



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/WG.6/3/ARE/1
16 September 2008

ENGLISH
Original: ARABIC

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review
Third session
Geneva, 1-15 December 2008

**NATIONAL REPORT SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 15 (A)
OF THE ANNEX TO HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTION 5/1**

United Arab Emirates*

* The present document was not edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

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Introduction

The present report was prepared in accordance with article 5 (e) of United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/251 establishing the Human Rights Council and with the guidelines adopted by the Council, in keeping with the Emirates' commitment to the observance and implementation of all human rights principles, charters and treaties which seek to safeguard human dignity, achieve equality, social justice and equality of opportunity for all and create a better life, greater stability and enhance the State's international standing. The report was prepared, in conjunction with national institutions and civil associations, to convey information about the endeavours that the Emirates had made in the field of human rights and the extent to which the State complies with national laws and the international treaties which it has ratified, and also to describe the human rights situation on the ground using the universal periodic review mechanism.

Methodology for the preparation of the report

Government authorities, civil associations and national institutions participated in the preparation of this report, and a committee collected and studied the information and data submitted by all the stakeholders, incorporating them into the report.

Plan for the preparation of the report

Based on the universal periodic review mechanism and in keeping with the norms, criteria, objectives and principles of the review, as defined by the Human Rights Council, the State drew up a plan of action for the preparation of the report which reflects its determination, first and foremost, to abide by its international obligations and to implement them on the ground in accordance with best practices geared towards the wider promotion of human rights and fully free and responsible engagement in wide-ranging cooperation and partnership with all sectors of society and stakeholders.

The plan of action can be broken down as follows:

- The establishment of a committee chaired by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs with members drawn from: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Office of the Minister of State for Federal National Council Affairs; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Labour; the Ministry of the Interior; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Social Affairs; the Federal National Council; the Women's Union; the Journalists' Association; and the Emirates Human Rights Association
- A briefing on the universal periodic review for relevant parties from the executive, legislative and judicial authorities, governmental and non-governmental organizations and human rights media organizations, which was designed to involve them in the preparation of the national report by consulting with them, soliciting their views and inviting them to provide the committee with data and information on human rights in the State relevant to their respective areas of competence

- The committee studied the human rights data and information and incorporated it into the report in accordance with the established criteria
- The committee reviewed the previous human rights reports which the Emirates had submitted to relevant United Nations treaty bodies, together with the treaty bodies' recommendations
- The committee took a number of practical steps, conducting field visits and making contact with civil and national human rights associations
- Some members of the committee were selected to attend certain of the sessions at which the Human Rights Council considered States' reports, in order to familiarize themselves with the procedures involved in the interactive dialogue with the Council
- A workshop for stakeholders was held to give everyone an opportunity to present their views and comments on the information and data contained in the report
- A dedicated website (www.mfnca.gov.ae) with information on the universal periodic review and on the preparation of the national report was set up to provide everyone with the opportunity to submit any comments or views on human rights in the State using the following e-mail address: uae_upr@mfnca.gov.ae
- The committee prepared a booklet setting out the Human Rights Council's procedures, the national plan of action and the requirements for the preparation of the report, in Arabic and English, distributed it to all the parties concerned and published it on the website (annex 7)
- A mechanism was established to follow up on and implement the recommendations of the Human Rights Council

1. Political system

The United Arab Emirates was established on 2 December 1971 as a federal State consisting of seven Emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ras al-Khaimah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain and Fujairah. The State is in Asia, in the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, and is bounded in the north by the Arabian Gulf, in the west by Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in the south by the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and in the east by the Gulf of Oman.

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

The Constitution defines the division of powers between the federal and the local authorities. Article 120 sets out the legislative and executive powers of the federal authorities, while article 121 defines the legislative functions which are exclusive to the federal authorities. Other functions are carried out by the member Emirates.

Under the Constitution, the federal authorities of the United Arab Emirates consist of the following:

1.1 Supreme Council of the Federation

This is the highest authority in the State and consists of the rulers of all the Emirates that make up the Federation or their alternates in their Emirate in the event of their absence. Each Emirate has one vote in Council proceedings. The Supreme Council of the Federation formulates general policy on all issues for which the Federation has responsibility and considers all matters pertaining to the furtherance of the Federation's goals and the mutual interests of the member Emirates.

1.2 President and Vice-President of the Federation

The Supreme Council of the Federation elects the President and Vice-President from among its members. Under the Constitution, the President of the Federation performs a number of tasks, most importantly: presiding over the Supreme Council of the Federation and guiding its deliberations; signing federal laws, decrees and decisions that are ratified and promulgated by the Supreme Council; appointing the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister of the Federation, as well as government ministers, accepting their resignation and releasing them from their duties upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister of the Federation. The Vice-President of the Federation exercises all the powers of the President when the latter is absent for any reason.

1.3 The Cabinet

The Federal Cabinet consists of the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and a number of ministers. In its capacity as an executive organ of the Federation, and subject to supreme oversight by the President of the Federation and the Supreme Council, the Cabinet deals with all the internal and external affairs for which the Federation has competence under the Constitution and federal law. It performs a number of particular functions, most importantly: following up on the implementation of the Federal Government's general domestic and foreign policy; proposing draft federal laws and transmitting them to the Federal National Council; preparing the draft federal budget and overseeing the implementation of federal laws and decrees, as well as the international treaties and conventions to which the State is a party.

1.4 Federal National Council

The Council consists of 40 members from the member Emirates with seats assigned as follows: Abu Dhabi: 8; Dubai: 8; Sharjah: 6; Ras al-Khaimah: 6; Ajman: 4; Umm al-Qaiwain: 4; and Fujairah: 4. Draft federal laws, including finance bills, are submitted to the Federal National Council before being transmitted to the President of the Federation to lay before the Supreme Council for ratification. The Government informs the National Council of the international treaties and conventions which it signs with other States and various international organizations, and provides it with relevant background information. The Federal National Council may debate any general subject of relevance to federal affairs and make recommendations thereon.

1.5 Federal courts

Article 94 of the Constitution stipulates that justice is the foundation of government, the judiciary is independent and judges, in discharging their duties, are subject to no authority other than the law and their own conscience.

The federal court system consists of federal courts of first instance and federal appeal courts with diverse responsibilities for civil, commercial, criminal, administrative and sharia cases. In addition, the Federal Supreme Court, consisting of a president and a number of justices appointed by a decree of the President of the Federation, following approval by the Supreme Council, performs a number of tasks as assigned to it under article 99 of the Constitution, including: verifying the constitutionality of federal laws, interpreting the Constitution; and trying offences that have a direct bearing on the interests of the Federation.

In addition to the federal courts, the United Arab Emirates has local courts, as provided for in article 104 of the Constitution, which states: “Local judicial bodies in each Emirate shall have jurisdiction over all legal matters which are not assigned to the federal courts under the Constitution.” The local courts apply the Constitution, federal laws and local laws which are not incompatible with the Constitution and federal laws. The local courts operate on three levels - first instance, appeal and cassation - without prejudice to the functions vested in the Federal Supreme Court under the Constitution. According to the Constitution, the Prosecutor-General of the Federation is the head of the Federal Prosecutions Department, which prosecutes offences under the Federal Criminal Code and Federal Code of Criminal Procedures.

