategy for combating non-infectious diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease and the risk factors that cause them, e.g., poor nutrition, physical inactivity, use of tobacco and stress. In addition, campaigns are carried out to raise women's awareness of various ways to protect themselves against chronic diseases and various forms of cancer.

11. Article 13 — Economic and social benefits

74. Providing a decent quality of life to citizens is one of the foundations of the Emirates Vision 2021. Accordingly, the State acts through the concerned institutions to provide for the social and economic welfare of all. In 2011, the Ministry of Social Affairs adopted measures to implement the decisions of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the State, to increase social assistance by 20 per cent for the nine groups that receive subsidies from the Ministry of Social Affairs. These groups include the elderly (with family or alone), widows, orphans, abandoned women and divorcees over the age of 35, persons with physical or health disabilities, families of prison inmates and persons with disabilities. The increase covers 31,700 families. The State constantly reviews social security to ensure that it meets quality-of-life requirements based on citizens' economic conditions. The aforesaid increase is the third granted to persons eligible

for social assistance since His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the State, assumed office.

75. The State works to provide housing to its citizens without discrimination, particularly special groups (widows, divorcees and similar categories) to ensure a decent life for them. A committee was formed to monitor the implementation of the housing initiatives of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the State. One such initiative involved the allocation of 173 housing units in October 2012 to widows and divorcees among 703 citizens throughout the State — both male and female — who submitted housing applications. As stated in the State's initial report, there are no impediments to women's obtainment of loans and credit facilities on a par with men, and women are not subject to special requirements, such as the need to obtain a guarantee.

76. As regards opportunities for recreational activities, sports and cultural life in all its aspects, the State focuses on providing a holistic lifestyle to nationals and non-nationals by promoting cultural programmes and pioneering initiatives that enhance social cohesion and ties with different cultures. The concerned governmental and civil-society institutions have organized many recreational, athletic and cultural activities for various groups and migrant communities without gender discrimination.

77. The General Youth and Sports Authority is a national mechanism that issues permits to private athletic organizations and monitors their activity. The authority seeks to create an environment that encourages females to engage in sports, establishing the Women's Sports Unit for this purpose. The unit implements athletic plans, programmes and activities for women. In addition, the Emirates Women's Sports Committee and Fatima Bint Mubarak Ladies Sports Academy work to overcome the difficulties of women participating in sports and to qualify women technical staff and athletes to participate in domestic, regional and international athletic competitions.

78. Physical and sports education broadly are an inseparable part of school activity, and females are therefore encouraged to participate in the available sporting events. Women participate in decision-making on sports in the United Arab Emirates through their presence on the boards of directors of the sports federations. In 2013, 2,272 women were registered with the sports authorities.

79. As regards the economic empowerment of women, the State acts through government and civil society institutions to support the participation of women in the economy, particularly in entrepreneurship. These institutions qualify and train women. They grant them loans to engage in commercial activity through the financing funds established for this purpose. In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs, women's organizations and the councils of women in business encourage active women and support their small and medium enterprises by providing marketing opportunities, acting to boost their participation trade fairs and educating them about savings.

80. In the first half of 2013, there were over 21,000 Emirati female business owners, up 58 per cent from 2012 and 100 per cent from 2011. Female business owners constitute 10 per cent of the Emirati private sector and 15 per cent of the members of the boards of directors of the chambers of commerce and industry in the State, up 13 per cent from 2012. Businesswomen run projects worth 40 billion

dirhams, and this figure is expected to reach 50 billion dirhams in the next two years.

12. Article 14 — Rural women

81. The United Arab Emirates has carefully considered the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. In a meeting in April 2012 chaired by His Highness Sheikh Mansur bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Presidential Affairs, the Ministerial Council on Services discussed a proposal submitted by the Ministry of Public Works to update the Comprehensive National Plan to Develop Federal Buildings and Remote Areas in the Northern Emirates by 2030. The Ministerial Council also discussed ways to meet needs of the regions and areas with a view to enhancing prosperity and quality of life, especially in remote areas, based on cooperation, coordination and integration with local governments in order to assess urbanization and settlement in remote areas.

82. The Emirates Vision 2021 focuses on providing a well-developed infrastructure to strengthen the economic environment in order to build a highly productive knowledge economy. All concerned government institutions are working to implement this vision. In 2013, the Ministry of Public Works and Housing started developing remote areas, including Tawyin in Fujairah, Kadra in Ras al-Khaymah, Dhayd and Mudam in Sharjah and Hatta in Dubai as well as new cities.

