



**Convention on the Rights
of Persons with Disabilities**

Distr.: General
31 December 2014
English
Original: Arabic

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**Consideration of reports submitted by States
parties under article 35 of the Convention**

Initial reports of States parties due in 2012

United Arab Emirates*

[Date received: 24 January 2013]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

GE.14-68106 (E) 180615 190615



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Introduction

1. From the time of its foundation on 2 December 1971, the United Arab Emirates has diligently sought to cater for the various needs of persons with disabilities, whom it regards as an integral part of society with the same rights and obligations as other non-disabled members of the community.

2. From the outset, the State has endeavoured to ensure that its Constitution and laws embody the fundamental human rights principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It has acceded to, and ratified, the basic international human rights instruments, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1974), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1997), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2004), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2010), the Convention against Torture (2012), the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2007) and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2009). The State has also acceded to the Arab Charter on Human Rights and the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, as well as the Geneva Conventions on international humanitarian law, and has ratified nine ILO conventions concerning hours of work, forced labour, labour inspection, night work by women, equal remuneration, minimum age and the worst forms of child labour.

3. By acceding to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 19 March 2010, the State demonstrated its firm commitment to the ongoing development of a society characterized by solidarity, compassion and social justice while, at the same time, recognizing the need to ensure the equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by all sections of society.

4. This concern was illustrated by the promulgation of laws, legislative enactments and ordinances guaranteeing all the rights of this social category in all spheres, such as health, education, rehabilitation, housing, social security, culture, leisure, mobility and a decent life without any discrimination or curtailment of rights due to disability.

5. In recent years, the State has been highly successful in ensuring a decent life for persons with disabilities and enabling them to enjoy all the rights with which they are endowed under its legislation and the time-honoured social traditions of Emirati society. These successes have been attested by international reports, development indicators, data concerning achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other statistics which clearly show that the United Arab Emirates has become an exemplary model of human development and the enjoyment of a decent life by all members of society, including persons with disabilities.

6. The preparation of this initial report provided the United Arab Emirates with a good opportunity to evaluate its general policies and intensify its endeavours to take the measures needed to implement the Convention's provisions in an effective manner in collaboration with national civil society associations.

I. National context

1. Establishment of the State

7. The United Arab Emirates was established on 2 December 1971 as a federation of seven emirates (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ras al-Khaimah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain and Fujairah) with Abu Dhabi as its capital.

2. Geographical location

8. The State occupies an area located on the Asian continent in the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula between 22°35' and 26°25' N and 51°35' and 56°10' E. It is bounded by the Arabian Gulf in the north, the State of Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the west, the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the south and the Gulf of Oman in the east.

3. Area

9. The State covers an area of 83,600 km² and includes a number of islands with a total area of 5,900 km². The coastline stretches for 644 km along the southern shore of the Arabian Gulf from the base of the Qatar Peninsula in the west to Ras Musandam in the east. The eastern coastline extends for 90 km along the Gulf of Oman.

4. Topography

10. Most of the land, particularly in the west, consists of desert interspersed with several well-known oases, such as Al-Ain and Liwa, in addition to fertile pastureland in the Zafrah areas where groundwater is plentiful. To the south of these areas lie the sand dunes that form the boundary of the *Rub' al-Khali* (the Empty Quarter).

11. Jabal Hafit marks the southern boundary of the Buraimi Oasis, where the city of Al-Ain is located, and is approximately 1,220 metres high. In addition, the Hajar mountain range, which is 80 km long from north to south and approximately 32 km wide, cuts across the Musandam Peninsula, enters the Sultanate of Oman and runs down to the eastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula. The city of Ras al-Khaimah stands at the foot of the northern flanks of this range, which reach an altitude of around 2,438 metres at their highest point. On the western flanks, there are a number of large valleys and ridges, some of which are used for agriculture.

12. Most of the coastline is sandy, except in the north in Ras al-Khaimah at the headland of the Hajar mountain range.

13. The territorial waters tend to be shallow, with an average depth of 35 metres and a maximum depth of 90 metres, except in the Straits of Hormuz where the water is up to 145 metres deep. The State's territorial waters contain many coral reefs studded with pearl oysters and teeming with fish.

5. Climate

14. The United Arab Emirates lies in the tropical dry zone stretching across Asia and North Africa and is also affected by local environmental factors because of its position on

the shores of the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, which is linked to the Red Sea through the Mandeb Straits.

15. High summer temperatures are associated with high humidity rates and there are marked differences in climate between the coastal, inner desert and mountainous zones which together make up the topography of the State. The State is buffeted by monsoon and other seasonal winds which pick up strength in the spring and late summer. It receives little rainfall, and in variable quantities, between November and April.

6. Population

16. According to the results of the most recent census (2005), the population of the State was around 4,229,000. Approximately 3.5 million persons were living in urban areas and 700,000 in remote parts of the State. UAE nationals accounted for around 21 per cent of the population and 2.5 million men and women over the age of 15 in the State were economically active. In 2010, the total population was estimated at 8,264,070.

Geographical distribution of the population (UAE nationals) according to the 2010 estimates

<i>Emirate</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
Abu Dhabi	200 418	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-Qaiwain	8 761	8 811	17 482
Ras al-Khaimah	49 181	48 348	97 529
Fujairah	32 486	32 374	64 860
Total nationals	479 105	468 888	974 997
Total non-nationals	5 682 711	1 633 262	7 316 073
Total population	6 161 820	2 102 250	8 264 070

Source: National Bureau of Statistics.

7. Political system

17. The United Arab Emirates, which was established on 2 December 1971, has a federal political system. The Constitution defines the fundamental constituents and aims of the Federation and the matters in which sovereign jurisdiction is delegated to the Federal Government throughout the territory and territorial waters lying within the international boundaries of the member Emirates. The latter exercise sovereignty over their respective territories and territorial waters in all matters in which jurisdiction is not delegated to the Federal Government under the Constitution. The people of the Federation are a single people and form part of the Arab nation. Islam is the official religion of the Federation and the sharia is a principal source of legislation therein. The official language of the Federation is Arabic.

8. Constitutional institutions

18. The federal authorities consist of the following:

The Federal Supreme Council

19. This is the highest authority in the State and consists of the rulers of all the Emirates constituting the Federation or their deputies in the event of a ruler's absence or inability to attend. Each Emirate has one vote in the Council's proceedings.

20. The Supreme Council formulates the State's general policy on all matters in which the Federal Government has jurisdiction under the Constitution. It considers all questions pertaining to the furtherance of the Federation's goals and the common interests of the member Emirates and also ratifies federal laws and decrees and international treaties, approves the appointment of the Prime Minister and accepts his resignation or his release from his functions on the recommendation of the President of the Federation. It likewise approves the appointment of the president and justices of the Federal Supreme Court and accepts their resignation or dismissal under the conditions laid down in the Constitution. The Council also has supreme oversight functions with regard to the general affairs of the Federation. Article 47 of the Constitution stipulates that the Federal Supreme Council shall exercise the following functions:

- Formulate general policy on all matters in which the Federal Government has jurisdiction under the Constitution, and consider all questions pertaining to the furtherance of the Federation's goals and the common interests of the member Emirates;
- Ratify federal laws prior to their promulgation, including the Federation's annual general budget estimates and final accounts;
- Ratify decrees on matters subject to the provisions of the Constitution;
- Approve decrees requiring the Supreme Council's consent prior to their promulgation by the President of the Federation;
- Ratify international treaties and agreements by decree;
- Approve the appointment of the Prime Minister and accept his resignation or his release from his functions on the recommendation of the President of the Federation;
- Approve, by decree, the appointment of the president and justices of the Federal Supreme Court and accept their resignation or dismissal under the conditions laid down in the Constitution;
- Exercise supreme oversight of the general affairs of the Federation;
- Perform any other functions required of it under the Constitution or federal laws.

21. Article 49 of the Constitution stipulates that: "Supreme Council decisions on substantive matters shall be adopted by a majority of five members, provided that the majority includes the votes of the Emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The minority shall be bound by the view expressed by the majority. Decisions on procedural matters, which shall be defined in the Council's rules of procedure, shall be adopted by majority vote."

The President and the Vice-President of the Federation

22. The Federal Supreme Council elects the President and the Vice-President from among its members. The Vice-President assumes all the functions of the President when the latter is absent for any reason. The President and the Vice-President serve a five-year term in office and are eligible for re-election.

23. Under Article 51 of the Constitution: “The Federal Supreme Council shall elect from among its members the President and the Vice-President of the Federation. The Vice-President of the Federation shall assume all the functions of the President when the latter is absent for any reason.”

24. Article 54 of the Constitution stipulates that the President of the Federation shall exercise the following functions:

- (a) Presiding over the Supreme Council and guiding its deliberations;
- (b) Convening and closing meetings of the Supreme Council in accordance with the Council’s rules of procedure; a meeting of the Council must be convened whenever any of its members so requests;
- (c) Convening joint meetings of the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers as and when required;
- (d) Signing and promulgating federal laws, decrees and decisions ratified by the Supreme Council;
- (e) Appointing the Prime Minister of the Federation, accepting his resignation and releasing him from his functions, subject to the approval of the Supreme Council; appointing the Deputy Prime Minister of the Federation and the ministers, accepting their resignation and releasing them from their functions on the recommendation of the Prime Minister of the Federation;
- (f) Appointing diplomatic representatives of the Federation to foreign States, as well as other senior civilian and military federal officials, excluding the president and justices of the Supreme Court, and accepting their resignation or dismissing them subject to the approval of the Council of Ministers. Decisions to appoint, accept the resignation of, or dismiss these persons are taken by decree and in accordance with federal law;
- (g) Signing the credentials of diplomatic representatives of the Federation accredited to foreign States and entities; accepting the accreditation of foreign diplomatic and consular representatives to the Federation and receiving their credentials; and signing representatives’ letters of appointment and credentials;
- (h) Overseeing the implementation of federal laws, decrees and decisions by the Council of Ministers and by its members within their respective fields of jurisdiction;
- (i) Representing the Federation at home and abroad and in all international relations;
- (j) Exercising the right to grant a pardon and commute sentences, and endorsing death sentences in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and federal law;
- (k) Bestowing military and civilian medals and decorations in accordance with the relevant laws;
- (l) Performing any other functions vested in him by the Supreme Council or pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution or federal law.

The Council of Ministers

25. The Council of Ministers consists of the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and a number of ministers selected from among nationals of the Federation possessing attested skills and experience.

26. “The Federal Council of Ministers shall consist of the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and a number of ministers” (art. 55 of the Constitution).

27. “Ministers shall be selected from among nationals of the Federation with attested skills and experience (art. 56 of the Constitution).”

28. “The Council of Ministers, in its capacity as the Federation’s executive body subject to oversight by the President of the Federation and the Supreme Council, shall manage all aspects of domestic and foreign affairs in which the Federal Government has jurisdiction under the present Constitution and federal law (art. 60 of the Constitution).”

29. In particular, the Council of Ministers exercises the following functions:

(a) Monitoring the implementation of the general domestic and foreign policy of the Federal Government;

(b) Proposing federal bills of law and transmitting them to the Federal National Council before they are submitted to the President of the Federation to lay before the Supreme Council for ratification;

(c) Preparing the Federation’s annual general budget estimates and final accounts;

(d) Preparing various draft decrees and decisions;

(e) Drawing up regulations for the implementation of federal laws without introducing any amendments, annulments or derogations, and formulating controls and regulations for the organization of government agencies and departments, in accordance with the Constitution and federal laws. The competent federal minister or any other administrative body may be empowered, by means of a special legal provision or by the Council of Ministers, to issue some of these regulations;

(f) Overseeing the implementation by all the competent federal or local governmental authorities of federal laws, decrees, regulations and decisions;

(g) Overseeing the enforcement of federal court judgements and international treaties and instruments ratified by the Federation;

(h) Appointing and dismissing, in accordance with the law, federal officials whose appointment or dismissal does not need to be effected by decree;

(i) Monitoring the performance of federal government agencies and departments and the general conduct and discipline of federal employees;

(j) Any other functions assigned to it by law or by the Supreme Council in accordance with the Constitution.

The Federal National Council

30. The Federal National Council comprises 40 seats which are allocated among the member Emirates as follows: Abu Dhabi: 8 seats; Dubai: 8 seats; Sharjah: 6 seats; Ras al-Khaimah: 6 seats; Ajman: 4 seats; Umm al-Qaiwain: 4 seats; and Fujairah: 4 seats.

31. Article 69 of the Constitution stipulates that: “Every Emirate shall be free to determine the method of selection of the citizens representing it in the Federal National Council.”

32. Article 70 defines the conditions of membership as follows:

“Members of the Federal National Council must meet the following criteria:

(a) They must be citizens of one of the Emirates in the Federation and must be permanently domiciled in the Emirate that they represent in the Council;

(b) At the time of selection, they must not be under 25 years of age;

(c) They must have civil capacity, a record of exemplary conduct, a good reputation and no previous convictions for dishonourable offences, unless they have been rehabilitated in accordance with the law;

(d) They must be fully literate.”

33. Article 71 of the Constitution stipulates that: “Membership of the Federal National Council may not be combined with any other public office in the Federation, including ministerial office.”

34. With regard to the duration of membership, under article 72 of the Constitution: “The term of membership in the Council shall be four Gregorian years, beginning on the date of the Council’s first meeting. Thereafter, the Council’s mandate shall be renewed for the period remaining until the end of the transitional phase referred to in article 144 of the present Constitution. Members may be re-elected when their term expires.”

35. Article 89 of the Constitution refers to the Council’s law-making function as follows: “Without prejudice to the provisions of article 110, federal bills, including finance bills, shall be referred to the Federal National Council prior to their submission to the President of the Federation for consideration and ratification by the Supreme Council. These bills shall be debated by the Federal National Council, which may approve, amend or reject them.”

36. With regard to international treaties, article 91 of the Constitution stipulates that: “The Government shall notify the Federal National Council of the international treaties and agreements that it concludes with other States and international organizations and shall provide the Council with relevant background information”.

37. Federal Supreme Council Decision No. 4 of 2006, concerning the method for selecting representatives of the Emirates in the Federal National Council, was a constitutional turning point in the consolidation of the democratic process on which the State has embarked; a process based on political participation by all members of society and empowerment of the people of the Emirates to elect the members of the Council according to a procedure that combines elections with appointments in the initial stage. Article 1 of the Federal Supreme Council decision stipulates that: “Half the members shall be elected by an electoral college consisting of a minimum of one hundred times the number of representatives of each Emirate.” Article 2 further stipulates that: “The other half of the representatives of each Emirate shall be chosen by the ruler.”