A judicial coordinating council was established by Cabinet decision No. 77/3 of 2007 under the chairmanship of His Excellency the Minister of Justice and with members including heads and directors of federal and local judicial bodies, in addition to directors of law colleges in the State. The council is tasked with promoting cooperation, coordination and exchanges of experiences between the federal and local courts, examining the shared problems and challenges with which they have to contend, recommending appropriate solutions and harmonizing legal principles and judgements handed down in similar cases heard by the two sets of courts.

2. Guarantees of the promotion and protection of human rights

2.1 Constitutional guarantees

In accordance with a number of human rights standards endorsed by the international community, chapter III of the Constitution is devoted to the subject of public freedoms, rights and duties, and contains a number of provisions (arts. 25 to 44) guaranteeing protection to these freedoms and rights. In addition, chapter II of the Constitution sets out the “Social and economic pillars of the Federation” and embodies a number of human rights principles, as described hereunder:

- Principle of equality: the Constitution affirms the principle of equality in article 14, which states: “Equality, social justice, and the creation of security, peace and equal opportunities for all citizens are the mainstays of society. Solidarity and mutual respect constitute a firm bond between citizens.” Article 25 furthermore provides: “All persons are equal before the law, and there shall be no discrimination between citizens of the Federation on the grounds of origin, ethnicity, religious belief or social status.”
- Personal freedom: article 26 of the Constitution affirms: “Personal freedom is guaranteed to all citizens. No person may be arrested, searched, detained or imprisoned except within the framework of the law, and no person may be subjected to torture or degrading treatment.” In affirmation of the human right to security, article 27 stipulates: “The law shall define offences and penalties. There shall be no penalty for an offence or an omission occurring prior to the enactment of a law providing for such a penalty.” The Constitution safeguards and regulates this right, stipulating, in article 28, that:

“Punishment is personal, and the accused shall be presumed innocent until his guilt is proven in a legal and fair trial. The accused is entitled to engage a person who is capable of defending him at trial. The law shall define the circumstances under which the accused must be assisted by counsel. It is prohibited to inflict bodily or mental harm on an accused person.”

- Freedom of opinion and guaranteeing the means for its expression: article 30 of the Constitution states: “Freedom of opinion and of oral and written expression and all other means of expression is guaranteed within the limits set by law.”
- Freedom of movement and residence: article 29 states: “Freedom of movement and residence is guaranteed to citizens within the limits set by law.”
- Freedom of religion: the Constitution recognizes the freedom to practise religion, as stated in article 32: “Freedom to practise religion in accordance with established traditions is safeguarded, provided that this is without prejudice to public order or contrary to public morals.” The State has authorized the establishment of places of worship for different denominations and revealed religions and has provided land free of charge for the construction of these places.
- Right to privacy: this right includes the inviolability of the home and the confidentiality of correspondence. The Constitution affirms the principle of the inviolability of the home in article 36, which states: “Homes are inviolable and may only be entered with the owner’s permission, unless the law and the conditions laid down therein otherwise provide.” Article 31 states: “The freedom and confidentiality of correspondence by mail, telegramme and all other means of communication are guaranteed by law.”
- Right to a family: the Constitution states that the family is the foundation of society. Article 15 states: “The family is the foundation of society, and the mainstays of the family are religion, morality and patriotism. The law shall safeguard and preserve the family and protect it from deviancy.”
- Right to social welfare and social security: article 16 states: “Society shall provide for the welfare of children and mothers and protects minors and others who are unable to look after themselves for any reason, such as illness, incapacity, old age or involuntary unemployment. It shall undertake to assist and rehabilitate them, in their own interests and the interests of society. The laws on public assistance and social insurance shall regulate these matters.”
- Right to education: the Constitution stipulates: “Education is a fundamental factor in social progress. It is compulsory at the primary stage and free of charge at all stages in the Federation. The law shall establish the necessary plans for the dissemination of education at its different stages and for the eradication of illiteracy” (art. 17). The legislature assigns the federal State responsibility for meeting this obligation.
- Right to health care: in order to create a safe and healthy society, the Constitution provides, in article 19, that: “Society shall guarantee citizens health care, together with the means to prevent and treat diseases and epidemics. It shall encourage the establishment of hospitals, clinics and public and private treatment centres.”

- Right to work: article 20 of the Constitution provides: “Society views work as one of the cornerstones of social progress. It shall endeavour to provide work and training to citizens and shall create the right conditions for work by enacting legislation which safeguards workers’ rights and employers’ interests in the light of advanced international labour legislation.” Article 34 states: “Every citizen is free to choose his work, profession or occupation in the framework of the law, having due regard for the legislation regulating certain occupations and professions. Forced labour may not be imposed on any person, except in the exceptional circumstances stipulated by law and against compensation. No person may be enslaved.” The Constitution guarantees the right to engage in government service, as stated in article 35: “Access to government service is open to all citizens under equal conditions and in accordance with the law. Government service is a national service entrusted to those who perform it. In discharging their professional duties, government servants shall be guided solely by the public interest.”
- Right to freedom of assembly and association: article 33 states: “Freedom of assembly and association is guaranteed within the framework of the law.”
- Right to own property: the Constitution guarantees the right to own property, in the interests both of individuals and society. Hence, article 21 provides: “Private property is safeguarded. The law shall specify the restrictions applicable to such property. No person may be stripped of his property except as dictated by the public good, in the framework of the law and in exchange for fair compensation.” In furtherance of the right to own property, the legislature prohibits the expropriation of public property, as stated in article 39 [of the Constitution]: “The expropriation of public property is prohibited. The penalty of expropriation of private property may only be imposed pursuant to a court order and under the circumstances provided for by law.”
- Right to bring a complaint and to communicate with the public authorities: the legislature affirms that rights and freedoms are guaranteed protection. Article 41 [of the Constitution] states: “Everyone may bring a complaint before the competent authorities, including the judicial authorities, regarding any infringement of the rights and freedoms set out in the present chapter.”

The tradition of open audiences held by the rulers of the Emirates and senior officials continues. Audiences by the rulers and senior officials provide a forum for citizens and others to discuss and debate public affairs. The rulers pay frequent visits on a virtually systematic basis to citizens in their communities, and even their homes, in order to learn about their living conditions at first hand. This is an established and effective practice in the State and is a traditional channel which runs in parallel with modern channels of representation and participation.

2.2 Legal guarantees

In order to give effect to the general principles embodied in the Constitution, the State has enacted a number of laws to guarantee rights and freedoms, including:

Federal Criminal Code No. 3 of 1987, as amended by Federal Act No. 34 of 2005

The Code sets out a number of fundamental principles aimed at preserving and protecting human rights, including the principles of: *nulla poena sine lege*; the presumption of innocence; the personal nature of punishment; the criminalization of acts involving abuse of office and misuse of authority; the principle that no person may be arrested, struck or searched except under the

circumstances defined by law; the prohibition on the threat or use of force to extract a confession to a crime; and the prohibition on insulting revealed religions and on all acts which are prejudicial to the life, physical integrity or dignity of persons.