83. Women's organizations and social development centres subordinate to the Ministry of Social Affairs empower women by providing training and development opportunities in their branches in remote areas. For example, the General Women's Union has launched a project to economically empower women living in remote areas in the emirates of Ras al-Khaymah, Umm al-Qaiwain, Ajman and Fujairah. It also organizes trade fairs where families market their products.

84. The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health provide equal services to non-nationals in remote areas by building schools and health centres. In addition, many awareness-raising programmes target women in remote areas.

13. Article 15 — Equality before the law

85. National legislation guarantees equal rights to men and women in respect of legal capacity, especially regarding the conclusion of contracts. Article 18 of Federal Law No. 18 of 1993 concerning commercial transactions stipulates that "(1) Any person who has attained 21 calendar years of age and is free of any legal impediment shall be competent to engage in commerce;" and "(2) Nevertheless, a minor, whether under guardianship or custodianship, may, upon attaining the age of 18 calendar years, engage in commerce, provided the court grants absolute or restricted permission to do so."

86. In deference to the multiplicity of nationalities of residents in the State, the aforesaid commercial transactions law, article 21, regulates the competence of a foreign woman, stating, "The competence of a married woman to engage in commerce shall be regulated by the law of the State of which she is a national."

87. The General Women's Union has prepared a study entitled "Enlightened Features of the United Arab Emirates Judiciary." The study examines the extent to which judicial judgments and decisions entrench women's human rights. It reviews

several judgments in the areas of personal status, civil rights and social rights and concludes that the judgments demonstrate the Emirati judiciary's concern with women's rights regardless of nationality.

88. Organizations involved in women's issues, particularly the General Women's Union, offer training programmes, seminars and workshops to shed light on women's rights. Those initiatives have had a positive impact, enabling them to resort to the judicial authorities in order gain access to and preserve their earnings.

89. There is no legislative impediment to the freedom of movement of women inside the State or abroad. The Constitution guarantees individuals freedom of movement. Under the law, possession of a passport is an individual right, and a passport may be confiscated solely pursuant to a judicial ruling.

14. Article 16 — Family relations

90. Federal Law No. 20 of 2005 concerning personal status regulates family relations (marriage, divorce, custody, inheritance, etc.). The United Arab Emirates expresses its appreciation for the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. However, certain matters concerning the regulation of marriage and inheritance are based on the Islamic sharia, which treats women without discrimination in all respects.

91. Under the sharia and personal status law, a woman is entitled to choose her husband and request dissolution of the marriage contract (*khula*). When women are prevented from marrying, the judge serves as the guardian of the woman and gives her in marriage. Generally, Emirati personal status law guarantees the rights of women based on the sharia, which treats women without discrimination. It stipulates a woman's inheritance share, whether large or small, depending on her degree of kinship to the deceased. Islam safeguards the rights of women based on justice, fairness and balance. It considers the women's duties and man's obligations. Men, not women, are required to bear the financial burdens. Thus, a man is responsible for covering the expenses of his wife and children. A male does not necessarily have precedence over a female regarding inheritance in all cases. In some cases, males and females are equal. In other cases, a female has precedence, while in others a female inherits, but a male does not.

Chapter Three

Implementation of the Convention: opportunities and challenges

92. The United Arab Emirates has achieved significant progress in promoting women's rights, empowering women, strengthening their status at various levels and opening new horizons of empowerment. It is among the leading states of the world in respect of the empowerment of women and promotion of women's roles in all aspects of society. Nonetheless, efforts to bring about change have met with challenges that impede or slow the progress of women.

93. The absence of precise, detailed statistical indicators according to geographical scope (urban/rural) is a key challenge facing strategic planning for the advancement of women in the State. The General Women's Union has taken note of this problem. It is working assiduously in cooperation with the National Bureau of

Statistics to urge the concerned institutions to include all international indicators of women's empowerment within their statistical databases and to develop a strategy for gender statistics in the State.

94. The State has undertaken initiatives through governmental, private and civil society institutions to enable Emirati women to hold leadership posts, doing so in record time relative to the age of the State. Nonetheless, it aspires to increase women's participation in various sectors by boosting leadership capacity building programmes for women to qualify them to hold more posts in institutions and to be better represented in parliament. To this end, the relevant institutions are working to promote societal awareness of the importance of political participation. The State also aspires to promote economic empowerment programmes for women and to increase the percentage of women in the business sector by supporting enterprises run by businesswomen.