The federal judiciary

38. Under article 94 of the Constitution: “Justice is the foundation of governance. Judges shall be independent and, in the performance of their duties, shall be subject to no authority other than the law and their own conscience.”

39. The judicial system in the United Arab Emirates consists of the Federal Supreme Court, which sits in the federal capital, and appellate courts and courts of first instance in various cities. The Federal Supreme Court is composed of a president and a maximum of five justices. They are appointed under the terms of a decree promulgated by the President of the Federation subject to approval by the Supreme Council.

40. Local judicial bodies in each Emirate deal with all legal matters that do not come under the purview of the federal courts. Article 99 of the Constitution defines the functions of the Federal Supreme Court as follows:

“The Federal Supreme Court shall be competent to rule on the following matters:

- (a) Disputes between member Emirates of the Federation, or between one or more Emirates and the Federal Government, which are referred to the Court at the request of any of the parties concerned;
- (b) Examination of federal laws which one or more Emirates challenge on grounds of unconstitutionality, and examination of any legislation adopted by an Emirate which is challenged by a federal authority on the grounds of unconstitutionality or incompatibility with federal law;
- (c) Verification of the constitutionality of laws, legislation and regulations in general, if so requested by any domestic court hearing a case. The court concerned must abide by the Federal Supreme Court's ruling on the matter;
- (d) Interpreting provisions of the Constitution if so requested by a federal authority or the government of an Emirate; such interpretations shall be binding on all;
- (e) Calling ministers and senior federal officials appointed by decree to account for acts committed during their performance of their official duties, at the request of the Supreme Council and in accordance with the relevant law;
- (f) Hearing offences that directly harm the interests of the Federation, such as offences against internal or external security, the forging of official documents and seals of any federal authority, and the counterfeiting of currency;
- (g) Adjudicating jurisdictional disputes between the federal judiciary and local judicial bodies in the Emirates;
- (h) Adjudicating jurisdictional disputes between judicial bodies in different Emirates; the rules governing such matters shall be laid down in a federal enactment;
- (i) Any other functions provided for under the present Constitution or which may be assigned to it pursuant to a federal law."

9. Economic and social indicators

41. The development policy that the United Arab Emirates is pursuing has succeeded in achieving high rates of growth in all economic and social sectors. Gross domestic product (GDP) rose from 321 billion dirhams in 2003 to 1 trillion dirhams in 2011. The contribution of the non-petroleum sectors amounted to 635 billion dirhams in 2006 and income per capita rose from 91,500 dirhams in 2005 to 132,000 dirhams in 2010.

42. Since its foundation, the United Arab Emirates has experienced rapid economic and social growth such as is rarely achieved in developing, or even developed, societies. It has used its increasing revenue from petroleum sales to meet the basic needs of society. The State has made a good impression on the international community by virtue of its generous donations of aid and assistance to Arab and other developing countries throughout the world. The State's most significant domestic achievements include the following:

- (a) Completion of most of the infrastructural projects;
- (b) Establishment of educational and health institutions and the provision of general access to educational, health, social and cultural services;
- (c) Procurement of production and investment materials and equipment for the creation of various types of industries;

(d) Enactment of laws and regulations and the creation of a modern administrative structure for the State;

(e) Pursuit of flexible policies to facilitate the recruitment of foreign labour and supply the manpower needed to meet the requirements of various development projects;

(f) Use of appropriate technologies tailored to the current needs of the State;

(g) Encouragement of female participation in the workforce and in development endeavours;

(h) The opening of channels for economic, commercial, political and cultural cooperation with the outside world in furtherance of the mutual interests of the State and other Arab and friendly States and peoples.

43. The United Arab Emirates is pursuing a liberal economic policy based on free trade, commercial exchanges and the free flow of capital and services in a manner conducive to the development of the national economy and the diversification of sources of income. It is also seeking to achieve balanced economic and social development for the State as a whole and in each member Emirate of the Federation and is endeavouring to strike a balance between social development and economic growth. As a result of its development policies, the United Arab Emirates has achieved a high ranking as shown by the following national and international indicators.

(a) National socioeconomic development indicators

<i>Indicator</i>		<i>2006</i>
Average GDP per capita (in thousands)	(UAE dirhams)	141.7
	(United States dollars)	38.6
Workforce (in thousands)	Males	2 288
	Females	359
	Total	2 647
Workforce as a percentage of the total population; crude activity (participation) rate	Males	79.0
	Females	26.9
	Total	62.6
The unemployed as a percentage of the total workforce (unemployment rate)	Males	2.58
	Females	6.96
	Total	3.17
Overall dependency ratio:		25.5
The elderly:		1.1
Children:		24.4
Population density per square kilometre		54
Rural population as a percentage of the total population		17.5
Gender ratio (number of males per 100 females)		217
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)		14.9
Total fertility rate		1.96
Crude mortality rate (per 1,000 population)		1.55

<i>Indicator</i>		<i>2006</i>
Life expectancy at birth	Males	76.5
	Females	78.5
	Total	77.4
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)		7.3
Illiteracy rate	Males	10.0
	Females	7.6
	Total	9.3

Source: Emirates in figures, 2007, Ministry of Economy.

(b) The Emirates in international indices

46. **Human Development Report:** In the Human Development Report for 2011, the United Arab Emirates ranked first in the Arab region and rose two steps to rank thirtieth among 187 countries. It ranked thirty-eighth in the Women's Empowerment Index.

47. **Gender Equality Index:** The United Arab Emirates was ranked first in the Arab region in the Gender Equality Index published by the World Economic Forum in 2011.

48. **Happiness and satisfaction index:** The United Arab Emirates was ranked first in the Arab region and seventeenth globally in the 2012 report on the first United Nations Survey of Happiness and Satisfaction among Nations.

49. **Rule of Law Index:** The United Arab Emirates was ranked first in the Arab and Middle East region and thirteenth globally in the index on the rule of law and judicial transparency (2011) developed by the World Justice Project.

50. **Index on transparency and combating corruption:** The United Arab Emirates was ranked second in the Middle East and North Africa region in the 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index developed by Transparency International and was ranked twenty-seventh globally, out of 183 countries listed, which was a step higher than its ranking in 2011.

51. **Competitiveness Index:** The United Arab Emirates was ranked fifth in the world on the indicator of government spending efficiency, which is a sub-index in the Global Competitiveness Report for 2011–2012 published by the World Economic Forum.

52. **Network Readiness Index:** The Global Information Technology Report for 2011–2012 published by the World Economic Forum ranked the United Arab Emirates third in network readiness among the Arab countries and thirtieth among the 142 countries listed.

10. Cultural and social framework

53. The United Arab Emirates uses oil wealth for social development consistent with the principles on which the State was founded, as defined in the overall development goals for 1974, namely, that people in the Emirates must benefit from development and social services.

54. As a result of this policy, the State has succeeded in helping its people to escape the cycle of poverty, illiteracy and disease and has improved their economic and social welfare. This policy has ensured a high average income, developed remote areas, introduced social security and provided citizens with free services in sectors such as education, health, housing, culture, leisure, sanitation and infrastructure.

55. In consequence, family life in the Emirates has changed significantly over the past few years with the transformation from Bedouin and nomadic life to a more sedentary existence and the shift from extended families to nuclear families. The roles played by men and women in society have remained stable and based on the complementarity of their respective roles and responsibilities insofar as men and women have different responsibilities and duties towards the family and society.

56. A number of extraneous social phenomena have appeared within Emirati society under the influence of developments in the State and exposure to a variety of foreign cultures through the media, the information and technology revolution and the expatriate workers required by the labour market to meet economic development needs. However, the Emirati people and institutions have consistently shown a desire to combine the new with the traditional and are diligently studying these phenomena in order to assess their positive and negative impacts and ensure their compatibility with the State's social values and cultural legacy.

11. Persons with disabilities in the United Arab Emirates

57. The following table, based on data collected by the National Bureau of Statistics during the 2005 census, shows the number of persons with disabilities in the Emirates distributed by age group, gender and nationality:

Age group	Citizens			Non-citizens			Total		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
0-4	142	128	270	282	238	520	424	366	790
5-9	266	211	477	340	265	605	606	476	1 082
10-14	439	330	769	460	349	809	899	679	1 578
15-19	554	434	988	470	329	799	1 024	763	1 787
20-24	611	417	1 028	795	419	1 214	1 406	836	2 242
25-29	478	297	775	1 499	527	2 026	1 977	824	2 801
30-34	372	195	567	1 872	470	2 342	2 244	665	2 909
35-39	265	141	406	1 575	335	1 910	1 840	476	2 316
40-44	252	155	407	1 286	332	1 618	1 538	487	2 025
45-49	242	170	412	1 084	261	1 345	1 326	431	1 757
50-54	246	195	441	852	192	1 044	1 098	387	1 485
55-59	288	177	465	554	147	701	842	324	1 166
60-64	382	180	562	273	101	374	655	281	936
65-69	371	251	622	109	65	174	480	316	796
70-74	375	282	657	85	66	151	460	348	808
75-79	224	155	379	41	35	76	265	190	455
80-84	189	152	341	26	51	77	215	203	418
85+	220	147	367	21	37	58	241	184	425
Total	5 916	4 017	9 933	11 624	4 219	15 843	17 540	8 236	25 776

II. Measures taken by the Emirates to apply the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

A. Bodies participating in the preparation of the report

58. The Ministry of Social Affairs (Department for the Care and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities) is the government agency responsible for the monitoring and coordination of national endeavours to ensure the care, rehabilitation and integration of persons with disabilities. It is also the body that supervises the preparation of the national reports in this regard for submission to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

59. Under the terms of its Ministerial Ordinance No. 40 of 2012, the Ministry of Social Affairs formed a committee to prepare the initial report on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The committee comprised representatives of a number of governmental and non-governmental bodies engaged in this field, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Youth and Sports Authority, the Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care and Minors' Affairs and civil society institutions such as the Association of Families of Persons with Disabilities. Several specialized working groups were formed to gather relevant data and draft the report in conformity with the guidelines on the treaty-specific document that States Parties are required to submit in accordance with article 35, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD/C/2/3).

1. Drafting of the report

60. The committee assigned to draft the national report of the United Arab Emirates held its first meeting in March 2012 to study the Convention and the treaty-specific document guidelines prepared by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. During its meeting, the committee decided to adopt the following methodology:

- (a) Formulation of a scheduled work plan to complete the drafting of the report;
- (b) Holding of periodic committee meetings;
- (c) Specification of the procedure for the collection of relevant information and data from official federal governmental and local bodies and civil society institutions and associations and the adoption of a transparent mechanism for consultation and coordination with those bodies through official correspondence, direct contacts, field visits, questionnaires and the holding of workshops.
- (d) Formation of a number of working groups within the committee to analyse and classify the collected information, data and statistics so that the report could be drafted in accordance with the guidelines prepared by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

2. Ministries, institutions and bodies considered to be the main stakeholders in the provision of services for, and application of the legislation concerning, persons with disabilities

61. The State has more than one body providing services and developing and implementing legislation for the benefit of persons with disabilities. In fact, all the governmental and non-governmental institutions concerned participate in the implementation of the State's policies in regard to persons with disabilities. These institutions include: the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Zayed Higher Foundation for Humanitarian Care and Minors' Affairs in

Abu Dhabi, the Humanitarian Services City in Sharjah, the Knowledge and Human Development Authority and the Community Development Authority in Dubai, the Association of Families of Persons with Disabilities, the Emirates Down Syndrome Association, the Tamkeen Foundation and the centres for the rehabilitation and training of persons with disabilities. The following table lists a number of institutions providing services for persons with disabilities.

<i>Institution/centre</i>	<i>Number</i>
1. Governmental rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities	5
2. Local governmental rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities:	
• Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care	10
• Sharjah Humanitarian Services City	6
• Developing Child Centre	1
3. Private rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities	34
4. Clubs for persons with disabilities	5
5. Associations of persons with disabilities	3
6. Institutions for the employment of persons with disabilities	3
Total	66

Mandate of the Ministry of Social Affairs in regard to disability issues

62. The Ministry of Social Affairs, which is responsible for the formulation of social policies in regard to persons with disabilities, undertakes the functions assigned to it under the terms of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities. The Ministry is the federal agency empowered to monitor the application of the Act by, inter alia, establishing and licensing governmental and private centres for the care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. It is also responsible for monitoring and coordinating the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with the various State institutions.

63. The Department for the Care and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities proposes plans and programmes to safeguard the interests of such persons and improve the services available to them. The Department also monitors the implementation of the relevant legislation and international instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, supervises the governmental and private rehabilitation centres and administers the Ministry's social security scheme to ensure the economic welfare of persons with disabilities and their families.

B. General provisions of the Convention (arts. 1–4)

(a) General legal framework and guarantees concerning the protection of rights and freedoms

64. The Constitution of the United Arab Emirates is the primary source for all domestic laws enacted to regulate the relationships of individuals and institutions in the State and for the promulgation by the federal and local authorities of laws regulating various civil, commercial, criminal and judicial domains. The State has been keen to join regional and international organizations and has ratified numerous relevant regional and international instruments.

65. The constitutional guarantee of human rights in the United Arab Emirates is characterized by the fact that such rights and freedoms are enshrined in the core provisions of the Constitution which take precedence over ordinary laws and legislative enactments. The paramount and binding nature of those provisions preclude any contestation of their legal validity, especially as they are consistent with universally recognized human rights norms. Part III of the Constitution, concerning public freedoms, rights and obligations, contains numerous provisions (arts. 25–44) guaranteeing the protection of such freedoms and rights and part II, concerning the fundamental social and economic pillars underpinning the Federation, also enshrines many of the human rights principles enunciated in international instruments.

(b) Position of the Emirates in regard to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

66. The State was showing concern for persons with disabilities even before the adoption of the international convention concerning their rights. This concern was clearly illustrated by the promulgation of legislative enactments, laws and ministerial ordinances designed to safeguard the interests of this social category. These enactments culminated in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act No. 29 of 2006 which recognized a large number of rights of persons with disabilities and specified the obligations of ministries and other State institutions and bodies towards this social category. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto were signed on 12 February 2008 as an affirmation of the State’s commitment to those rights.

67. The Convention was ratified by Presidential Decree on 24 December 2009 and published in the Official Gazette in 2010. The projects, initiatives and activities carried out by ministries, State institutions and civil society organizations received a tremendous boost after the State’s signature and ratification of this Convention. In order to ensure the optimum application of the Convention and the domestic enactments, rapid steps were taken to develop and implement new initiatives in numerous fields, such as sociopedagogical integration, an enabling environment, health, education and the provision of employment opportunities, which will be reviewed in this report.