Code of Criminal Procedures No. 35 of 1992, as amended by Federal Act No. 29 of 2005

The Code sets out the procedures that courts hearing criminal cases must follow in order to guarantee the accused a fair hearing. It guarantees the accused the right to defend himself in person or through a lawyer, whether during the preliminary inquiry, the investigation phase or trial proceedings. It also specifies the procedures by which the accused may appeal against judgements handed down by courts at different levels.

Federal Act No. 43 of 1992, regulating penal institutions

The federal legislature regulates penal institutions, including the individualization of punishment, and the incarceration and categorization of prisoners. It guarantees prisoners access to health care and social welfare, together with education and moral instruction. It also regulates prisoners' release and rehabilitation. The most important provisions of the Act define and provide for the protection of prisoners' rights, granting members of the State prosecution service the right to enter correctional and penal institutions at any time in order to verify compliance with the laws and regulations. Every prisoner is entitled to meet with a member of the State prosecution service who is in the institution in order to lay his complaint before him. Moreover, every prisoner has the right to submit a complaint to the Minister for Internal Affairs, the Prosecutor-General, the director of the administration concerned or an officer at the institution. The Act also grants diplomats and human rights associations the right to visit prisoners and to examine their conditions of detention, provided that written permission is obtained in advance from the prosecutor's office concerned.

Federal Labour Relations Act No. 8 of 1980

This Act sets out a number of principles safeguarding workers' rights, such as: equality with respect to employment and career progression; the protection of wages, working hours and leave; workers' safety; workers' health and social welfare; compensation for industrial injuries and occupational diseases; and the settlement of individual and collective labour disputes. With regard to the right to work or to remain in work, the Act does not distinguish between individuals on the grounds of race, sex, social status or belief. Hence, everyone is equal before the law, save in respect of the exigencies of a job and compliance with labour standards. The State is pursuing its efforts to improve these laws with a view to assisting the international organizations concerned. The Ministry of Labour is currently discussing a State programme of action, in cooperation with the International Labour Organization, to conduct a comprehensive review of the State's labour regulations and procedures.

Federal Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 51 of 2006

The State promulgated Federal Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 51 of 2006. The fact that the Emirates is one of the first States in the region to have promulgated legislation on this topic, testifies to the determination of the Emirates legislature to combat human trafficking offences and various forms of exploitation of human beings, particularly women and children. Hence, article 1 of the Act defines human trafficking as "the recruitment, transfer, removal or receiving of persons by means of the threat or use of force or any other form of coercion, or by means of abduction, deception, trickery, the abuse of authority, the exploitation of a situation of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of sums of money or favours in order to obtain another person's consent with a

view to exploiting that person. Exploitation includes all forms of sexual exploitation, exploitation of the prostitution of others, bonded or forced labour, servitude or similar practices, slavery or the removal of human organs.”

Federal Personal Status Act No. 28 of 2005

The United Arab Emirates promulgated Federal Personal Status Act No. 28 of 2005, which contains the most up-to-date and flexible norms on personal status matters. The Act applies to all citizens of the Emirates, except for non-Muslims whose confessional group and community is regulated by specific provisions. It also applies to non-citizens, unless they ask to be governed by their own laws.

Federal Act No. 9 of 1976, concerning juvenile delinquents and vagrants

In conformity with international norms, Federal Act No. 9 of 1976, concerning juvenile delinquents and vagrants, regulates the administration of juvenile criminal justice based on the need of minors to be afforded fair and humane treatment during prosecution, investigation and trial proceedings, which essentially preclude the use of custodial measures. Under the Act, a minor is a person below the age of 18 and may not be sentenced to death or imprisonment or ordered to pay financial penalties. Moreover, the provisions on repeat offences do not apply to minors. In 2003, special prosecutor’s offices and departments were established to deal with juvenile cases.

Federal Printing and Publishing Act No. 15 of 1980

The Federal Printing and Publishing Act regulates and guarantees freedom of the press. The Act imposes restrictions on the exercise of the Minister’s administrative powers, ensuring that the Minister does not exploit those powers to nullify the right to freedom of expression guaranteed by the Constitution. The Act also recognizes the right of the press to publish whatever material it deems fit.

Federal Human Organ Transplants Act No. 15 of 1993

The Federal Human Organ Transplants Act No. 15 of 1993 regulates operations involving the removal of human organs from a living or deceased person and their transplant to another person, as well as the circumstances, conditions and restrictions appertaining to the donation of human organs. One of its key articles is article 7, which prohibits the sale and purchase of human organs by any method whatever or the receiving of any material reward in exchange for human organs. Article 10 defines the penalties for breaching the Act, namely, imprisonment and a fine of up to 30,000 dirhams (Dh) or a term of three years’ imprisonment.

Federal Public Interest Associations and Organizations Act No. 2 of 2008

In the framework of regulating civil associations and public interest organizations, the State enacted a law to define the rules on the establishment of these associations, the methods by which they are administered and their overall functions, together with the condition of membership and the duties and rights of members. The Act requires associations to keep records and books, in particular income and expenditure accounts, supported by documentary proof.

Federal Social Security Act No. 2 of 2001

This Act was created to meet and guarantee the requirements of a basic and decent life for citizens. It regulates social welfare and the categories of person entitled thereto, together with emergency relief provision in the event of public catastrophes.

Federal Pensions and Social Insurance Act No. 7 of 1999

This Act requires public and private sector employers to contribute to the general pensions and social insurance scheme, in order to provide coverage for citizens employed in the two sectors, whom the Act refers to as “insured persons”. In this way, the Act provides a safety net for insured persons or their beneficiaries, ensuring that they will have a decent life when the insured person’s employment comes to an end for any of the reasons specified in the Act, in particular, death, incapacity, lack of physical fitness for the job and the reaching of retirement age.

Federal Environmental Protection and Development Act No. 24 of 1999

The basic aim of this Act is to protect the environment, preserve its diversity and natural balance and combat different forms of environmental pollution, preventing any damage or adverse effects caused by development plans and programmes and protecting society, human health and other living organisms from activities and actions which damage the environment.

Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, concerning the rights of persons with special needs

The aim of this Act is to guarantee persons with special needs their rights and provide them with a comprehensive range of services consistent with their capacities. The State guarantees equality of treatment among these persons and vis-à-vis other members of society under its legislation and socio-economic development programmes. It also takes appropriate measures to prevent discrimination against them based on their special needs status.

2.3 International treaty guarantees

Since it was established, the United Arab Emirates has taken care to incorporate the fundamental human rights principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into its Constitution and laws and to accede to and ratify the fundamental international human rights treaties, thus helping to promote the human rights principles to which the international community is committed. Hence, it acceded to 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 against Transnational Organized Crime (2007) and the Convention against Corruption (2006), in addition to the Geneva Conventions on international humanitarian law.

The State has furthermore signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol and ratified nine International Labour Organization conventions on the subjects of working hours, forced labour, labour inspections, night work for women, equal pay, the minimum age for employment and the worst forms of child labour. The State has stepped up its regional cooperation in this domain, ratifying the Arab Charter on Human Rights adopted at the Tunis Summit in 2004, together with two Arab Labour Organization conventions.

The State is in the process of completing the constitutional formalities for accession to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and is considering acceding to the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, respectively on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and involvement of children in armed conflicts.

2.4 Cooperation with international and regional organizations

Since joining the United Nations on 9 December 1971, the Emirates has supported the activities of the Organization, because it believes in the promotion of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law and norms and is convinced that the United Nations is the best mechanism for strengthening international relations and achieving sustainable development.

The State has stepped up its involvement in the United Nations specialized agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It has also developed its cooperation with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), in addition to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The United Arab Emirates has entered into cooperation agreements with over 28 United Nations funds and programmes carrying out some 80 consultancy and technical assignments in the Emirates to assist ministries and federal and local institutions and government.

As a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the State supports the Organization in order to enable it to play its role in the development of Islamic action in favour of Islamic countries.

Since joining the League of Arab States and its institutions and specialized agencies, the State has promoted and supported all the activities and regional programmes of the League in order to strengthen and promote Arab action.

The United Arab Emirates is also a founding member of the Gulf Cooperation Council and, ever since the declaration establishing the Council was issued in Abu Dhabi on 25 May 1981, it has helped to promote cooperation among the member States, to foster complementarity in different domains and to coordinate positions and foreign and economic policies.

In the context of its unreserved support for the activities of United Nations organs, the State signed a cooperation agreement with UNICEF in 2005 in the framework of a programme to monitor and provide for the social and psychological rehabilitation, repatriation and local reintegration of child camel jockeys. The State contributed \$30 million for the establishment of welfare projects for these children in their countries. The State continues closely to follow the progress of these projects on the ground, in conjunction with the countries concerned and with UNICEF.

The State signed a cooperation agreement with UNICEF in the context of the Global AIDS Campaign, which aims at preventing the spread of this disease. In the framework of cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and in support of the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, the State contributed \$15 million to support the work of

the office responsible for combating and suppressing human trafficking and to run training courses for technical staff and law enforcement personnel. The State furthermore supports the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.

In cooperation with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Emirates has organized several programmes, such as the strategy for the advancement of women in the Emirates and a project to promote the role of women parliamentarians.

3. Civil associations and national human rights institutions

Emirates Human Rights Association

This Association was established pursuant to the Federal Public Interest Associations Act No. 6 of 1974, as amended, to raise awareness about and explain the rights and obligations of individuals in society. It operates within the framework of the law and in cooperation with government institutions to promote the principles of respect for individual rights, curb human rights violations, safeguard equality and prevent discrimination among members of society based on origin, religious and intellectual beliefs, colour, sex and race. The Association also provides assistance to improve conditions for detainees and prisoners in accordance with international standards and human rights principles, and to help the weak, victims of disasters and persons with special needs.

General Women's Union

The Women's Union was established on 27 August 1975. Its members include the women's associations that founded the Union (the Abu Dhabi Women's Association, the Dubai Women's Association, the Sharjah Women's Union Association, the Ajman "*Um Al Mo'mineen*" Women's Association, the Umm Al Qaiwain Women's Association and the Ras Al Khaimah Women's Association). The Union plays a key role in the formulation of general policy on women, the creation of plans for the promotion of women's issues in all domains and the establishment of plans and programmes to integrate women into overall development plans and empower them to play their role in life without discrimination.

Jurists' Association

This Association was established on 25 September 1980 to promote human rights, defend freedoms and the rule of law, raise professional, cultural and social standards among jurists and cooperate with Arab and international human rights associations and foundations whose work has a bearing on the Association's aims.

Sociologists' Association

This Association was established in 1980 to promote awareness and social education throughout society, using all available means to foster social cohesion, stability and integration, in cooperation with government agencies, and helping to provide social welfare and technical expertise to individuals and groups who need it, in particular persons with disabilities, minors and older persons.

Journalists' Association

The Journalists' Association was founded on 30 September 2000 to promote the Emirates press as a medium of expression of the Emirates and a defender of journalists' rights and interests; to enable journalists to carry out their mission; and to further the principle of freedom of the press. The Association promotes the profession and safeguards the rights of all members in the event of arbitrary dismissal, illness or incapacity through recourse to the competent authorities and cooperation with relevant public and private institutions geared towards the development of the media profession and activities.

The Journalists' Association was a founding member of the International Press Emblem Campaign in Geneva, Switzerland, and was selected as the regional headquarters for the States of the Gulf, the Middle East and North Africa. The Association joined the International Union of Journalists in 2004.

General Department of Human Rights, Dubai Police General Headquarters

Established on 30 September 1995, the Department has responsibility for protecting human rights, receiving and dealing with complaints from the public about violations of human rights and personal freedoms, providing for the welfare of inmates of correctional and penal institutions, assisting their families and disseminating a human rights culture throughout society.

Dubai Women's and Children's Foundation

This Foundation was set up in 2007 to provide direct assistance to victims of violence, including domestic violence, human trafficking and child abuse, by offering them safe houses, training opportunities and rehabilitation services which meet international standards, thus helping to strengthen human rights protection.

National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking

The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking was established by Federal Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 51 of 2006, which updated the State's legislation on this crucially important issue and underscored the State's commitment to meeting its international obligations in this domain. In this regard, the State has ratified the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

In conformity with the Act, the Committee studies and updates legislation on human trafficking issues in order to provide victims with the protection that they need consistent with international standards. It also prepares reports on the measures that the State has taken and follow-up thereon, as well as coordination between the different State organs concerned, such as ministries, government departments, institutions and organizations, and education of institutions and society about these offences.

Social Support Centre, Abu Dhabi police headquarters

The Social Support Centre was set up in 2003. The idea behind its establishment was founded on several principles and values, most importantly the principle of respect for human rights in accordance with the sharia and the rule of law. Under article 16 of the regulation by which it was established, the Centre deals with the following: cases of domestic violence that for which an official complaint does not need to be filed; violence in schools; cases of boys and girls who

run away from home which have not been reported to the police; minor acts of juvenile delinquency which do not constitute criminal offences; disputes and minor disagreements between neighbours that do not need to be the subject of an official complaint.

Zayed Foundation for Charitable Works

This is a charitable foundation which was established in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in 1992 to carry out charitable work in the State and abroad and, in particular, to help build and support cultural centres, scientific research complexes and public awareness institutions, together with hospitals, clinics, health rehabilitation centres, orphanages, childcare institutions and homes for older persons and persons with disabilities, and also to deliver relief aid to areas stricken by natural and social disasters.

Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates

The Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates was founded in 1983 as a voluntary civil organization pursuing a humanitarian mission of protecting human life, ensuring respect for the humanity of the person and relieving human suffering. The Society operates in coordination and cooperation with the competent and relevant authorities and institutions in the State and abroad, employing a range of methods, of which the most important are the delivery of certain types of health care, the organization and implementation of emergency relief operations that deliver the right kind of assistance, the establishment of charitable projects and action to deal with the social problems confronting widows, orphans, older persons, persons with special needs and the reunification of families that have been separated. The Society also provides facilities in the State for persons who are ill and wounded or who have fled from disaster-stricken areas, providing them with food, medicine, treatment and psychological support.

Family Development Foundation

The Foundation was established on 10 May 2006 by a decree of the President of the State. It focuses on the implementation of social legislation, recommends whatever changes are necessary to develop it in order to guarantee the rights of women and children and creates sustainable development programmes for families and women. The Foundation, working in cooperation with local and federal organizations and specialized civil associations, seeks to provide for the development and welfare of the family in the broad sense of the term, in furtherance of the aims of promoting the well-being of families, women and children. The Foundation creates mechanisms and means for dealing with family issues and coordinating actions to achieve qualitative solidarity in the interests of the family and society. It is also involved in exchanges of information and experiences, and the development and coordination of joint areas of work. It adopts scientific best practices and studies and analyses current and future phenomena, problems and challenges confronting the family, women and children.

Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation for Charitable and Humanitarian Works

The Foundation for Charitable and Humanitarian Works provides assistance to all persons in need in the United Arab Emirates, whether they live in a remote area or an urban environment. It also helps the needy in countries throughout the world. It is an autonomous foundation with the legal capacity to achieve its aims.

4. Efforts of the Emirates to promote and protect human rights

4.1 Promotion of political participation

The approach taken by the United Arab Emirates since the Federation was established has been characterized by measured and steady progress leading to major successes and qualitative leaps based on the development of channels for political participation and the gradual creation of an electoral system designed to strengthen the powers of the Federal National Council and boost its role. In order to ensure that modernization bears fruit, the State - as mentioned in the address given by His Excellency the Head of State in 2005 - has adopted a clear timetable based on a gradualist approach, whereby each phase will be assessed separately and built upon before moving to the next stage.

The first stage, which was launched in 2006, involved the establishment of an electoral college, the members of which were chosen by the rulers of the Emirates. The college elected half the members of the Federal National Council, while the other half were appointed by the rulers of the Emirates. The aim of the second stage is to increase the membership of the Council and expand the Council's powers, while the third stage will involve the holding of general elections to return half the members of the Federal National Council.

4.2 Women

Women occupy an important place in Emirates society. Ever since it was established in 1971, the State has taken an interest in improving the status of women and providing them with the skills they need to enable them to be active and productive members of society through their constructive participation in different areas of life. Legislative and legal measures adopted by the Emirates focus on the elimination of gender-based discrimination. Hence, the State has adopted several policies to guarantee the advancement of women and to enable women to exercise all their constitutional and legal rights (annex 3).

In implementation of the Constitution, legislation has been enacted affirming the principle of equal rights for men and women, such as the right to work, to social security and a pension, to own property, to manage business activities and assets, to have access to all educational and health services and housing, to equal pay and to benefits such as maternity and childcare leave, as guaranteed under the Civil Service Act. The fact that the Emirates has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination against Women and is a member of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission for Social Development of the Economic and Social Council is a positive sign of the State's determination to do everything possible to provide women with opportunities to participate actively in sustainable development. According to the 2007-2008 Human Development Report, the United Arab Emirates is twenty-ninth out of a total of 177 States when measured against the gender empowerment indicator.

In the framework of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination against Women, the United Arab Emirates and its women's organizations produced a document on boosting the role of women and ensuring their constructive participation in various domains. The document, entitled "National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in the Emirates", was drawn up in close cooperation with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The aims and mechanisms set out in the strategy document focus on

a number of first principles of importance to society, in particular: the Constitution of the State; the constitutional provisions which provide guarantees and rights for women; and support for social cohesion, the preservation of identity and the effective and productive utilization of human resources, whether men or women.

The State took another step forward in 2006 when it launched a national initiative to include women in development issues in the United Arab Emirates and in all governmental and non-governmental sectors and to promote gender equality in policies, programmes, projects and legislation in order to support sustainable development. Other objectives of the initiative include, improving the resources and building the capacities of women's organizations and developing their partnerships with State and community structures. This step won international praise and support, and led to a partnership with the United Nations Development Programme.

By way of a contribution to the promotion of women's political participation, the General Women's Union launched a project in 2006 to promote the role of Arab women parliamentarians within the framework of the UNIFEM strategy and plan of action for 2004-2008. The purpose was to highlight best practices and useful lessons to be learned for the present and the future from working with Arab women parliamentarians and from the legislative issues that come to the fore in studying cases in the Arab States participating in the project.

In 2006, women's political empowerment in Emirates society was given a significant boost when women were given two ministerial portfolios. That number was doubled in 2008 when four women were given ministerial portfolios in the government line-up and nine were elected or appointed as members of the Federal Nations Council (22.5 per cent of the members of the Council). This shows that the empowerment of women is both the responsibility of everyone in society and a part of reform and development plans.

The United Arab Emirates devotes tireless efforts to the eradication of illiteracy and the attainment of gender equality with regard to reading and writing skills among adults and young persons. As a result of these efforts and the cooperation of civil society organization, literacy rates among adult women (over 15 years of age) and young women (15-24 years of age) were 93 and 97 per cent respectively in 2005. In order to promote gender equality and empower women, the United Arab Emirates is working to eliminate gender gaps in primary and intermediate education by no later than 2015. The statistics on education show that the ratios of girls to boys in primary and intermediate education in 2005 were 94.8 and 92.6 per cent respectively. As for the ratios of girls to boys in secondary and university education, the corresponding figures were 106.7 and 181 per cent respectively in 2005.

The legislation of the State grants men and women equal rights in respect of work. In fact, women's participation in the Emirates labour market is a matter of crucial importance. Hence, the State has taken all possible measures to encourage Emirates women to participate in the labour market. The female participation rate among nationals is approximately 59 per cent, with 30 per cent of women in senior decision-making positions. Women occupy approximately 60 per cent of technical jobs in the medical, nursing, pharmacy and teaching professions, and around 15 per cent of teaching positions in the University of the United Arab Emirates. Furthermore, eight women were appointed to positions as under-secretaries of State and assistant directors in State institutions, according to the data for September 2005. The State has encouraged women to join the diplomatic corps and the legal profession, and women have been appointed as diplomats by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There were approximately 45 women diplomats in 2006, 10 of them working in embassies abroad, and women have also been appointed as deputy public prosecutors and judges.

Women are not only employed in the government sector but are also active in private sector as businesswomen. The total volume of business investments managed by over 11,000 women managers nationwide is estimated at Dh 14 billion.

4.3 The police and human rights

The police force is a regular civil corps with responsibility for maintaining security and public order in the country. The Ministry of the Interior places human rights at the top of its priorities, based on its strategy of focusing on justice, equality, probity and the protection of human rights as part of its vision and goals as a pathway to security and stability and a greater sense of safety in a multi-ethnic society. In order to promote honest conduct and respect for human rights, a police code of conduct setting out 33 behavioural rules and professional ethics has been adopted. Prior to their appointment, all members of the police must sign the code and undertake to abide by it. These rules require police officers, as officials who represent the State with regard to law enforcement, to: serve the community; uphold ethical standards; protect rights and freedoms; serve the cause of justice; protect the rights of accused persons, persons convicted of offences and victims of crime; deal with all members of the community without exhibiting any bias or discrimination on grounds of colour, sex, nationality, religion, belief, language, age or social status; and to refrain, in all circumstances, from all forms of cruel or degrading treatment (annex 4).

The structure of the Ministry of the Interior includes several administrative units which monitor the behaviour of the police and refer complaints from the public to all police headquarters and general departments, in addition to the Office of the Inspector-General, which is an independent monitoring authority reporting directly to the Minister for Internal Affairs. Channels of communication are open to the public to receive complaints about any errors which police officers may commit and to take whatever action is needed. This helps to promote the concepts of community policing and social justice and to offer a high quality service to the community.