68. Article 125 of the Constitution stipulates that: “The local governments of the Emirates shall take the requisite measures to implement the laws enacted by the Federal Government, as well as the international treaties and instruments to which it becomes a party, by, inter alia, promulgating the local laws, regulations, decisions and orders needed for such implementation. The federal authorities may supervise the implementation by the Emirates’ governments of laws, decisions, international treaties and instruments and federal court judgements and the competent administrative and judicial authorities in the Emirates shall provide the federal authorities with all possible assistance in this connection.

C. Development of legislation and terminology consistent with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(a) Replacement of the designation “persons with special needs”

69. In keeping with the terminology adopted in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the definitions contained therein, the designation “persons with special needs” which was used in Federal Act No. 29 of 2006 was changed to “persons with disabilities” in the amendment made to that Act under the terms of the Presidential Decree promulgating Federal Act No.14 of 2009 concerning the rights of persons with disabilities.

(b) Promulgation of new legislation

70. As required by the provisions of article 4 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and, in particular, paragraphs 1 (b), (c) and (f) thereof, the Council of Ministers promulgated Decision No. 7 of 2010 regulating the activities of non-governmental centres for persons with disabilities and improving the standard of the services that they provide. The implementing regulations of the said decision were designed to ensure that rehabilitation, pedagogic and therapeutic services for persons with disabilities are provided by highly skilled professionals. The enactments promulgated after the signature and ratification of the Convention include the following:

- Federal Act No. 11 of 2008, as amended by Federal Act No.9 of 2011, concerning human resources in federal government agencies and the requirement that persons with disabilities be given priority access to employment therein;
- Council of Ministers Decision No. 29 of 2008 concerning the organizational structure of private education;
- Council of Ministers Decision No. 21 of 2008 concerning the provision of increased social assistance for persons with disabilities;
- Council of Ministers Decision No.7 of 2010 concerning non-governmental institutions for the care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities;
- Council of Ministers Decision No. 9 of 2011 concerning the Sheikh Zayed Housing Programme under which persons with disabilities are accorded priority access to housing loans and assistance;
- Ordinance No. 166 of 2010 issued by the Minister of Education approving general rules for special education in government-run and private schools;
- Ordinance No. 188 of 2010 issued by the Minister of Education approving the participation of schools in the initiative for the integration of special categories;
- Ordinance No. 479 of 2010 issued by the Minister for Social Affairs concerning the integration of children with disabilities in kindergartens;
- Ordinance No. 284 of 2011 issued by the Minister of Health concerning the formation of a specialized committee on health and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities;
- Local Act No. 27 of 2006 concerning the administration of human resources in government agencies and departments in the Emirate of Dubai and the requirement that persons with disabilities working therein must be provided with all the facilities needed for the performance of their official duties by ensuring that their workplaces are equipped in a manner consistent with the nature of their special needs;
- Local Act No. 1 of 2006, as amended by Local Act No. 1 of 2008, under which government agencies in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi are required to reserve 2 per cent of their civil service vacancies for persons with disabilities.

(c) Treaty-specific concepts adopted in national legislation

71. In view of the United Arab Emirates' desire to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, its legislature has adopted the concepts contained in articles 1 and 2 of the Convention. The principal concepts adopted include:

Definition of disability

72. The definition of “persons with disabilities”, as adopted by the State legislature, is consistent with the concept of disability set forth in article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Such persons, as defined in article 1 of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, are those who have full or partial, short or long-term, physical, sensory, mental, communication, learning or psychological impairments or disorders that may reduce their ability to meet their normal requirements in the same way as their non-disabled peers.

73. The legislature took care to adopt a combined medico-legal approach to disability by extending the definition’s coverage to ensure protection for all persons with short or long-term disabilities, believing that all such persons might be subjected to discrimination because of their disabilities.

74. The legislature’s eagerness to adopt this new concept of disability is clearly illustrated by section V of Federal Act No.14 of 2009 which focuses on ways to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy an enabling and unobstructed environment, thereby recognizing the fact that, far from being confined to physical, sensory or mental disorders or impairments, disability may extend to surrounding environmental or other barriers.

Definition of discrimination on the basis of disability

75. Insofar as the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability constitutes one of the principal objectives of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the legislature took care to incorporate this objective in the State’s laws and define it in a manner consistent with the definition contained in article 2 of the Convention.

76. Discrimination on the basis of disability, as defined in article 1 of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, means any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of any of the rights provided for under the legislation in force in the State.

Reasonable accommodation

77. The State’s legislature has adopted the concept of reasonable accommodation in a number of legislative enactments in force, as illustrated by the following:

- In the field of employment and access to public service, article 14 of Federal Act No. 11 of 2008, as amended by Federal Act No. 9 of 2011, concerning human resources stipulates that persons with disabilities must be given priority access to public service and those working therein must be provided with all the facilities needed for the performance of their official duties by ensuring that their workplaces are equipped with the necessary requirements in a manner consistent with the nature of their special needs;
- Under the terms of article 13 of the Federal Act concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research have an obligation to take appropriate measures, in collaboration with the bodies concerned, to provide educational diagnosis, academic curricula, teaching aids and techniques and alternative means to improve communication with persons with disabilities; they likewise have an obligation to formulate alternative teaching strategies and provide an enabling material environment and other means to ensure full participation by students with disabilities;

- Under the terms of article 10 of Federal Act No.4 of 1984, persons with disabilities who are studying abroad on scholarships have a guaranteed right to be provided with the equipment and means needed to facilitate their education (“The Ministry shall bear all the costs of the devices, appliances, apparatus and equipment needed by persons with disabilities or impediments studying abroad in order to pursue their education and lead their normal lives in accordance with their state of health as duly certified by the competent medical authorities and confirmed by the scholarship registrar”);
- Within the framework of the State’s endeavours to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy freedom of movement in public facilities, article 22 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act guarantees the right of such persons to an enabling environment and access to places that are accessible to non-disabled persons;
- Under article 25 of the said Act, the authorities concerned have an obligation to comply with the accessibility criteria applicable to public thoroughfares and public land, air and sea transport in a manner consistent with their use by, and the needs of, persons with disabilities;
- With regard to languages of communication, the above-mentioned Federal Act No. 14 of 2009 guarantees the right of persons with disabilities to express their opinion and to seek and receive information by sign language, in Braille or by other means of communication.

Mechanism adopted for the implementation of the provisions of domestic legislation concerning the rights of persons with disabilities

78. Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, adopted a mechanism to ensure the implementation of its provisions in a manner consistent with the objective specified in article 2 thereof and also in article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, namely to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

79. This mechanism is based on the formation of a number of committees to carry out the planning and coordination of specific functions as follows:

(a) Article 11 of the said Act made provision for the formation, by decision of the Council of Ministers, of a specialized committee on health and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities;

(b) Article 15 of the Act made provision for the formation, by decision of the Council of Ministers, of a specialized committee on education for persons with disabilities;

(c) Article 19 of the Act made provision for the formation, by decision of the Council of Ministers, of a specialized committee on employment for persons with disabilities;

(d) Article 21 of the Act made provision for the formation, by decision of the Council of Ministers, of a specialized committee on sports, culture and recreation for persons with disabilities.

80. The Act also specified the respective tasks to be assigned to the committees formed under the terms of the decisions promulgated by the Council of Ministers.

81. It is noteworthy that no decision has yet been promulgated concerning the formation of a specialized committee on sports, culture and recreation for persons with disabilities. However, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development, the Youth and

Sports Authority and the local sports councils are formulating and implementing policies to support persons with disabilities in the fields of culture and sport.

D. Realization of rights and freedoms

Article 5: Equality and non-discrimination

82. The legislature of the United Arab Emirates has endeavoured to ensure equality and equal opportunities, without discrimination, for all citizens in accordance with article 14 of the Constitution which stipulates that: “Society shall be based, inter alia, on equality, social justice, security, peace of mind and equal opportunities for all citizens”.

83. In addition to the Constitution, the national legislature has promulgated an enactment on the rights of persons with disabilities (Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009) with a view to enabling persons with disabilities to exercise their rights on an equal footing with others and without discrimination.

84. In keeping with this constitutional principle, article 3 of the Act stipulates that the State shall ensure equality between persons with and persons without disabilities, as well as non-discrimination on the basis of disability in any legislation, shall show due regard for disability-related issues in all its socioeconomic development policies and programmes and shall take appropriate measures to prevent discrimination on the basis of disability.

85. Articles 2–12 of the Act stipulate that disability must not be used as a reason to prevent persons with disabilities from enjoying their rights, particularly in regard to care and social, economic, health, educational, occupational, cultural and recreational services.

86. In the same context, the national legislature has adopted the principle of positive discrimination by approving certain motivational measures to ensure the achievement of effective equality of opportunity and treatment between persons with disabilities and others.

87. Pursuant to the provisions of article 3 of the Act concerning equality and non-discrimination, the national legislature has adopted the same principle of positive discrimination by approving a quota system (2 per cent of all posts in the governmental sector in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi), according persons with disabilities priority access to public office in federal government agencies and institutions and to housing assistance, reserving parking places for vehicles used by persons with disabilities, granting privileges in regard to communications, transport and travel and waiving customs duty on all assistive devices used by persons with disabilities.

Article 6: Women with disabilities

88. The Constitution of the United Arab Emirates specifies the rights and obligations of all members of society. The national legislature has taken care to ensure that the principle of equality and non-discrimination among citizens of the Federation on grounds of gender is incorporated in all its laws and legislative enactments, bearing in mind the fact that, due to the status and nature of women, including women with disabilities, special legislation has been promulgated to protect them. All the rights and freedoms provided for in the Constitution, such as liberty of person, freedom of movement and the rights to education, work, health care and access to public service, are guaranteed for all citizens. Moreover, the United Arab Emirates has been a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women since 2004.

89. In recognition of women’s greater need for protection, article 16 of the Constitution emphasizes their right to care and social security (“Society shall cater for the welfare of mothers and children and shall protect minors and other persons who are unable to care for themselves for reasons such as sickness, infirmity, old age or involuntary unemployment. It

shall assist and rehabilitate such persons for their benefit and for that of the community as a whole.”)

90. Federal Act No. 2 of 2001, concerning social security, explains the mechanism for the enjoyment of this right and, in article 4, lists the following categories entitled to social assistance from the State: widows – divorced women – persons with disabilities – the elderly – orphans – persons of unknown parentage – unmarried girls – persons afflicted with an incapacitating infirmity – married students – families of convicts – financially incapacitated persons – deserted wives – and Emirati women married to foreigners.

91. Within the context of the State’s endeavours to promote women’s rights, the national legislature has taken numerous measures to prevent gender-based discrimination. For example, article 30 of Federal Act No. 8 of 1980, regulating labour relations in the private sector, stipulates that women should be paid the same wage as men, especially if they are performing work of equal value. In addition, under the State’s legislation on human resources, women are entitled to maternity leave on full pay. The national legislature has also established a legal framework to ensure that women play their role in society on a par with men since the Federal Personal Status Act No. 28 of 2005 does not regard masculinity as a requirement for guardianship of property. Accordingly, the judiciary in the United Arab Emirates grants women the right to guardianship of both person and property in certain circumstances.

92. With regard to national endeavours to empower women with disabilities, such women are able to enjoy all their rights and freedoms, as well as all the welfare services provided by the State, in the same way as non-disabled persons. The State encourages them to enrol in the various stages of general and university education and offers them equitable employment opportunities, taking into consideration the reasonable accommodation that they require in their working environment in order to be able to participate effectively in social and national development.

93. Within the context of its endeavours to promote the role of women in the family and society, the State has sought, through the federal and local governments, to establish institutions specialized in family welfare, such as the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood at the federal level, the Family Development Foundation in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, the Dubai Foundation for Women’s Development, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs in Sharjah and the women’s associations that have been formed throughout the Emirates.

94. The State encourages women with disabilities to join not only those associations but also the sports and cultural clubs for persons with disabilities that have been established throughout the Emirates. Moreover, numerous associations in the State have organized symposiums and forums to raise awareness concerning women’s rights in the light of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the mechanism to enable women to exercise their rights. The principal symposiums that have been organized in this connection include:

- The Symposium on Self-Help for Persons with Disabilities, organized by Sharjah Humanitarian Services City, February, 2009;
- The Symposium on the Rights of Deaf Women in the light of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs, April, 2011;
- The Symposium on the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities, organized by the Supreme Council for Family Affairs in Sharjah, October, 2011.

95. The Symposium on the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities led to the formation of the first league to monitor the enjoyment by such women of their rights in the United Arab Emirates. The objectives of the league are as follows:

- To participate in the drafting of the strategy for the integration of women with disabilities and to ensure that such women and their organizations are involved in the formulation, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of policies and plans;
- To promote the social empowerment of women with disabilities;
- To liaise with the bodies responsible for the improvement and regulation of the educational environment with a view to enabling women with disabilities to pursue their education without discrimination;
- To liaise and coordinate with the bodies responsible for the removal of architectural barriers from the surrounding environment in order to overcome all environmental and other obstacles in all public facilities, ensure that signs in Braille and audiovisual directives that can easily be read and understood are provided in public buildings and facilities, and encourage access by women with disabilities to new technologies and information and communication systems;
- To enable women with disabilities to fully exercise their right to health services;
- To promote the occupational empowerment of women with disabilities so that they can work and become self-reliant and independent;
- To put an end to the marginalization of female students with disabilities, address the issue of their exclusion from participation in school sports activities and encourage physical education departments in universities and colleges to introduce special courses for persons with disabilities.

Article 7: Children with disabilities

96. In conformity with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and particularly article 7 thereof under which States Parties are required to attach special importance to issues concerning children with disabilities in the plans, programmes and initiatives that they undertake, the State has implemented a large number of projects and initiatives designed to promote the rights of children with disabilities, provide them with better educational opportunities and ensure their social and educational integration.

97. The federal bill of law on the rights of the child contains 12 chapters comprising 57 articles specifying the rights of the child, including the rights of children with disabilities, in various health, educational, cultural and other fields. Article 38 of the bill stipulates that: "Children with mental or physical disabilities shall enjoy, in addition to the recognized rights of the child, the right to medical care and treatment and sufficient education and rehabilitation to promote their self-reliance and facilitate their effective participation in society".

98. Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, specifies all the rights of this category, including their right to equality with their peers and non-discrimination on the basis of disability. It guarantees their right to express their opinion in Braille if they are blind, in sign language if they are deaf, or by other means of communication, as well as their right to seek, receive and impart information on an equal footing with others. It also guarantees their right to enrolment in all educational, training and rehabilitation institutions and participation in cultural, sports and leisure activities.