The Ministry of the Interior, through the diplomatic channel, sends diplomatic and consular missions tables containing data on their nationals in prisons. The figures show that a total of 1,273 prison visits were made by embassy and consular staff in 2007 and the first half of 2008, while the number of visits made by organizations, associations and the Red Crescent over the same period was 121 (annex 6).

4.4 The media

The National Media Council was established to oversee media issues. Media organizations in the United Arab Emirates have worked to make a qualitative leap in terms of professional and technical standards and the achievement of journalistic excellence. A total of seven Arab newspapers and four English-language newspapers are published in the State, in addition to dozens of magazines and specialist periodicals. Television stations have expanded steadily with the advent of satellite broadcasting. Over 1,213 specialized companies now work in the Dubai Media City free zone, including 60 television companies which operate and broadcast the output of close to 150 television stations, and more than 120 publishing houses which produce around 400 titles.

A code of honour and professional ethics has been drawn up and signed by newspaper editors, defining the basic norms regulating the conduct of journalists and the ethical rules which journalists must follow when dealing with news items and sources. The Journalists' Association examined the draft law on printing and publishing, presented its comments on it and forwarded them to the National Media Council.

The decision taken by the Vice-President and Prime Minister of the State to prohibit the imprisonment of journalists who may commit an error in the course of their work was very well received among all the circles involved in human rights work and among the members of the profession. The report of the “Reporters Without Borders” organization for 2007 ranked the Emirates in sixty-fifth position out of 169 countries, which is a marked improvement on its ranking for 2006.

4.5 Migrant workers

The number of migrant workers in the Emirates is among the highest in the world. A total of 3,113,000 foreign workers of over 200 nationalities work in 250,000 enterprises. The wide opportunities for employment on offer help to create an open social climate in the country and to cement ties with neighbouring States and communities (annex 2).

Improving working conditions

The Emirates believes that human beings, including workers with temporary contracts, have the right to an adequate standard of living. Hence, the Vice-President and Prime Minister of the State, the ruler of Dubai, issued a number of directives to improve the living conditions of workers, on a continuous basis. The most important of these directives relate to: the creation of suitable workers’ housing in conformity with international standards; the provision of adequate means of transport; the establishment of federal tribunals to deal with labour disputes; guarantees of workers’ freedom of movement; and the articles of the Labour Code and decrees regulating the Code guarantee to workers and employers the enjoyment of their rights. The Ministry of Labour has taken several steps to improve working conditions, such as requiring businesses with 50 or more employees to submit every quarter tables certified by a public account showing that workers’ wages have actually been paid. In 2008, the Ministry introduced a regulation requiring enterprises to pay salaries through banks and other financial institutions.

In view of the soaring temperatures in the summer, since 2005, the Ministry of Labour has prohibited the performance of work under the direct sun from June to August, between the hours of 12.30 and 3 p.m., and decided to impose a fine of up to Dh 30,000 and to refuse to issue new work permits for a period of up to one year to companies which breach this prohibition. The Ministry does not issue collective work permits to enterprises in the construction industry and other sectors without proof that the employer will provide employees with adequate accommodation. Pursuant to a governmental directive on increasing the number of labour inspectors, the Ministry has stepped up its inspection visits in accordance with the Labour Code and international conventions. In 2007, its inspectors visited 122,000 enterprises, sanctioning 8,588 for breaches relating to working conditions and for violations of workers’ rights.

Labour disputes

Labour disputes reported by employees or employers are settled by a legal specialist within 14 days of the filing of the complaint. If no settlement is reached, the complaint is referred to a court (employees are not required to pay costs at any stage of proceedings). A total of 22,000 cases were settled in 2007, of which only 3,949, or 18 per cent, were referred to the courts. The legal specialist examines applications for the withdrawal of complaints about employees who abscond. If the withdrawal of a complaint is approved and the complaint is deemed to have been a ruse on the part of the employer, the Ministry will cease all dealings with the enterprise for a one-year period and fine it Dh 10,000.

Labour tribunals

Labour tribunals were set up at the State level to process labour cases in an expeditious manner. Cases referred to these tribunals are exempt from legal fees at all stages of proceedings, including during the enforcement of judgements. The settlement of labour disputes was added to the functions of mediation and reconciliation boards in order to facilitate the consideration of these cases as an alternative to ordinary legal process.

Workers' health insurance

Workers receive a health card to make it easier for them to have access to treatment, without having to pay for the card. The Emirate of Abu Dhabi has introduced a mandatory, comprehensive insurance policy which covers all workers, including those who work in residential homes. The policy is paid for by the employer. The health insurance scheme adopted by Abu Dhabi will be rolled out to include the entire State.

International cooperation and initiatives to protect workers' rights

As part of the Emirates' efforts to improve the situation of workers, to take care of them, to raise their awareness and to ensure that they are not exploited in their States of origin, 10 memorandums of understanding were signed between December 2006 and December 2007 with labour-sending States in Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand, China, Mongolia and Indonesia).

The Emirates furthermore hosted the Ministerial Consultation on Overseas Employment and Contractual Labour for Countries of Origin and Destination in Asia (the Abu Dhabi Dialogue) and the Gulf Forum on Temporary Contractual Labour in January 2008, which were organized with the help of the Council of Labour and Social Affairs Ministers of the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Arab Labour Organization. The Abu Dhabi meeting established that labour-sending and receiving States have joint responsibility for ensuring that companies which import labour and all organizations involved in the employment of temporary contractual labour comply with the requirements of domestic laws regulating the sending of labour, and thus contribute to the protection of workers' rights. The meeting also recognized that labour-sending and receiving countries have joint responsibility for monitoring compliance by labour-importing companies and all organizations involved in the employment of labour with domestic laws regulating the sending of workers.

Domestic workers

The Emirates pays considerable attention to the issue of domestic servants and domestic workers. In April 2007, the United Arab Emirates imposed a standard employment contract, applicable throughout the Federation, for persons employed to assist in the home and those with a similar status. The standard employment contract regulates the employment of persons in these categories consistent with the nature of the work and related tasks. It also covers other aspects such as health care, salaries, the duration of the contract, the provision of adequate rest breaks and access to treatment and health care under the health scheme in effect in the State. Salaries are set by agreement between the two parties, and paragraph 1 of the contract stipulates the full amount of the salary to be paid at the end of each month. It also states that the two sides must sign a salary statement, written in Arabic and English, as proof that the salary has been paid and received. The sponsor must keep this document and present it on demand.

The State is in the process of drafting a bill on domestic service to cover domestic servants and persons with a similar status, and the constitutional formalities for its enactment will be carried out as soon as the draft is completed.

Expatriate clubs and associations

The State makes sure to adopt best practices and provide a decent life for persons residing in its territory. A wide range of expatriate associations, clubs and business associations have been established in the Emirates, helping to strengthen relations among residents in the State.