99. The Ministry of Social Affairs, in its capacity as the body responsible for the care and rehabilitation of children with disabilities, provides them with access to medical, psychological and social care and treatment, as well as opportunities to study and acquire knowledge at all stages of formal and informal education. Wider scope has also been provided for their vocational training, rehabilitation and social integration through the five federal governmental centres that have been established for the care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, in addition to the local centres in the Emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah.

100. Private centres for persons with disabilities have been licensed to operate in the Emirates and the Government of Sharjah has opened Sharjah Humanitarian Services City which provides services for all persons (nationals and expatriates) with disabilities. There are a total of 66 federal governmental, local governmental and private centres and institutions providing health, therapeutic, educational, vocational and craft rehabilitation services for children with disabilities. These children follow the standard curricula set by the Ministry of Education, with a few slight amendments to the teaching methods insofar as sign language and Braille are used to teach children with sensory impairments.

101. Vocational and craft rehabilitation services are provided for all children over 14 years of age with disabilities so that they, and especially those with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, can acquire vocational and craft skills, particularly in traditional handicrafts, that will enable them to make a productive contribution, thereby facilitating their social integration.

102. In order to promote the social integration of children with disabilities so that they will not feel isolated from their social milieu or environment, the centres apply the day-care system and do not have boarding facilities. The Department for the Care and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities consistently endeavours to deliver its services to the maximum number of children with disabilities at the locations where they are living in their normal geographical and social environment.

103. In view of the importance of the social integration of persons with disabilities, the Ministry of Social Affairs, acting in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, has already begun to integrate them in the general education system in order provide an environment conducive to their integration at an early age. The State has taken care to set up rehabilitation programmes for children afflicted, or at risk of being afflicted, with disabilities at an early stage (under 5 years of age) through the establishment of early intervention centres in the Emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah where children are provided with a variety of therapeutic and ancillary rehabilitation services. Therapists also make field visits to the children in their homes and train their guardians in ways to support and assist them. The initiatives and projects undertaken to safeguard the rights of children with disabilities are illustrated by the following:

1. “We are all children” initiative

104. In 2011, the Children’s Department in the Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Department for the Care and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities, launched the “We are all children” initiative the purpose of which was to ensure that children under 3 years of age with disabilities were integrated in kindergartens. A comprehensive set of criteria was drawn up for the integration of children with mental, motor, visual, auditory or autistic impairments in kindergartens. A mechanism was designed to monitor this integration process in an accurate, scientific and systematic manner and kindergartens were encouraged to apply it.

2. “Child’s smile” campaign

105. The purpose of the “Child’s smile” campaign, launched in 2010, was to promote the buccal and dental health of all children, including those with disabilities, through a mobile clinic paying periodic visits to nursery schools, kindergartens and centres for children with disabilities.

3. Legislative framework of the State’s early intervention programmes

106. Article 9 of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, stipulates that the Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with other bodies in the State, shall establish centres, institutions and institutes for the care and rehabilitation of children with disabilities which shall undertake the following functions:

- Rehabilitation of children with disabilities so that they can adapt and integrate in society;
- Provision of educational programmes for children with disabilities;
- Training of families of children with disabilities in ways to interact with them.

4. Early intervention programmes

107. In 2008, the Ministry of Social Affairs launched the early intervention programme known as “My first step” which targets children up to 5 years of age who are afflicted with disabilities or retarded development or at risk of being afflicted with a disability. This programme provides the customary early intervention services, including family counselling and early intervention procedures at home, at the centre and in hospital.

108. The Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi is implementing an early intervention programme at its centres in addition to other programmes for the treatment and social integration of children afflicted with disabilities or retarded development.

109. In 2009, the Community Development Authority in the Emirate of Dubai launched an early intervention programme under the auspices of the Developing Child Centre for the provision of early intervention services at home. The Ministry of Social Affairs is preparing to open an early intervention centre in the Emirate of Dubai for the provision of integrated diagnostic, evaluation and therapeutic services. The construction work has already been completed in accordance with the most modern international standards and personnel are currently being recruited to staff the centre. The Ministry of Social Affairs has drawn up the implementing regulations and the diagnostic evaluation and educational and therapeutic intervention procedures for this programme.

110. The early intervention centre in the Emirate of Sharjah which is run by Sharjah Humanitarian Services City provides early intervention services for all children up to 5 years of age in accordance with the model of early intervention at home and at the centre.

111. In the Emirate of Ras al-Khaimah, the early intervention section attached to the Ras al-Khaimah Centre for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities is implementing a programme that includes all forms of early intervention. More than 35 children were enrolled in the programme in 2010 and preparations are currently being made to open three new early intervention centres in other Emirates.

112. Private associations have also played a role in the development of early intervention programmes. The Emirates Down Syndrome Association in the Emirate of Dubai has

opened a centre in which all children with this syndrome have access to functional, physical and speech therapy.

113. The rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities receive children over 4 years of age and, depending on the type of disability or disorder from which they are suffering, provide them with the skills needed for their psychomotor development.

5. Provision of support and assistance for private associations concerned with children with disabilities

114. The Ministry of Social Affairs and civil society institutions provide material, technical and other forms of support for the Association of Families of Persons with Disabilities, help to raise family awareness of ways to interact with children with disabilities, and help to develop the standard of services available for such children. The Ministry provides material support for the Emirates Association of the Visually Impaired with a view to developing its activities in this field. Other institutions and associations in the State also receive material and other forms of support from the local governments and civil society organizations and institutions. For example, the Emirates Down Syndrome Association received funding from the Emirates Foundation for Philanthropy in order to open its clinic in Dubai for children with Down syndrome and the Tamkeen Centre for the Visually Impaired is being funded and sponsored by the Government of Dubai.

Article 8: Public awareness-raising

115. Pursuant to the provisions of article 8 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the State has taken every possible measure to raise public awareness concerning the Convention and disability-related issues. In accordance with article 4 of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in coordination with the bodies concerned, is formulating programmes to make persons with disabilities, their families and their local environment fully aware not only of the rights provided for in the Act and in other legislative enactments but also of the services available to them.

116. The Ministry of Social Affairs recently posted a copy of the Convention on its website in order to make its provisions more widely known and the Ministry has issued a publication containing a number of working papers explaining the Convention's provisions and defining the role that the State's institutions should play in their implementation. The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Affairs have also held several workshops to raise public awareness concerning the Convention.

117. In conformity with the provisions of article 4 of the above-mentioned Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, the Ministry of Social Affairs is making tireless endeavours to raise awareness among the general public concerning disability-related issues and the rights of persons with disabilities. The principal endeavours that the Ministry has made in this regard are summarized below:

1. Publications on the subject of disability

118. With a view to enriching the scholarly research library with studies and specialized research papers on disability-related issues and, at the same time, raising public awareness concerning this social category and its rights, the Ministry of Social Affairs issues numerous publications on this subject. In 2008, the Ministry issued the first periodical magazine specialized in this field. The magazine, entitled *My World*, is published in the Arabic and English languages and contains the latest developments, research, studies and specialized articles on disability.

119. This magazine has proved to be an effective means to raise awareness of the guaranteed rights of persons with disabilities, as set forth in domestic legislation and in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which the State recently ratified.

120. In 2010, the Ministry launched a second periodical magazine, entitled *Be My Friend*, which targets children with a view to not only advising them on ways to communicate with their disabled schoolmates who have been integrated in the education system but also making them more aware of the challenges that this category faces in daily life.

121. The committee organizing Deaf Awareness Week, which includes representatives of the Ministry of Social Affairs, publishes an annual magazine entitled *Sada al-Samt* [Echo of Silence] containing articles and specialized research on issues relating to auditory impairment.

122. The Ministry, in collaboration with other bodies, has also published a number of books on various issues, such as subsidized employment, as well as brochures advising employers on the best way to interview jobseekers with disabilities and advising persons with disabilities on the best way to pass such interviews.

2. Awareness-raising campaigns in the media

123. A series of campaigns and programmes have been conducted in collaboration with the media (press, television and radio) to raise awareness of disability-related issues.

124. The television programmes focus on numerous important disability-related issues and, in particular, those of current interest on special occasions such as Deaf Awareness Week, International White Cane Day, International Day of Persons with Disabilities and Arab Day of Disabled Persons when issues such as marriage of persons with disabilities, enabling environment and the capacities of persons with disabilities are discussed.

125. Some television channels have a weekly programme slot devoted to disability-related issues during which they host specialists and guardians.

126. The Ministry has published numerous articles and round-table discussions on disabilities, such as behavioural disorders and autism, in local newspapers and magazines.

127. Civil society institutions, including associations of disabled persons such the Emirates Association of the Visually Impaired and the Association of Families of Persons with Disabilities, are endeavouring to raise awareness of disability-related issues by holding briefings, issuing informative bulletins and organizing or participating in various activities in public places.

128. In collaboration with associations and clubs for persons with disabilities, the Ministry has recently organized symposiums on the rights of such persons.

129. The principal symposiums that have been held on this subject include:

- The social approach to disability and its impact on domestic legislation and social policies;
- The rights of deaf women in the light of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- Discrimination on the basis of disability: definition, causes and remedies.

Article 9: Accessibility

130. The United Arab Emirates has taken legislative and other measures to enable persons with disabilities to enjoy an enabling physical and psychological environment.

131. In conformity with the provisions of article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and articles 22–26 of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, the State has implemented a number of projects to guarantee the following:

- (a) An enabling environment with easy access to public transport;
- (b) An enabling environment with easy access to public buildings and facilities;
- (c) Access to the websites of ministries and State institutions.

132. Accessibility of public transport was facilitated by the opening, in 2009, of the Dubai Metro which is among the means of transport most suited to persons with disabilities insofar as their needs are catered for by its specifications, including:

- Absence of environmental barriers at all stations;
- Tactile guide paths to enable the visually impaired to find directions in the stations;
- Toilet facilities for persons with disabilities;
- Reserved spaces in all stations and trains for users of wheelchairs and mobility assistive devices;
- Information system in stations and trains to cater for the needs of persons with visual or auditory impairments;
- Special lighting at the bottom and top of escalators to assist persons with weak eyesight;
- Non-slip floors from the car parks to the stations;
- Direction signs in different colours;
- Public telephones for wheelchair users and persons with auditory impairments.

133. In the Emirate of Dubai, the needs of persons with disabilities are also catered for in public buses and at bus stops the specifications of which facilitate their use by such persons.

134. Specifications that take into account the needs of persons with disabilities have also been applied in means of transport by sea.

135. Since 2009, the Dubai Roads and Transport Authority has made special taxis available for persons with motor disabilities.

136. The Roads and Transport Authority and the municipalities have also taken care to ensure that parking spaces are reserved for the vehicles of persons with disabilities in all public car parks, such as those at shopping centres, recreation areas, hotels, restaurants, ministries and public service facilities, in accordance with the internationally recognized specifications under which one out of every 25 parking spaces is reserved for this purpose.

137. In 2009, Dubai Airport opened Terminal 3 which was built in accordance with specifications that make it easy for persons with disabilities to move around in the terminal and travel in comfort and safety.

138. In 2010, the Abu Dhabi Transport Department introduced disability-friendly specifications that apply not only to public buses and car parks but also to shelters in waiting areas, pedestrian crossings and the Abu Dhabi Metro project. Persons with disabilities are exempted from the payment of fares on buses and other means of public transport. Since 2010, the Emirate of Sharjah has also been operating public buses that cater for the needs of persons with motor disabilities.

139. In order to ensure the accessibility of public buildings and facilities, the building permits that the Civil Engineering Department in the Emirate of Dubai has issued since 2008 have been accompanied by architectural guidelines specifying the legislation and regulations concerning disability-friendly design.

140. In 2011, the Ministry of Public Works issued disability-friendly standards and specifications for public buildings.

141. In 2011, Dubai Municipality also issued disability-friendly planning and design guidelines for facilities, buildings and infrastructure.

142. The Ministry of Social Affairs issued Ministerial Ordinance No. 294 of 2011 under which operators of private non-governmental centres for the care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities are required to apply the architectural criteria needed to ensure that their centres provide an enabling environment for such persons.

143. In 2011, the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority issued guidelines for the classification of hotels and hotel apartments required to meet disability-friendly architectural and service criteria.

144. In 2009, the Ministry of Social Affairs issued checklists to help operators and administrators of hotels, tourist facilities and public parks to provide a more enabling environment therein.

145. Since 2009, the information media, including newspapers, magazines and television programmes, have given extensive coverage to the need for an enabling environment, which has also been discussed at numerous symposiums and conferences held in and outside the Emirates.

Article 10: Right to life

146. The legislation of the United Arab Emirates is consistent with the provisions of article 10 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, concerning the right to life, insofar as article 16 of the Constitution stipulates that: "Society shall cater for the welfare of mothers and children and shall protect minors and other persons who are unable to care for themselves for any reason".

147. Under article 340 of the Criminal Code (Federal Act No. 3 of 1987, as amended by Federal Acts Nos. 34 of 2005 and 52 of 2006), abortion is designated as a punishable criminal offence in order to protect and safeguard the life of the foetus.

148. The State has formulated national strategies to provide protection against disability or to mitigate its impact through the early detection and diagnosis of diseases and various forms of impairment and disability at all stages of life.

149. Under the terms of articles 9 and 10 of the Federal Act concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, the national legislature has guaranteed the right of such persons to receive comprehensive health-care and rehabilitation services.

150. By law, citizens with disabilities have a guaranteed entitlement to free health services, assistive devices and rehabilitation, the cost of which is borne by the State.

Article 11: Protection in situations of risk and emergencies

151. The United Arab Emirates is keen to ensure the protection and security of all persons residing therein. In 2007, in order to guarantee the highest degree of security and protection in situations of risk and emergencies, the State established the National Emergency and Crisis Management Authority as the lead agency responsible for coordinating all endeavours in this field with the security and police authorities concerned.

152. In collaboration with a number of public bodies, such as district boards of education, local municipalities and cultural institutions, the Authority organizes awareness-raising campaigns and training workshops on security and safety-related issues.

153. One of the largest awareness-raising campaigns in this connection was the school security and safety campaign, conducted from 15 February to 15 March 2009, which targeted students and teachers throughout the State with a view to raising academic awareness in the field of security and safety in order to protect schools from all forms of risk and ensure that they constitute a secure and attractive educational environment conducive to the pursuit of academic studies.

154. Since 2010, the Authority has organized two international conferences on emergency and crisis management and it is eager to organize such an event every year in order to further increase the level of awareness and enhance the performance and effectiveness of emergency response endeavours and capacities in the United Arab Emirates.

155. In 2009, the Ministry of Social Affairs issued technical guidelines, intended for civil defence personnel, on ways to plan the evacuation of persons with disabilities in emergency situations.