4.6 Combating human trafficking

In order to maintain its status as an active and committed member of the international community, the Emirates has taken action to implement a strategy focusing on four key areas:

(a) The development of legislation and laws on human trafficking issues. The State promulgated the Federal Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 51 of 2006, the first law of its kind in the Arab world. The Act prescribes severe penalties of up to life imprisonment. It covers all forms of human trafficking, including various forms of exploitation, child labour and trading in human organs;

(b) Empowering the authorities to use deterrents and preventive measures. In this regard, the Federal Government and local Governments have expanded the scope of anti-human trafficking laws. Reports show that 10 cases involving human trafficking had been filed by the end of 2007, and that convictions had been handed down in 5 cases, in which the defendants were sentenced to between 3 and 10 years in prison;

(c) Protection and support for victims of human trafficking offences: the State has established a number of residential facilities to shelter and support victims of human trafficking in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and is currently rolling out the experiment to include other Emirates;

(d) Expanding the scope of bilateral and international cooperation on combating human trafficking offences: in the past two years, the Emirates has signed agreements with a number of countries, such as India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, China, Thailand and the Philippines, to regulate influxes of workers from those countries. Other bilateral and international cooperation agreements have been signed with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to give the Emirates police service a prominent role in the enforcement of laws and dissemination of information at the regional level and to encourage partnerships with non-governmental organizations and institutions in exchanging know-how and information about combating human trafficking (annex 5).

5. Achievements and best practices

The 2008 Human Development Report produced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ranked the Emirates thirty-ninth out of the 177 States covered by the report in terms of its place on the human development ladder, on which it has made significant progress in all domains. The strategy of the Government of the Emirates (annex 1) is to build on these achievements, some of which are described hereunder.

5.1 Education

Public education

The United Arab Emirates has implemented several strategies to create an advanced educational system that keeps pace with developments in the modern age and modern information techniques and raises levels of educational attainments among students. The State guarantees free public education up until university for all citizens, in order to disseminate education throughout society and to eradicate illiteracy. Since the establishment of the Federation, the public education process made great strides forward; the total number of public and private schools in 2007/2008 stood at 1,259, 759 of them public schools and 500 private schools, catering for over 648,000 students in the different stages of education. In private schools, the rate of enrolment was 98 per cent for boys and 95 per cent for girls, and the illiteracy rate fell to 5 per cent as a result of the work done by literacy and adult education centres.

The State has made a great effort to improve education for persons with disabilities and integrate them into society through the creation of rehabilitation and education centres for persons with disabilities throughout the State and supplying all their needs, drawing on international expertise and experience in this domain. The State develops academic programmes, bearing in mind the importance of this aspect of development for its future goals. Hence, the Ministry of Education has developed and updated teaching curricula to keep pace with changes in the world, to disseminate education throughout the State and to create modern schools. The State has also given the private sector the opportunity to share responsibility with the Government for delivering education and offering educational opportunities to all the inhabitants of the State.

In the 2007/2008 academic year, the Ministry of Education began implementing the “Schools of Tomorrow” project and programme in the framework of its policy of utilizing the experiences of other countries to develop its schools and educational institutions. The Ministry applies international best practices and student-centred teaching methods, employing modern educational techniques to teach English, mathematics, sciences and computing.

In keeping with the principles behind the concept of decentralized government, education boards have been set up in the Emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah to formulate education plans for each Emirate in the context of the general education policy of the Ministry of Education, which forms the basis of the State’s education system. These boards have contributed to the overall renewal of the education process and the application of the principle of decentralization, and have launched important initiatives, projects and programmes to develop the education system.

Higher education

The State has devoted its energies to higher education. Thus, the University of the United Arab Emirates was founded in 1977 as the first institute of higher learning in the country. This was followed by the creation of several universities and public education colleges throughout the State offering access to free education, in addition to 44 accredited private institutes of higher learning. In the 2007/2008 academic year, a total of 46,519 students were enrolled in these institutions.

Since it was established, the State has sent its students to the best universities in the world to study and benefit from [other] educational experiences. In 2005/2006 a total of 110 students were sent to study for a bachelor’s degree, while 65 were sent to take a master’s degree and 29 a doctorate.

5.2 Health care

Ever since it was founded, the State has made efforts to provide health services to citizens and residents in the framework of development plans, and has established a number of government hospitals and clinics at the State level to provide treatment for all. In 2006, there were a total of 33 public hospitals, 192 clinics and health centres and 6,490 family health centres. The State has also allowed the private sector to set up hospitals and clinics in the different Emirates of the Federation in order to foster the development of medical services. A number of hospitals have been created in conjunction with international health centres; mention may be made of the Dubai Healthcare City, which has attracted a number of international medical institutions. Some Emirates have adopted a compulsory health scheme which applies to citizens and residents alike.

As health-care services have evolved, the fertility rate has risen and mortality rates have fallen, with the result that average life expectancy at birth in 2006 stood at 75 years. The fall in the mortality rate is most evident among infants; the infant mortality rate in 2006 was less than 7 per 1,000 live births and the under-5 mortality rate was less than 12 per 1,000 live births. Infant poliomyelitis has been eradicated in the Emirates. A final document declaring the country to be free of the disease was drawn up by the regional committee in 2007 and subsequently transmitted to the international certification commission. The Emirates was also declared malaria free by the international certification commission of the World Health Organization on 12 March 2007.

5.3 Social welfare

Social security

The State pays out monthly allowances to 16 different categories of persons, including older persons, persons with disabilities, orphans, widows and divorced women. Some 37,848 families benefit from this scheme, and a total of 4,478 children including 1,389 orphans, 2,951 children with disabilities and 138 children of unknown parentage receive assistance. As from 2008, the amounts disbursed to these families will be doubled, from Dh 1 billion to Dh 2.2 billion.

Welfare of persons with disabilities

A total of 3,339 persons with disabilities are cared for in 33 centres, 15 of them government centres and 18 civil sector centres. Special education classes in regular Ministry of Education schools include a number of students with learning difficulties. The Ministry of the Interior has adopted a project to train and employ persons with disabilities, whereby training and jobs in the Emirates will be provided where these persons live. Mention is also made of the Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services initiative, which focuses on the rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities. Moreover, five sports clubs have been established for persons with disabilities, in addition to three civil associations that deal directly with persons with disabilities.

Welfare of older persons

The State pursues a policy of providing for the welfare of older persons, using financial aid and mobile units to deliver services to them in order to keep them with their families. A total of 11,171 older persons have access to social assistance. Older persons can also go to homes and day clubs where they can receive services without having to be residents. This arrangement is designed to keep older persons with their families. Mobile units have been set up so that health, social and psychological care can be delivered to older persons in their homes by a team consisting of a nurse, a doctor and a social worker.

Children's care

The State devotes considerable attention to children. It has enacted legislation to regulate the right of children to care and education, and has implemented a number of health, social and educational plans to provide for children's welfare. Since families and nurseries are the first structures in which children are educated, the State focuses attention on families and their welfare to enable them to play their role in child-raising. This it does through welfare and family training schemes, together with instruction for prospective marriage partners to educate them about the fundamental requirements of family life.

The State has established numerous nurseries and kindergartens in all towns and villages to encourage early learning. These structures provide the best standards of educational and psychological care in the world. A total of 202 nurseries were created in 2007. In addition, the Cabinet adopted decision No. 19 of 2006 providing for the creation of nurseries in ministries, public organizations and institutions, government departments and offices to look after children between two months and four years of age of female employees in these organizations, in order to provide the children with social stability.

The State also seeks to support children with disabilities or special needs and to supply all their educational and rehabilitation needs, in order to integrate into society. A number of welfare and rehabilitation centres and sports centres have been set up across the State, delivering educational and health services, in addition to vocational, occupational and sports training.

With a view to providing for the welfare of young offenders, the State has established special homes to look after and accommodate young offenders of both sexes, offering them assistance with social welfare, education, and reform, as well as vocational training. A subsequent welfare programme provides for follow-up geared towards the reintegration of young offenders into society. Social reformatories have admitted 752 young offenders (82 of them girls).

5.4 Housing

The State supplies and creates suitable housing for citizens through the following local and federal government bodies:

Ministry of Public Works

In the past five years, the Ministry has built over 17,040 residential units at a cost of approximately Dh 2 billion. It has also carried out extension work to develop existing housing consistent with the size of the family and has built new homes to replace housing that is now too old.

Sheikh Zayed Housing Programme

This Programme was created in 1999 as an important adjunct to the efforts of the State to provide housing. The idea behind it is that the Government allocates Dh 640 million per year to finance housing schemes for citizens on limited incomes earning an average of less than Dh 15,000 per month. The Programme offers interest-free housing loans of up to Dh 500,000, which are repayable over 25 years. Free grants and assistance are also provided for persons in need. Since the Programme was established, a number of housing complexes have been constructed in the Emirates of Ras al-Khaimah, Fujairah, Umm al-Qaiwain and Ajman for thousands of persons with limited incomes. Close to 1,400 applications for grants and financial assistance were approved under the Programme in 2007.

Abu Dhabi Housing Loans Authority

In 2006, the Abu Dhabi Government launched a new, contemporary vision of public housing for citizens, based on the concept of integrated housing complexes as an alternative to popular housing. The idea was to construct 18,000 residential units in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi at a cost of close to Dh 33 billion. The Land and Housing Allocation Commission prioritized applications for housing from older persons, large families with low incomes, persons considered humanitarian cases and widows. In 2006, 665 homes and 7,210 plots of land were distributed to citizens in Abu Dhabi, Al-Ayn and the western region. The executive board approved the largest instalment of housing loans, in the amount of Dh 4 billion, to finance the twelfth round of applications received by the Loans Authority.

Mohammed Bin Rashed Housing Foundation

The Mohammed Bin Rashed Housing Foundation was established in 2005, with capital of Dh 12 billion, to replace the Private Housing Funding Programme established in 1993. The Foundation owns, leases and rents land, real estate and buildings and manages financial transactions involving housing loans or contracts with financial and banking institutions and also designs and creates residential units. The Foundation disburses 1,800 loans per year at a value of Dh 350 million.

Sharjah Public Works Department

In 2006, the cornerstone was laid for the creation of three new housing districts in the city and suburbs of Sharjah, at a total cost of Dh 2 billion. The Department is in the process of implementing construction projects for 700 public housing units in the central and eastern regions, at a cost of Dh 420 million.

5.5 Development projects for remote areas

The State has carried out several crucially important projects to develop remote areas. In pursuance of that objective, His Highness the President of the Federation issued instructions in June 2005 for the establishment of a committee to study the needs of remote areas in the State in terms of infrastructure services to improve living and social standards among the inhabitants of these areas. That committee was then tasked with overseeing projects to develop these areas, and its plan of action provided for the implementation of road-building projects, the construction of buildings and the creation of health services and centres, schools, kindergartens and housing for the inhabitants of these areas, in addition to maintenance of some of these structures, the construction of hospitals fitted out with the most up-to-date equipment and instruments and the construction of civil defence centres and police stations. The purpose behind this initiative is to provide the inhabitants with everything that they need for their comfort and safety.

5.6 Marriage Fund

The Marriage Fund was established under Federal Act No. 47 of 1992. Its purpose is to: encourage marriage among citizens; offer financial grants to citizens with limited resources to help them to defray the costs of marriage; help to create family stability in society; and conduct cultural, social and behavioural awareness campaigns. The Fund offers grants of not less than Dh 60,000 for eligible young persons in the Emirates.

5.7 Dissemination of a human rights culture

The United Arab Emirates understands that human rights education and the dissemination of human rights concepts constitutes a fundamental human right. The Ministry of Education has therefore established a system to bring together different human rights concepts and has drawn up a document on human rights education for students in grades 1 to 12, to be taught through core subjects.

Similarly, the academic curricula of law faculties and police academies include two hours for human rights instruction to familiarize students with: the nature of human rights; the international and regional human rights regime; collective rights; the rights of prisoners; human rights in the Emirates; the role of the police in human rights; policing that takes account of human rights and fundamental freedoms; and the teaching of international humanitarian law. The State attaches considerable importance to the initial and ongoing training of members of the federal and local judiciary. It set up a federal judicial training and studies institute which has local counterparts in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Their curricula include the study of human rights conventions and treaties, the procedures of international human rights organizations and international resolutions of relevance in this domain. In addition, numerous campaigns, publications and seminars are organized, and legal periodicals are published by State institutions and civil associations, in order to promote a human rights culture.

Conclusion

The observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms is a strategic option which the Emirates embraced for compelling reasons, in order to avoid being cut off from the global mainstream. That option was confirmed by the inclusion in the heart of the Emirates' Constitution and legislation of the principles underpinning human rights and fundamental freedoms. From here, the path to progress, growth and stability for the State lay in an effective commitment to the protection of human rights and guarantees of fundamental freedoms. The Emirates has determined that it will continue its efforts to preserve the gains made in the area of human rights and to make continuous improvements in keeping with international best practices in this domain. There is no doubt that the Emirates, like other States in general and in the region in particular, has to contend with a set of challenges and difficulties which it is attempting to tackle in order to promote human rights. These challenges are the following:

- The creation of additional mechanisms to protect human rights, keep pace with national and international developments and update laws and regulations
- The expectations of the State with regard to national capacity-building and the deepening and intensification of education for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Through a national plan, the State endeavours to deal with the effects of the development boom which requires intensive utilization of temporary foreign labour. The State, in cooperation with international bodies that deal with labour, constantly strives to develop the best methods and practices to improve the situation of workers in the State
- In addition, efforts are being made to regulate relations between employers and workers in a framework that safeguards dignity and rights and is consistent with international standards, particularly with regard to ancillary or domestic workers

- Notwithstanding the progress made with respect to women, the biggest challenge is to boost the role of women in society, to increase opportunities for women to enter a number of fields, based on their capacities and skills, to support their participation in economic activity and to reinforce policies to increase and build their capacities and encourage women to bear their responsibilities as key partners in the development process
- The State endeavours to deal with human trafficking offences looking at international best practices in this domain, developing and improving the legislation in force in the State, in keeping with international standards, creating institutions and structures to deal with human trafficking offences and strengthening cooperation with international organizations and bodies

List of annexes

1. Federal Government's strategy;
2. Report on the rights of workers in the United Arab Emirates: "2007 annual report" issued by the Ministry of Labour;
3. Report on women in the United Arab Emirates, prepared by the Ministry of State for National Council Affairs, 2008;
4. Police code of conduct and ethics for employees of the Ministry of the Interior, adopted by ministerial decision No. 654 of 2005;
5. Report of 2007 on combating human trafficking;
6. Experience of the United Arab Emirates in applying human rights principles in the context of prison and reform work;
7. Booklet on the national action plan.