156. In 2011, within the context of the endeavours made by government agencies to ensure the requisite protection of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and emergencies, the operations department at Police Headquarters in Dubai launched a project, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs in Dubai, to assist persons with disabilities. The project's objective was to gather data on persons with disabilities registered with the Ministry, including the types of their disabilities and their places of residence, so that the police could intervene rapidly to assist them in emergency situations.

Article 12: Equality before the law

157. Article 25 of the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates guarantees the equality of all citizens before the law. Since the achievement of its independence, the State has diligently endeavoured to ensure that all social categories enjoy equality before the law as required by the Constitution and international treaties and instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities under article 12 of which persons with disabilities have the right to enjoy equal recognition before the law. In keeping with these provisions, Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, stipulates that persons with disabilities should be treated on an equal footing with their non-disabled peers and no legislative enactment should discriminate against them. Article 157 of Federal Act No. 5 of 1985 (Code of Civil Procedure) further stipulates that every person possesses legal capacity unless he is deprived thereof or restricted therein by law. Under the provisions of the Act, persons with restricted legal capacity include:

- Wards placed under the care of a guardian as being of feeble or unsound mind;
- Totally insane persons.

158. In accordance with the provisions of article 60 of the Criminal Code (Federal Act No. 3 of 1987, as amended by Federal Acts Nos. 34 of 2005 and 52 of 2006), anyone who, at the time of his commission of an offence, was incapable of exercising discernment or volition due to insanity or a mental disorder cannot be held criminally responsible and is entitled to legal protection from criminal prosecution.

159. Under the provisions of article 173 of the above-mentioned Code of Civil Procedure, the court appoints a judicial assistant for persons with disabilities if their physical incapacity is such as to make it difficult for them to fully understand the proceedings or

express their wishes, particularly if they have multiple disabilities such as “deaf and dumb”, “blind and deaf” or “blind and dumb”.

160. The national legislature does not regard insanity as a mental disability that precludes marriage since the Federal Personal Status Act No. 28 of 2005 stipulates that the guardian may conclude a contract of marriage for an insane person subject to the judge’s approval and provided that the following conditions are met:

- The other party to the contract must agree to marry the said person after being informed of the latter’s condition;
- The said person’s pathological condition must not be of a hereditary nature;
- The marriage must be in the said person’s interest.

161. With regard to the provision of guarantees to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to exercise their legal rights, the national legislature does not leave this matter at their discretion since regulations have been promulgated to protect persons with disabilities, and particularly those for whom the court appoints a judicial assistant. The above-mentioned Code of Civil Procedure permits the judicial assistant to act only in the interests of the person with a disability and a distinction is made between cases in which a person who is insane or of unsound mind is placed by the court in the care of a guardian, who acts on behalf and in the interests of his ward in all the legal proceedings, and cases in which the court decides to appoint a judicial assistant to help a person with a severe disability to fulfil certain legal requirements. In the latter case, the person with the disability acts on his own behalf with help from the assistant, who does not have the right to act alone in such matters unless so authorized by the court in the event of the disability becoming so severe as to prevent the person afflicted therewith from acting on his own behalf, and only in circumstances in which the said person’s failure to so act would be likely to jeopardize his interests. The domestic legislation does not contain any provisions that prevent persons with disabilities from exercising their right to acquire or inherit property or obtain loans since, as will be explained below, persons with disabilities are legally entitled to priority access to loans and housing assistance.

Article 13: Access to justice

162. The administration of justice and the enforcement of rights are among the fundamental principles and values on which the work of the judiciary in the United Arab Emirates is based. Under article 41 of the State’s Constitution, all persons, including those with disabilities, have a guaranteed right to seek legal remedy. During legal proceedings, persons with disabilities are provided with the requisite facilities, such as the appointment of interpreters in sign language. The judiciary is an autonomous authority as stipulated in article 94 of the Constitution (“Justice is the foundation of governance. Judges shall be independent and, in the performance of their duties, shall be subject to no authority other than the law and their own conscience.”)

Article 14: Liberty and security of person

163. In the United Arab Emirates, all individuals have a guaranteed right to security of person since their safety and peace of mind are among the fundamental principles enshrined in article 14 of the Constitution.

164. Article 26 of the Constitution further stipulates that: “Personal freedom shall be guaranteed to all citizens. No one may be arrested, searched, detained or imprisoned except as provided by law.”

165. In keeping with its desire to ensure the security and well-being of all, including persons with disabilities, the State has established numerous centres specialized in the care

and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. These centres apply the highest standards of safety and security in order to ensure the well-being of their staff and of the persons benefiting from their services.

166. Under the terms of Council of Ministers Decision No. 7 of 2010, compliance with environmental safety specifications is a requirement for the issue of operating licences to non-governmental institutions specialized in the care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

167. The State is also endeavouring to ensure a safe environment in all its vital facilities, such as schools, hospitals, airports, public transport and shopping centres, so that persons with disabilities can fully enjoy and benefit from those facilities.

168. By law, persons with disabilities are entitled to legal assistance if their freedom is restricted for any valid reason since article 6 of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, stipulates that, in all circumstances in which their freedom is restricted for a valid reason, the State shall ensure that they are provided with the following forms of legal assistance:

- The requisite information and details concerning the reasons for the restriction of their freedom;
- Appropriate assistance if they are unable to pay legal fees, costs or fines.

Article 15: Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

169. The State recognizes the principles laid down in international human rights instruments. This recognition is evident from its accession to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and regional and international instruments and treaties, such as the Arab Charter on Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which contain provisions condemning such practices. The State has also acceded to numerous other international instruments such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

170. The national legislature, believing in the principles enunciated in those instruments and treaties concerning non-subjection to torture or inhuman treatment, has taken care to ensure compliance therewith. Accordingly, article 26 of the State's Constitution stipulates that no one may be subjected to torture or degrading treatment and the Criminal Code (Federal Act No. 3 of 1987, as amended by Federal Acts Nos. 34 of 2005 and 52 of 2006), protects convicts by prescribing penalties for anyone who puts their lives at risk. The law also guarantees the requisite protection for persons with disabilities against any form of inhuman treatment in the event of their freedom being restricted for a valid reason insofar as article 6 of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, stipulates that the State shall ensure that persons with disabilities are treated in a humane manner that shows due regard for their circumstances and needs as persons with disabilities in the event of their freedom being restricted for any reason.

171. Article 10, paragraph 2, of Federal Act No. 10 of 2008, concerning medical liability, permits the conduct of medical research or experiments on human beings only with authorization from the bodies specified in the implementing regulations and solely on the conditions laid down therein. Article 28, paragraph 2, of the said Act makes provision for a deterrent penalty by stipulating that anyone who contravenes the provisions contained in

article 10, paragraph 2, of the Act shall be liable to a term of not less than six months' imprisonment and/or a fine of 100,000–200,000 dirhams.

Article 16: Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse

172. The legislation of the United Arab Emirates guarantees the protection of all citizens, including persons with disabilities, and article 10 of the Constitution stipulates that the rights and freedoms of the people of the Federation shall be protected so that all citizens can enjoy a better life. This protection is not confined solely to the preservation and upholding of their rights, since the law guarantees the requisite protection of juveniles and persons incapable of protecting themselves, particularly if they are subjected to exploitation, violence or abuse. Under the terms of article 349 of the Criminal Code (Federal Act No. 3 of 1987, as amended by Federal Acts Nos. 34 of 2005 and 52 of 2006), anyone who, in person or through a third party, endangers a juvenile under 5 years of age or an individual who is incapable of protecting himself due to his state of health or his mental or psychological condition is liable to a penalty of imprisonment if the offence is committed by leaving the juvenile or incapacitated person in a deserted location or if it is committed by any of the victim's ascendants or by a person responsible for the victim's care and protection.

173. The United Arab Emirates is strongly and resolutely opposed to all forms of human exploitation for sexual or other purposes and its strategies in this regard are based on the following four fundamental principles:

- Development of laws and legislation on trafficking in persons;
- Empowerment of the competent authorities to apply deterrent and preventive measures;
- Provision of protection and support for the victims of such offences;
- Expansion of the scope of bilateral cooperation to combat such offences.

174. The Federal Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act No. 51 of 2006, which was the first of its kind in the Arab region, prescribes severe penalties, ranging from a term of one year to life imprisonment and fines of 100,000 to 1 million dirhams, for anyone who commits an offence of trafficking in persons.

175. The said Act guarantees the protection of persons with disabilities against all forms of exploitation. Article 1 of the Act designates abuse of an individual's weakness as an offence of trafficking in persons and article 2 thereof makes provision for a heavier penalty if the victim of the abuse is a female or child with a disability.

176. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior are playing a vital role in coordinating the measures taken by the various State institutions to protect children against all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse.

177. The Ministry of Social Affairs has established a children's department which is responsible for raising awareness of the need to promote and protect the rights of the child.

178. In the same context, the Ministry of the Interior has established a Higher Committee on the Protection of Children, the principal objectives of which include: consideration of the establishment of a national centre for the protection of children which would look into all aspects of offences to which children are exposed, as well as all phenomena that encourage the exploitation of children; formulation of solutions and initiatives to ensure the protection of such children; and liaison with governmental and private bodies, charitable associations concerned with children and international police authorities to determine the best international practices to ensure the protection of children against criminal exploitation and violence.

179. In order to protect children against exploitation, the competent authorities are taking various measures, including denial of entry to children from certain States if their names are included on the passports of family members or relatives.

180. The United Arab Emirates requires children to hold separate passports and separate entry visas to ensure compliance with the regulations and enable immigration and passport officers to check the children's identity at the time of their entry into the State and verify their return to their countries of origin with their family members or relatives.

181. The Federal Government regards persons subjected to sexual exploitation as victims in need of protection and support through counselling and rehabilitation programmes and, at the same time, believes that anyone who forces such victims to engage in prostitution should be punished.

182. The police departments have recently set up telephone hotlines to receive complaints from persons subjected to any form of abuse or exploitation.

Article 17: Protecting the integrity of the person

183. The State's accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities confirmed its commitment to ensure the integrity of such persons in accordance with the provisions of article 17 of the Convention which stipulates that every person with a disability has a right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity on an equal basis with others. This is achieved by, inter alia, prohibiting the use of persons with disabilities in medical experiments against their consent or without the approval of their guardians or legal representatives, as stipulated in article 4, paragraph 4, article 7, paragraph (d), article 8, article 9 and article 10, paragraph 2, of Federal Act No. 10 of 2008 concerning medical liability. Article 13 of the said Act also makes provision for strict measures to safeguard all persons from forced sterilization and to protect young girls and women against forced abortion.

Article 18: Liberty of movement and nationality

184. The right to acquire the nationality of the United Arab Emirates is guaranteed by law and every citizen residing in any of the member Emirates is entitled to hold the State's nationality. It is not permitted, under any circumstances, to conceal newborn infants and anyone who commits such an offence is liable to a penalty of imprisonment as prescribed in article 327 of the Criminal Code (Federal Act No. 3 of 1987, as amended by Federal Acts Nos. 34 of 2005 and 52 of 2006).

185. The State is implementing measures to ensure prompt registration of the birth of children with disabilities. Such children have a guaranteed right, at birth, to be given a name and to acquire nationality in accordance with the law.

186. Article 2 of the Federal Nationality and Passports Act No. 17 of 1972, as amended by Federal Act No. 10 of 1975, stipulates that:

187. By law, the following persons are deemed to be citizens:

- Any Arab residing in any of the member Emirates in 1925 or before and who has maintained his normal residence therein up to the date of entry into force of the Act;
- Any person born in or outside the State to a father legally holding the State's nationality;
- Any person born in or outside the State to a mother legally holding the State's nationality if such person's paternity has not been legally established;

- Any person born in or outside the State to a mother legally holding the State's nationality and an unknown or stateless father;
- Any person born in the State to unknown parents; a foundling is deemed to have been born therein failing proof to the contrary;
- The said Act specifies the conditions under which individuals may acquire the State's nationality through naturalization or affiliation.

188. Article 15 of the said Nationality and Passports Act specifies the following circumstances in which nationality may be forfeited:

- If the nationality holder, having enlisted in the armed forces of a foreign country without the State's permission, is ordered to cease serving therein but refuses to do so;
- If he is seeking to further the interests of a hostile State;
- If, of his own accord, he becomes a naturalized citizen of a foreign State.

189. Article 16 of the Act specifies the following circumstances in which a person's nationality may be withdrawn:

1. If he commits, or attempts to commit, an act that is deemed to endanger the State's security and integrity.
2. If he has been repeatedly convicted of dishonourable offences.
3. If the documents on the basis of which he was granted nationality are found to have been forged, falsified or obtained in a fraudulent manner.
4. If he resides outside the State continuously and without justification for a period in excess of four years.

Accordingly, under the legislation of the United Arab Emirates, no one may be stripped of his nationality in an arbitrary or unlawful manner.

Article 19: Living independently and being included in the community

190. The United Arab Emirates has taken the measures needed to promote the integration of persons with disabilities in the community and enable them to lead independent lives.

191. Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, specifies the role that the State's institutions should play in facilitating the integration of persons with disabilities in the community (arts. 13, 16, 17, 19 and 20).

192. Section V of the said Act guarantees the right of persons with disabilities to enjoy an enabling environment in conditions conducive to an independent life.

193. Under the provisions of the Act, it is prohibited to accommodate persons with disabilities in care and rehabilitation centres in such a way as to isolate and exclude them from their family milieu since, as stipulated in article 9 of the Act, the fundamental role of such centres is confined to the implementation of care and rehabilitation programmes designed to integrate persons with disabilities in the community.

194. Numerous ministerial decisions have been promulgated in this regard, including Council of Ministers Decision No. 7 of 2010 concerning non-governmental institutions for the care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and Ministerial Ordinance No. 294 of 2011 laying down the implementing regulations for that decision, under the terms of which it is prohibited to grant licences to institutions offering boarding facilities for persons with disabilities.

195. The Ministry of Social Affairs has signed memorandums of understanding with numerous bodies, such as the Ministry of Public Works, the Sheikh Zayed Housing Programme and the Housing Department in Sharjah, with a view to concerting their endeavours to apply the criteria and specifications needed to ensure an enabling environment in housing occupied by persons with disabilities.

196. Sharjah Humanitarian Services City also provides ancillary support services for children with disabilities living in their own homes.

197. The Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care and Minors' Affairs has launched a national programme for the integration of persons with disabilities. The second phase of this programme, which began in 2010 under the slogan "Our life is in our integration", was designed to acquaint government agencies and private sector institutions with the best international practices applied to provide services and an enabling environment for persons with disabilities.

198. One of the objectives of this programme was to reward the institutions most committed to the application of those criteria in order to motivate them to make even greater endeavours to promote the integration and independence of persons with disabilities.

Article 20: Personal mobility

199. Reference has already been made to the provisions of chapter two, section V, of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities. Pursuant to those provisions guaranteeing the right of persons with disabilities to enjoy an enabling environment, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with other bodies, has begun the implementation of several initiatives and projects in this field with a view to, inter alia, enabling persons with motor disabilities to drive vehicles technically adapted to the nature of their disability.

200. In accordance with the provisions of article 27 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act and article 64 of the Road Traffic Regulatory Act No. 21 of 2007, the vehicle licensing departments exempt persons with disabilities from the payment of fees.

201. Vehicles owned by persons with disabilities or their guardians are also exempt from the payment of motorway tolls in order to enable such persons to use those uncongested roads in a comfortable manner and free of charge.

202. The Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Roads and Transport Authority, is studying the requirements of persons with disabilities, particularly in regard to the use of public transport, with a view to overcoming the problems and difficulties that might prevent them from using such transport facilities.

203. The Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Airport Authority in the Emirate of Dubai, is also studying the difficulties encountered by persons with disabilities when travelling by air. Courses have been organized to train Dubai airport staff in ways to provide services for persons with disabilities passing through the airport.

Article 21: Freedom of expression and access to information

204. Freedom to express opinion is guaranteed under the legislation of the United Arab Emirates. Article 30 of the State's Constitution stipulates that freedom of opinion and of oral, written and all other means of expression thereof is guaranteed within the limits of the law. Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, guarantees the free expression of opinion by persons with disabilities and recognizes their right to access information. Article 7 of the said Act stipulates that: "The State guarantees the enjoyment by persons with disabilities of the right to express opinions through the use of Braille, sign language and other means of

communication, as well as their right to seek, receive and impart information on an equal footing with others". To this end, governmental and private media institutions have opened their audiovisual communication channels to persons with disabilities. The State has four government-run media institutions: the National Media Council, Abu Dhabi Media Company, Dubai Media Corporation and Sharjah Media Corporation.

205. The television channels and radio stations of both Sharjah Media Corporation and Abu Dhabi Media Company have a weekly time slot in their programmes which is devoted to the discussion of disability-related issues. Sharjah Humanitarian Services City, in collaboration with Sharjah Media Corporation, broadcasts the weekly *Masha'il al-Amal* [Gleams of Hope] programme to raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and discuss disability-related issues. The Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care, in collaboration with Abu Dhabi Media Company, also broadcasts a live radio programme entitled *Hajaat wa Amaal* [Needs and Hopes] for the discussion of various disability-related issues which provides an opportunity for persons with disabilities to express their opinion on such issues.

206. Both Abu Dhabi Media Company and Sharjah Media Corporation provide interpretation in sign language during the daily news bulletins broadcast on their television channels and also during the programmes devoted to issues of concern to persons with disabilities.

207. The government-run media broadcast live radio programmes that provide an opportunity for a broad range of listeners, including persons with disabilities, to express grievances and enter into contact with officials and decision makers with a view to finding solutions to their problems.

208. The Dubai-based subscription television network OSN provides an opportunity for persons with auditory disabilities to benefit from subtitles in the programmes presented on its various channels.

209. Within the context of the State's endeavours to promote and give effect to the right of persons with disabilities to freedom of expression and access to information, the governmental institutions are developing projects designed to make it easier for persons with disabilities to communicate with other members of society and access information.

210. With regard to the State's endeavours to promote the use of sign language, the institutions operating in the field of disability are making every effort to standardize dictionaries of sign language. Since 1999, Sharjah Humanitarian Services City has been organizing seminars and training workshops with a view to the compilation of a standard dictionary of sign language to be adopted throughout the State and in the Arab region as a whole. The compilation of this standard dictionary has now been completed with the assistance of the Social Committee of the League of Arab States.

211. The Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority which is the body responsible for the monitoring of telecommunication service providers in the State, recently launched the *Sada al-Samt* [Echo of Silence] project which is designed to make it easier for persons with auditory or speech impediments to communicate with the various State institutions. Under this project, customer service centres are being established in the companies providing telecommunication services in order to facilitate communication between such persons and any of the service providers through interpretation in sign language and its conversion into written text, or vice versa, so that messages can be transmitted by e-mail or fax to the intended recipients.

212. The Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Emirates Telecommunications Corporation, has launched the "freedom package" under which

persons with disabilities receive discounts of 50 per cent on telephone calls, text messages and Internet services in order to facilitate their communication with all social institutions. The printing press that the Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care is operating for blind persons, which is one of the major projects that the State is implementing to facilitate access to information by persons with visual impairments, produces academic curricula, literary works and a variety of other publications and educational aids in Braille for students in the general education schools.

213. The Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care also organizes an annual competition for the reading of stories in Braille with a view to broadening the knowledge and enhancing the sensory faculties of students with visual impairments and encouraging them to read books printed in Braille.

214. Article 30 of Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, guarantees freedom of access to information by persons with visual disabilities through the exemption of all their postal correspondence from postage charges.

215. In the same context, the State's public service institutions are facilitating access by persons with disabilities to information on their websites concerning the services that those institutions provide for various social categories.

216. The Abu Dhabi Technology Centre has also launched a project to facilitate access by persons with disabilities to government services. The objective of the project is to formulate procedural and operational criteria and guidelines to regulate the channels through which government services are provided, including electronic services, services available through the network of counters and kiosks and services provided by telephone.

217. In addition to the endeavours made by the above-mentioned governmental institutions, non-governmental and private institutions, including associations of persons with disabilities, are enabling such persons to exercise their right to express their opinion by organizing symposiums and forums to raise awareness concerning their rights and the role that government agencies should play in the promotion thereof. These institutions are also promoting easier access to information by facilitating communication between persons with disabilities and various civil society organizations. All the clubs and associations for persons with disabilities have websites that contain information on their activities and the Emirates Association of the Visually Impaired provides books printed in Braille, as well as audio books through the DAISY digital talking book service that the Association has introduced in collaboration with the Social Responsibility Fund in the Ministry of Social Affairs. In order to develop means of communication between persons with disabilities and other members of society, the Ministry of Social Affairs has organized a number of training courses, including courses on sign language for persons working in the naturalization, residence and customs departments and other institutions.

218. Workshops have also been held to make vehicle drivers with auditory disabilities more familiar with the "black marks" system applied in the event of traffic violations.

Article 22: Respect for privacy

219. The United Arab Emirates has established a legislative framework to ensure that the privacy of individuals is respected and protected against any infringement. Under the provisions of article 31 of the Constitution, freedom and confidentiality of postal, telegraphic and other means of communication are guaranteed in accordance with the law and, under the terms of article 36, homes are sacrosanct and may not be entered without the permission of their inhabitants except as provided by law and in the circumstances specified therein. Pursuant to these constitutional provisions, article 378 of the Criminal Code (Federal Act No. 3 of 1987, as amended by Federal Acts Nos. 34 of 2005 and 52 of 2006) prescribes a penalty of imprisonment together with a fine for anyone who violates the

personal or family privacy of individuals by committing any of the following acts without the consent of the victim or in circumstances other than those in which such acts are permitted by law:

220. Eavesdropping on or recording or transmitting, by any kind of device, conversations held in a private place, by telephone or by any other device; or receiving or transmitting, by any kind of device, an image of a person in a private place. If the acts referred to in either of these two cases are committed during a gathering and within the sight and hearing of the persons present therein, the latter's consent shall be required. The same penalty shall apply to any form of public dissemination of reports, images or comments relating to confidential aspects of the private or family lives of individuals, even if they are true.

221. Within the context of the legislature's desire to ensure greater respect and protection for the privacy of persons with disabilities, under the terms of article 8 of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, the State guarantees the requisite protection of the correspondence, medical records and private affairs of persons with disabilities.

Article 23: Respect for home and the family

222. By acceding to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the United Arab Emirates confirmed its full commitment to put an end to discrimination on the basis of disability in all matters relating to marriage, the family, birth and the like. Under the State's domestic legislation, the right to marry is guaranteed to all and the Personal Status Act likewise guarantees the same right to persons with disabilities subject to the proviso that, as already indicated, the marriage of an insane person requires the consent of the other party thereto.

223. The State has established the Marriage Fund Authority as a pioneering family-oriented initiative to encourage all citizens, including persons with disabilities, to marry by granting them financial assistance to cover the cost of the brides' dowers and thereby provide them with an incentive to found and develop Emirati families.

224. The conditions that applicants for this grant are required to meet include completion of the prenuptial medical examinations as a preventive measure to ensure that their progeny are not exposed to any disease that might cause a disability or chronic infirmity.

225. The legislation of the United Arab Emirates places no restriction on the number of children that a married couple may choose to beget since the State encourages procreation and grants all public sector employees an additional allowance for each new child born to the family.

226. Moreover, there is no provision in domestic law under which a married person with a disability is prevented from fostering a child since the interests of the child are the determining factor in the child's placement with a family, regardless of disability.

227. In keeping with the requirements of article 23 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to marry and found a family, the State has shown eagerness to organize collective wedding ceremonies for persons with disabilities. Two such ceremonies have already been organized for persons with disabilities and the State has borne all the marriage expenses of some of them. The Women's *Al-Nahda* [Awakening] Society and the counselling sections in the law courts also organize informative courses and programmes for persons preparing to embark on married life.

228. The Ministry of Social Affairs is working with the State's family development and social service institutions to provide all the forms of assistance needed to ensure a decent and stable family life for persons with disabilities.

229. The Social Security Department in the Ministry of Social Affairs pays monthly social assistance allowances to persons with disabilities and their families since, under the provisions of Federal Act No. 2 of 2001, any person with a disability falls within the categories entitled to social assistance.

230. Persons with disabilities are also covered by the services provided at the Ministry's social care centres.

231. The Social Services Department in Sharjah is one of the largest social service providers after the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Department is responsible for the establishment of social care centres and the provision of home-care and protection services for vulnerable persons, including those with disabilities, in addition to the provision of social support and rehabilitation for needy categories and the conduct of social studies and research.

232. All the Department's component units are seeking to ensure that its target categories, including persons with disabilities, enjoy all their rights, such as:

- Education;
- Issuance of identity documents;
- Shelter;
- Family life;
- Development and rehabilitation;
- Health;
- Protection against abuse;
- Livelihood;
- Integration in the community;
- Family formation through placement with foster families or marriage, etc.;
- Guaranteed income.

233. Numerous social institutions in the State are engaged in the formulation of national policies to protect children, including those with disabilities, against all forms of abuse and exploitation and ensure that they and their families enjoy a decent life. Reference has already been made to the federal bill of law designed to protect the rights of the child, including health, social, cultural and educational rights, the right to family life and the right to protection through the adoption of appropriate measures and a mechanism for their implementation.

234. The Community Development Authority in Dubai has formulated an integrated national policy for the protection of children throughout the Emirate.

Article 24: Education

235. In the United Arab Emirates, all persons have a right to education, without any discrimination, in accordance with article 17 of the Constitution which stipulates that: "Education is a fundamental factor in social progress. It shall be compulsory at the primary stage, and free of charge at all stages, within the Federation. Legal provision shall be made for the plans needed to propagate universal education at all levels and to eradicate illiteracy.

236. The provisions of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, emphasize the need to ensure that the right to education is also enjoyed by such persons. Article 12 of the Act stipulates that:

“The State shall ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities to study in regular or, if necessary, special classes in all mainstream education, vocational rehabilitation, adult education and lifelong learning institutions in which the academic syllabus shall be taught in sign language, in Braille or by any other method, as required. Disability per se shall not constitute an obstacle to enrolment in, or affiliation or admission to, any governmental or private educational institution of any kind.”

237. The said Act emphasizes the obligation of educational authorities to make reasonable accommodation arrangements to enable persons with disabilities to study on an equal footing with others. It stipulates that: “The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research shall take appropriate measures, in collaboration with the bodies concerned, to provide educational diagnosis, academic curricula, teaching aids and techniques and alternative means to improve communication with persons with disabilities; they shall likewise have an obligation to formulate alternative teaching strategies and provide an enabling material environment and other means to ensure full participation by students with disabilities.”

238. Pursuant to the provisions of the Act, a specialized committee on the education of persons with disabilities was formed, comprising representatives of the bodies concerned, such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Abu Dhabi Education Council and the Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority.

239. The main functions assigned to that committee include:

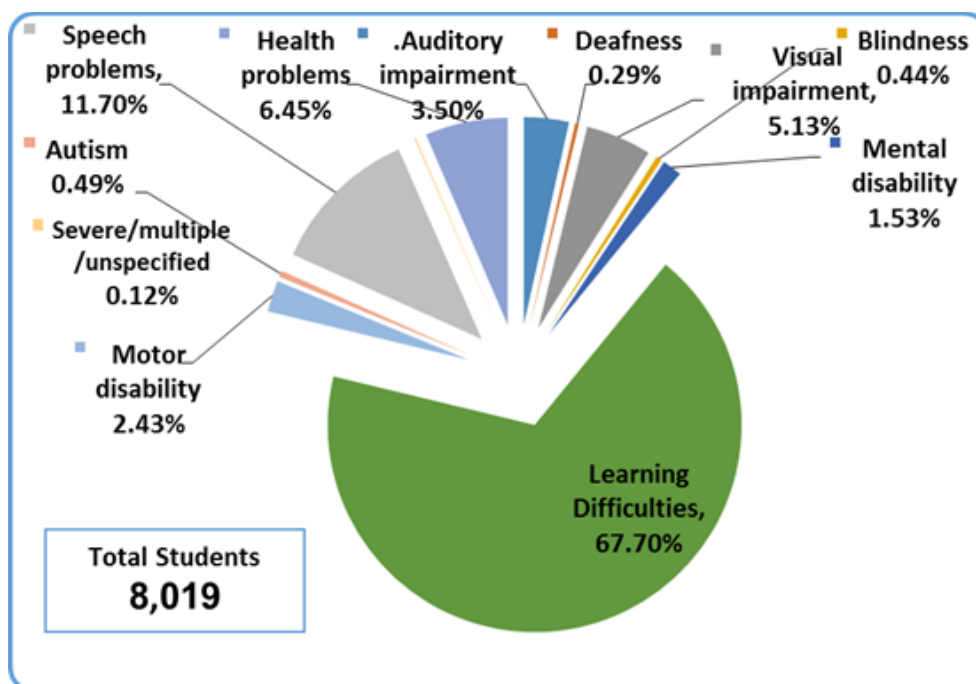
1. Formulation of executive programmes to ensure equal education opportunities for all persons with disabilities, from the stage of early childhood, in regular classes or special education units at all educational institutions.
2. Updating of the structure of academic curricula and programmes, and preparation of educational plans in keeping with the spirit of the times and technological developments, in a manner consistent with the physical and psychological development characteristics of persons with disabilities.
3. Regulation of all matters pertaining to the education of persons with disabilities, including programmes, procedures, methods and conditions of enrolment in regular classes and sitting of examinations.
4. Formulation of policies for the training of teaching staff catering for the educational needs of persons with disabilities.
5. Provision of advice and assistance for all educational institutions on technical and teaching-related matters, and study of their funding requirements in regard to equipment, technologies and the creation of an enabling environment on their premises.

240. In accordance with the provisions of the above-mentioned Act, the bodies concerned are incorporating in their strategic plans various initiatives and policies designed to ensure the success of programmes for the integration of persons with disabilities in educational institutions. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education are engaged in a coordinated joint endeavour to integrate students with disabilities studying at care and rehabilitation centres run by the Ministry of Social Affairs in the general educational institutions run by the Ministry of Education.

241. One of the major initiatives adopted by the Ministry of Education in this regard is the “School is for all” project to promote the integration of persons with disabilities in the general education system from the first grade onwards. The project was first applied to the

category of blind persons, who have been fully integrated into the government-run public schools.

242. Although a number of persons with auditory disabilities have been integrated into the general education system during the last two years, the majority of persons in this category are still being taught at care and rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities. The following table shows the proportions of persons with disabilities enrolled in public schools.



Source: Ministry of Education, 2012.

243. The total number of students enrolled at federal and local governmental and private sector care and rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities in the academic year 2009/10 amounted to 3,997.

244. The Ministry of Education has taken measures to ensure the successful implementation of all the initiatives adopted pursuant to the provisions of article 13 of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities.

245. One of the most significant measures in this regard was Ministerial Ordinance No. 166 of 2010, concerning the general principles to be observed in the educational programmes of government-run and private schools, under which the various departments of the Ministry are required, within their respective fields of jurisdiction, to meet the needs of schools in a manner conducive to the achievement of the following objectives:

- Creation of a school environment adapted to the admission of students with disabilities;
- Employment of teaching staff specialized in the care of special categories;
- Utilization of the academic techniques, devices and resources needed to participate in the initiative.

246. The environmental adaptation that the Ministry is seeking to ensure includes:

- Provision of special transport for students with motor disabilities;
- Construction of ramps in schools;
- Provision of school toilet facilities for persons with disabilities;
- Installation of elevators in schools;
- Provision of the requisite testing and diagnostic kits and training for the staff concerned;
- Supply of equipment and devices for students with disabilities;
- Supply of books in large print for the partially sighted and books printed in Braille for blind students;
- Formation of academic support groups in schools and special teaching groups in educational districts to monitor the progress of students with disabilities.

247. The Ministry is also training all teaching staff in ways to interact with the students with disabilities who are enrolled in the educational integration programmes being implemented. In conformity with the provisions of Ministerial Ordinance No. 527 of 2010, a total of 28 specialized centres are being established to train the staff of all government-run and private schools to meet the needs of students with disabilities enrolled therein.

248. The Ministry has also established special-education support centres in all educational districts in order to diagnose, assess and monitor students with disabilities.

249. With a view to endowing children, adults and teachers with specific skills, such as familiarity with Braille, sign language and augmentative and alternative modes of communication and mobility, the Ministry is providing the following types of training:

- Award of scholarships under which graduates from the secondary level of general education receive specialized training abroad in specific fields of special education;
- Provision of training in integration techniques for around 3,000 teachers at the training centres that have been established in more than 20 schools;
- Specialized and intensive courses, with all the requisite tools, to train national staff in the speech and language skills needed to teach persons with visual and other impairments;
- Training of students and teachers in specialized programmes for various forms of disability whenever the requisite equipment is available;
- Training of technical and administrative staff in programmes on special education and ways to integrate students with disabilities;
- Attending and participating in local and international conferences on special education;
- Training of accredited instructors in various fields of special education.

250. In addition to the Ministry of Education's endeavours to promote the integration of persons with disabilities in all educational institutions, both the Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care and Sharjah Humanitarian Services City have taken numerous measures to further the integration of such persons in public and private schools. By way of example, in 2010, the Zayed Organization signed an agreement with Abu Dhabi Education Council under the terms of which the Organization would transfer students with disabilities to government-run and private schools in Abu Dhabi subject to the condition that the Council would provide all the facilities needed to enable such students to receive an education on an equal footing with others.

251. Since the signing of that agreement, the Organization has successfully integrated more than 4,500 students in government-run and private schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Moreover, Sharjah Humanitarian Services City, in collaboration with Sharjah Educational District, is implementing additional integration programmes in government-run schools throughout the Emirate's territory, including villages and remote areas.

252. With regard to the right of persons with disabilities to study in higher educational institutions, the Ministry of Higher Education has taken the necessary measures to guarantee this right in government-run and private universities. In accordance with article 13 of the aforementioned Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, the Ministry of Higher Education is making reasonable accommodation arrangements for persons with disabilities studying in its institutions and both the United Arab Emirates University and Zayed University have opened offices for the provision of various support services to enable students with disabilities to study on an equal footing with their non-disabled peers.

Article 25: Health

253. Citizens with disabilities have a guaranteed right to health care under the provisions of the legislation in force in the United Arab Emirates. In conformity with article 10 of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, the Ministry of Health provides assistive devices, such as hearing aids and wheelchairs, for all children and adults with disabilities.

254. The State provides free health services, both at home and abroad, for all citizens with disabilities. Health services for non-nationals with disabilities are funded by health insurance companies or by the Abu Dhabi Health Authority's *Aounak and Thiqa* programmes which provide health insurance services for persons with disabilities not covered by social security. In 2011, more than 7,000 persons with disabilities were covered by these programmes.

255. The card that the Ministry of Health issues to persons with disabilities covers their health care throughout the Emirates and holders of such a card are exempted from payment not only of fees for its renewal but also of fees in respect of the issuance of sick leave certificates.

256. In accordance with the provisions of Ministerial Ordinance No. 284 of 2011, a specialized committee on health and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities was formed.

257. The principal functions assigned to that committee include:

1. Provision of diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitation services and development of existing health programmes and services to improve the situation of persons with disabilities.
2. Formulation of early detection, diagnostic, awareness raising and health education programmes to ensure specialized early intervention for the treatment of disability.
3. Recruitment and training of health personnel specialized in the various types of disability.
4. Conduct of research at the national level to identify the causes and consequences of disability and ways to prevent them, and circulation of the results of such research among the bodies concerned in the State.

258. In 2011, the Ministry of Social Affairs designed a programme to train physicians employed by government-run and private hospitals in ways to interact with persons with disabilities in emergency medical situations, and also in the procedures to be followed

during the medical examination and treatment of persons with mental, sensory or physical impairments or autism spectrum disorder.

Article 26: Habilitation and rehabilitation

259. The United Arab Emirates is implementing habilitation and rehabilitation programmes for persons with disabilities at 5 federal governmental, 16 local governmental and 38 private centres which also provide ancillary health services, such as physical, functional and speech therapy, in addition to educational, social and psychological services to improve the level of their patients' adaptation to their disability and society. Some of these centres have early intervention units to detect disability at an early stage, enhance their patients' developmental capacities and mitigate the effects of their disability. The State is diligently making every endeavour to assist persons with disabilities living in remote areas through the establishment of rehabilitation centres therein and the provision, by mobile units, of ancillary therapeutic services for persons with severe disabilities.

260. Under the provisions of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, higher educational institutions are required to offer specialized academic courses in diagnosis, early detection and educational, social, psychological, medical or vocational rehabilitation for the benefit of students who will be working with persons with disabilities and their families. Since in-house training programmes are also needed to update the knowledge and skills of serving staff, the Ministry of Social Affairs organized 35 training courses in 2007, 40 courses in 2008 and 132 courses in 2009 for staff working with persons with disabilities and the average number of such courses attended by each staff member amounted to 10.3 per year.

261. Under article 10 of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, every citizen with a disability is entitled to benefit from health, rehabilitation and support services at the State's expense. These services include the provision of technical aids and mobile and fixed assistive and compensatory devices (artificial limbs and eyes, hearing aids and mobility aids such as wheelchairs, walking sticks, walking frames and crutches), pressure-relieving pads and all the materials used in surgical procedures. The Ministry of Social Affairs supplies FM devices for persons with auditory impairments enrolled at care and rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities and the Ministry of Health supplies assistive and compensatory devices (such as hearing aids for persons with auditory impairments and physiotherapeutic equipment) free of charge for persons with disabilities who have a certified need therefor.

Article 27: Work and employment

262. Under the legislation of the United Arab Emirates, all persons, including those with disabilities, have a guaranteed right to work. Article 35 of the Constitution stipulates that: "All citizens shall have access to public office on a basis of equality of opportunity in accordance with the provisions of the law".

263. Article 14 of Federal Act No. 11 of 2008, concerning human resources in federal governmental institutions and agencies, stipulates that qualified citizens with disabilities must be given priority access to public service in posts the functions of which are compatible with their state of health and those working therein must be provided with all the facilities needed for the performance of their official duties by ensuring that their workplaces are equipped with the necessary requirements in a manner consistent with the nature of their special needs. In this connection, Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, confirms this category's right to work since article 16 thereof stipulates that: "Any citizen with a disability shall have the right to work and hold public office. Far from constituting, per se, an impediment to candidacy for, or choice of, employment, disability shall be taken into due consideration during the pre-recruitment aptitude testing of candidates to whom the provisions of the present Act apply."

264. The said Act guarantees the protection of persons with disabilities against discrimination in the working environment and in respect of working hours, periods of leave, remuneration and pensions. Article 18 thereof stipulates that: “The legislation promulgated in the State shall specify the measures to be taken to guarantee access by persons with disabilities to posts in the governmental and private sectors and to ensure the implementation of the other provisions regulating the employment of such persons, such as those concerning working hours, periods of leave, termination of employment and entitlement to separation-from-service indemnities and pensions”. The same article empowers the Minister of Social Affairs to propose the proportion of posts in the governmental and private sectors to be allocated to persons with disabilities, thereby firmly establishing the quota system for the employment of persons with disabilities not only in the governmental but also in the private sector.

265. In the light of this commitment to realization of the right of persons with disabilities to obtain employment, since 2006 numerous meetings have been held following which memorandums of understanding have been signed with governmental and private bodies in order to promote and facilitate the employment-related rights of persons with disabilities.

266. With a view to ensuring the rehabilitation and employment of persons who have been incapacitated as a result of traffic accidents or during their service in the armed forces, the training and rehabilitation centres operated by the Ministry of the Interior for persons with disabilities provide rehabilitation services to train such persons in occupations compatible with their capabilities, to develop their remaining aptitudes and to subsequently offer them employment opportunities within the Ministry of the Interior or elsewhere. The rehabilitation and employment projects that are being implemented in Sharjah under the auspices of the *Thiqa* Club for Persons with Disabilities and Sharjah Humanitarian Services City provide technical and vocational assistance for jobseekers with disabilities and train them in business management and development and in ways to find employment and enter the competitive job market. They also offer financial and administrative support to projects for persons with disabilities, such as the printing and processing of data in universities and employment offices, and the Specialized Committee on the Employment of Persons with Disabilities proposes the measures needed to protect persons with disabilities against employment-related exploitation, including any form of physical or psychological harassment.

267. The Specialized Committee on the Employment of Persons with Disabilities, which was established under the terms of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, is taking affirmative and effective action to promote the employment of persons with disabilities by formulating the requisite policies therefor and ensuring that such persons are endowed with the optimum degree of aptitude and retain their employment for the longest possible period of time. In order to encourage them to work on their own account, the Committee assists qualified persons with disabilities to establish economically viable businesses by providing them with information on available grants and soft loans and the conditions under which they are granted. The Committee is also encouraging and motivating the private sector to train and hire persons with disabilities by offering appropriate subsidies, thereby providing opportunities for such persons to access available functional and vocational training services.

268. As a result of the endeavours made to promote the advancement of women with disabilities in the United Arab Emirates, around 157 such women are currently employed in the federal and local governmental and private sectors where they constitute 25.8 per cent of the total number of persons with disabilities working in those sectors. The committee responsible for the organization of International Week of the Deaf in the United Arab Emirates, on which all the local institutions and centres operating in the field of auditory impairment are represented, celebrated the thirty-sixth anniversary of that Week in 2011

under the slogan “Empowerment of deaf women in the light of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”. Numerous other events and activities have also been organized to promote the rights of women with disabilities throughout the State.

269. In order to further the economic independence of the most vulnerable categories, consisting in persons with mental disability and women with disabilities, the Ministry of Social Affairs is implementing a number of training and production projects suited to those categories, such as the Tasneem chocolate manufacturing, recycling, *Munasabati* [My Opportunity], *Adasati* [My Lens] and organ harvesting projects. A cooperation agreement has also been signed with Al-Sahraa Group under which around 30 persons with mental disabilities have been hired by the Group to participate in agricultural and landscaping operations. A total of 608 persons with disabilities are currently employed in the various labour sectors.

270. With a view to facilitating the recruitment of persons with disabilities in various working environments on a non-discriminatory basis, the Ministry of Social Affairs is implementing an incentive-based employment programme under which persons with disabilities are recruited in the open labour market subject to provision of the facilities that they require, such as adaptation of workplaces, training or other forms of subsidization. The Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Community Development, has issued a brochure on subsidized employment which explains the procedures for this form of employment and the role to be played by each party thereto.

271. The Ministry of Social Affairs has also issued guidelines for employers on the best ways to interact with persons with disabilities in the working environment and during recruitment interviews, as well as guidelines to assist jobseekers with disabilities and help them to pass such interviews.

272. Studies of the current situation play an important role in determining the vocational rehabilitation and placement services needed by persons with disabilities in the United Arab Emirates. The Ministry has conducted four studies on problematic aspects of the employment of such persons and on the vocational rehabilitation programmes available and has submitted its recommendations, based on the findings of those studies, for consideration by the authorities concerned. The findings of one of the most significant studies, concerning problems affecting the employment of persons with mental disability, prompted the Ministry to organize a social forum, in collaboration with the Executive Office of the Council of Ministers for Social Affairs and Ministers of Labour of States Members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, to discuss the problems impeding the employment of persons with disabilities.

273. In the light of the findings of those studies, the Ministry has formulated a special curriculum for the vocational training of persons with mental disabilities under which training is based on the acquisition of skills rather than on the concept of protected workshops. This curriculum, which is being applied at the Ministry’s rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities, places emphasis not only on the aspect of vocational training but also on development of the social and behavioural skills of persons with disabilities in the working environment in such a way as to further their integration and adaptation therein while, at the same time, helping them to obtain a better understanding of their rights and obligations in that environment.

274. In order to enable persons with disabilities to market their products, the local institutions operating in disability-specific fields organize periodic exhibitions at which such persons can demonstrate their creative abilities and sell their products. The principal permanent marketing outlets are *Al-Arsah* Market in Sharjah and the Friday Market in Fujairah. The local institutions also participate in end-of-year events such as the annual exhibition of products of persons with disabilities in Sharjah Humanitarian Services City

and displays in other markets and exhibitions. With a view to promoting the employment of persons with disabilities, Sharjah Humanitarian Services City advertises their products on its website.

275. Within the framework of its endeavours to enable persons with disabilities to find employment, the Ministry of Social Affairs launched the “Work is Life” initiative the aim of which is to train persons with disabilities receiving monthly social security benefits so that they can find employment and enjoy independent sources of income instead of relying on social assistance.

276. The Princess Haya Award for Special Education is presented, on an annual basis, to a number of categories working in disability-related fields, including outstanding trainers applying the best practices and techniques in vocational training programmes.

Article 28: Adequate standard of living and social protection

277. The United Arab Emirates is endeavouring to ensure an adequate standard of living and social protection for all its citizens. The State has made tremendous progress, especially during the last decade, in the field of human development and, in 2011, was ranked first in the Arab region and thirtieth worldwide in the Human Development Index published by the United Nations Development Programme. This, in itself, illustrates the extent of the Government’s desire to improve the standard of living and the socioeconomic circumstances of individuals and the following statistics give a general indication of the rates of human development in the Emirates which are also reflected in the living conditions of persons with disabilities:

- In 2010, the per capita share of GDP rose to 132,000 dirhams (US\$ 40,000);
- In 2009, the average wage rose to 544,000 dirhams;
- In 2009, the per capita share of private consumption amounted to 78,000 dirhams;
- In 2009, the unemployment rate declined to 3.0 per cent;
- In 2009, the infant mortality rate declined to 6 per thousand live births;
- Individual life expectancy currently exceeds 76 years.

278. Within the context of the State’s endeavours to ensure the equal enjoyment by all citizens of an appropriate standard of living and social protection, without any discrimination on the basis of gender, colour, disability or other factors, the national legislature has guaranteed the right of persons with disabilities to receive free rehabilitation, training and therapeutic services and compensatory aids in accordance with articles 9 and 10 of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No.14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities.

279. In keeping with the State’s desire to provide care for persons with disabilities within their family environment, the national legislature has included such persons among the categories, such as divorced women, widows and orphans, which are entitled to monthly social assistance benefits.

280. These monthly benefits paid to persons with disabilities were recently increased to 5,280 dirhams in view of the decision makers’ belief that such persons are entitled to care and a decent life. The total number of persons with disabilities receiving such monthly benefits currently amounts to 3,818.

281. The Social Services Department in Sharjah pays monthly social assistance benefits to persons with disabilities who have a limited income and it is noteworthy that all persons receiving such benefits from the State’s social service institutions are exempt from the

payment of water and electricity charges and, in some of the Emirates, are granted a 50 per cent reduction in taxi fares.

282. Persons with disabilities are also covered by the housing programmes under which the State helps citizens to construct or purchase appropriate housing. In accordance with articles 19 and 40 of Council of Ministers Decision No. 9 of 2011 concerning the Sheikh Zayed Housing Programme, persons with disabilities are granted priority in regard to the receipt of governmental housing assistance.

283. All the State's institutions are endeavouring to alleviate the financial burdens on persons with disabilities by exempting such persons from public transport fares and reducing the charges that they pay for telecommunication and other services.

Article 29: Participation in political life

284. Equality and equal opportunities for all citizens are among the most important principles enshrined in article 14 of the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates and, consequently, participation by persons with disabilities in political and public life is guaranteed under the State's domestic law. This is illustrated by Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, under which the State guarantees equality between persons with disabilities and their non-disabled peers without any legislative discrimination on the basis of disability.

285. Within the context of the State's endeavours to enable persons with disabilities to participate in public life and enjoy an opportunity to become decision makers, its governmental institutions avail themselves of the skills of persons with disabilities who have been appointed to numerous advisory posts such as legal, sports and cultural consultants. The Ministry of Justice has also recently appointed two women with visual impairments as State attorneys and persons with disabilities have been nominated for membership of several national committees, including the Committee on the Health and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee on the Employment of Persons with Disabilities.

286. Under the legislation of the United Arab Emirates, there is nothing to prevent persons with disabilities from standing as candidates for membership of the Federal National Council (art. 70 of the Constitution) or from voting for candidates of their own choosing. In this regard, the Electoral Commission formed to oversee the elections to the Federal National Council held in September 2011 laid down standing rules to regulate voting and elections to membership of the Council.

287. Those rules guarantee the right of persons with disabilities to vote and stand as candidates for membership of the Council and also specify the procedures to be followed in order to enable persons with disabilities to participate effectively in elections. By way of example, article 33 of Decision No. 2 of 2011 issued by the Electoral Commission stipulated that any voters who are illiterate, blind or suffering from other disabilities that prevent them from voting in person may present themselves before any member of the Commission to record their choice of candidates in accordance with the voting procedure.

288. With regard to participation by persons with disabilities in non-governmental organizations, leagues and associations concerned with national public life, Federal Act No. 6 of 1974, as amended by Federal Act No. 2 of 2008 concerning associations of public benefit, regulates the formation of associations, as well as their statutes and governing bodies and the conditions of membership thereof. Under the provisions of the Act, members of such associations have the right to nominate anyone whom they deem appropriate for membership of their governing bodies in accordance with the prescribed procedures. The Act also permits the formation of more than one league or federation under the umbrella of a single association. The United Arab Emirates has a number of associations concerned

with persons with disabilities, such as the Emirates Association of the Visually Impaired, the Association of Families of Persons with Disabilities, the Emirates Down Syndrome Association and the Association of Deaf Persons.

Article 30: Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

289. Since persons with disabilities constitute an integral part of society, the United Arab Emirates attaches importance to their participation in cultural life, recreation and sport and has taken measures to ensure that such persons are able to exercise this right on an equal footing with other members of society.

290. Article 20 of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, stipulates that: “The State shall take the requisite measures to enable persons with disabilities to participate in cultural life, sports and recreation and, to this end, shall:

1. Ensure development and utilization of the creative, artistic and intellectual potential of persons with disabilities for the enrichment of society.
2. Make literary and cultural works available to persons with disabilities in sign language, Braille, audio, multimedia and other accessible formats.
3. Enable persons with disabilities to benefit from media programmes, theatrical performances, art exhibitions and all other cultural activities, and encourage their participation therein by exempting them from payment of fees in respect thereof.
4. Promote participation by persons with disabilities in national, regional and international sporting activities.

291. Within the framework of the State’s endeavours to overcome obstacles preventing persons with disabilities from participating in cultural life, recreation and sport, ministries and government agencies, together with civil society institutions, are implementing joint programmes designed to enable such persons to take part in cultural and recreational activities.

292. These projects include the establishment by the Social Responsibility Fund of the Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Emirates Association of the Visually Impaired, of a studio for the production of audio books using the DAISY system with a view to making cultural works available in formats accessible by persons with visual impairments.

293. The Ministry of the Interior’s Office to Ensure Respect for the Culture of Law, in collaboration with the *Tamkeen* Centre for the Training and Rehabilitation of Blind Persons, is printing local legislation in Braille.

294. The Emirates Association of the Visually Impaired has obtained authorization to reprint works published by certain national research institutions and centres, such as the Department of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in Dubai, the Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research, the Sheikh Sultan bin Zayed Centre for Research and Studies and the Juma al-Majid Centre for Culture and Heritage, in order to make them available in formats accessible by persons with visual impairments.

295. The principal cultural events recently organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs include the Gulf Theatre Festival which was designed to encourage and support the dramatic arts by staging performances in which persons with disabilities appeared together with well-known theatrical personalities from the Gulf States.

296. The Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority and the Museums Section of the Department of Culture and Information in Sharjah are studying numerous projects for the rehabilitation of local museums in order to overcome the obstacles making it difficult for visitors with disabilities to move around therein and acquaint themselves with the museums' amenities and exhibits.

297. The State shows great interest in sport for persons with disabilities as illustrated by the establishment of a national federation, known as the Emirates Disabled Sports Federation, under the terms of Ministerial Ordinance No. 24 issued by the Ministry of Youth and Sports on 26 June 1996. The objectives of the Federation are as follows:

1. To sponsor and develop sports for persons with disabilities in the State.
2. To participate in local, Gulf, Arab and international championships and competitions.
3. To provide opportunities for persons with various types of disability to engage in competitive sports.
4. To integrate persons with disabilities in society.

298. More than 3,000 sportsmen and sportswomen with disabilities are benefiting from the programme of the Emirates Disabled Sports Federation, which is supporting and sponsoring participation by persons with disabilities in games and sports at the regional and international levels. The Federation is the sole body in the United Arab Emirates responsible for the management of sports for persons with disabilities.

299. The Youth and Sports Authority subsidizes the Federation's activities, and especially those that promote participation by national teams in external regional and international sporting events.

300. Sportsmen with disabilities from the United Arab Emirates have been highly successful in international championships in which many of them have won medals, especially in athletics and weightlifting. Their numerous outstanding international sporting achievements include the award of three medals (two gold and one bronze) to the national team participating in the London 2012 Paralympic Games

301. In addition to the Emirates Disabled Sports Federation, the State has established numerous sports and cultural clubs for persons with disabilities, such as the Abu Dhabi and Al-Ain Clubs, the Dubai Club for Special Sports and the *Thiqa* Club which has branches in Khor Fakkan and Dhaid.

302. The most modern equipment is available in these clubs, which have been designed in such a way as to cater for the sporting and cultural needs of the various categories of persons with disabilities.

303. The objective of these clubs is to enhance the sporting, social and life skills of persons with disabilities and prepare a new generation of sportsmen and sportswomen to join the national teams representing the State in various sporting events.

304. These clubs also organize cultural symposiums and theatrical and other activities to enrich the cultural life of their members and, in collaboration with the disability-specific associations, are endeavouring to raise public awareness of disability-related issues and the rights of persons with disabilities.

Article 31: Statistics and data collection

305. In accordance with the provisions of article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the State is endeavouring to apply the best systems for the collection of data on persons with disabilities. The competent section in the Department for

the Care and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities contacts the various bodies in the State (ministries, local governmental agencies and institutions and private sector bodies and organizations such as companies, banks and institutions working in the field of the care of persons with disabilities) and the data on persons with disabilities that are collected from those bodies on a regular periodic basis are analysed by the section and classified under the following categories:

- Persons with disabilities working in the private sector and in local governmental agencies and institutions;
- Persons with disabilities receiving therapeutic, educational and rehabilitation services (through enrolment at centres for the care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities run by the private sector or by the federal or local governments);
- Persons with disabilities receiving disability-related services or partial or total exemption from certain fees;
- Persons with disabilities receiving higher education at universities and institutes;
- Persons with disabilities who have been integrated in the general education system.

306. All the information and data on persons with disabilities that are received from those bodies are disaggregated, classified and made available to decision makers, researchers and persons responsible for the formulation of programmes, projects and initiatives concerning persons with disabilities. During the collection of such data and information and their transmission to the bodies concerned, the privacy of persons with disabilities is respected and due regard is shown for the ethical principles to be observed in the collection and use of statistics.

307. In this connection, the Ministry of Social Affairs issues a “disability card” to every person with a disability and follows the traditional system under which persons with disabilities are classified under the following categories: physical disability – autism disorder – mental disability – visual impairment – auditory impairment – multiple disabilities. At the present time, the data and information on persons with disabilities are classified by type of disability, gender, residential area (Emirate) and nationality in the case of all persons holding or applying for disability cards.

Article 32: International cooperation

308. The State is cooperating with regional, Arab and international bodies in regard to the application of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the implementation of projects, initiatives and studies on persons with disabilities and a large number of forums and conferences on persons with disabilities are organized within its territory. Some of these forums are of an international nature, such as the biennial Dubai conference on rehabilitation at which a large number of researchers and participants from various international bodies discuss the latest studies and research on persons with disabilities and on the sidelines of which the latest disability-related inventions, devices, initiatives and projects are exhibited. A further example is the annual Abu Dhabi conference on rehabilitation at which specific topics are addressed, such as early intervention, vocational rehabilitation and the latest developments in the field of special education. Extremely important specialized symposiums are also held in the United Arab Emirates on topics such as autism, cochlear implants, Down syndrome and other disorders and internationally recognized experts and specialists in disability-related fields are invited to attend these events. During the period from 2008 to 2011, specialized conferences and symposiums on mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities were held in the United Arab Emirates, such as the Dubai Rehabilitation Conference held in the latter part of 2009. A regional symposium on

problems impeding the employment of persons with mental disabilities was also held during the same year.

309. The Ministry of Social Affairs in the United Arab Emirates is eager to participate in all the local, regional and international conferences and symposiums on the implementation of the Convention and to present its experiences in that regard. In this connection, the United Arab Emirates participated in the TRANSED 2010 Conference held in Hong Kong during which it presented its experiences in providing an enabling environment for persons with disabilities travelling on public transport. At the 2012 Universal Design Conference held in Oslo, Norway, the State also presented its experiences in providing an enabling environment for persons with disabilities in public transport and public buildings.

Article 33: National implementation and monitoring

310. In compliance with article 33 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with various federal and local agencies and institutions, has drafted a national framework for the implementation of the Convention in a manner consistent with the provisions of paragraphs 1 and 2 of that article. The draft has been submitted to the Council of Ministers where it is still under consideration.

311. One of the main proposals made in the draft framework is the formation of a higher committee on disability affairs, comprising representatives of various governmental bodies and civil society institutions, to coordinate the endeavours of those bodies in order to ensure that their policies are conducive to the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the national level.

312. The draft also makes provision for the establishment of another committee, comprising representatives of, inter alia, civil society institutions, associations of persons with disabilities and human rights associations, to monitor the implementation of the Convention and the bodies concerned are seeking to ensure that persons with disabilities participate actively in the implementation and monitoring mechanisms.

313. The Ministry of Social Affairs is currently coordinating the implementation by all governmental institutions of the provisions of Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, as amended by Federal Act No. 14 of 2009, concerning the rights of persons with disabilities.

314. The Ministry is also reviewing the provisions of the said Federal Act with a view to making it more consistent with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.