



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Thirtieth session

Summary record of the 696th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 7 March 2024, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Gamio Ríos (Vice-Chair)

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Ms. Gamio Ríos, Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Submission of reports by parties to the Convention under article 35 (continued)

Combined initial and second periodic reports of Bahrain (CRPD/C/BHR/1-2; CRPD/C/BHR/Q/1-2; CRPD/C/BHR/RQ/1-2)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Bahrain joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Bahrain**, introducing his country's combined initial and second periodic reports (CRPD/C/BHR/1-2), said that, under the Constitution, everyone was equal in dignity. A number of decisions had been made to make that constitutional principle a reality, including for persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Development, for example, had been established further to Royal Decree No. 25 of 2022 – previously, a single ministry had been responsible for both labour and social affairs. The change would make it possible to reinforce the Ministry's role in promoting the advancement of vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, who accounted for around 2 per cent of the country's population.
3. The country's pioneering disabilities law, Act No. 74 of 2006 on the welfare, rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, had been informed by the International Labour Organization Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159), and the Arab Agreement on the Rehabilitation and Employment of the Disabled. Bahrain had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which had the force of law in the country, in 2011, and a national strategy for persons with disabilities, which had drawn on research in the field, had been adopted in 2012. More recently, in July 2023, an action plan for the new national strategy for persons with disabilities had been adopted. The action plan, which had been preceded by a survey, had been developed with input from 150 experts from all sectors of society and the support of the High Committee for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities. It took the needs of women and children with disabilities into account and would provide a framework for public efforts for the empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities through 2027.
4. The National Human Rights Plan 2022–2026 had been adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2022. It envisaged projects to strengthen the implementation of international instruments on the rights of persons with disabilities and to build the capacity of such persons to enter the labour market. All national strategies for the protection of distinct segments of the population – older people, women and children, for example – had a disability component.
5. Measures had been taken to enhance the participation of civil society organizations in the life of the country. The majority of the decision-making positions in the 17 civil society organizations of and for persons with disabilities in Bahrain were occupied by women with disabilities. Every year, the Government set aside around \$4 million for the country's 49 rehabilitation centres and their projects.
6. Bahrain had been the host country for international sporting events for athletes from different disability groups. A number of Bahraini athletes were Paralympic medallists.
7. An inclusive education programme, as part of which relevant support services were provided, allowed children with disabilities to attend mainstream schools. Nearly 1,300 children were direct beneficiaries of the programme.
8. Persons with disabilities had the right to family life; they were placed in institutional homes or temporary shelters only as a last resort. Intensive rehabilitation was provided in a bid to enable them to remain with their families. Every year, some \$9 million was set aside to support the provision of rehabilitation and other relevant services by public agencies, private sector organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A project to help persons with disabilities obtain driver's licences at no charge had also been launched.
9. Spending on health care accounted for a considerable share of all public spending. Twenty-seven health centres were equipped to treat patients with disabilities of all kinds. Telemedicine consultations were also offered.

10. A national disaster management committee had been set up to ensure that all the country's people, including those with disabilities, were protected in the event of natural or other disasters. During the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, a communication campaign had been launched to help stop the spread of the virus. Campaign organizers had drawn on sign language interpreters and the audiovisual and print media to ensure that information was accessible to all.

11. A number of measures, including wage-support programmes, were in place to enhance the employability of persons with disabilities. In recent years, more than a thousand such persons had found employment. Disability benefits were doubled during the month of Ramadan. Nearly \$75 million had been set aside to increase benefits for persons with severe disabilities and fund the provision of social protection services. Assistive devices, including hearing aids, were made available at no charge, and all persons who had requested cochlear implants would have them by July 2024.

12. Work on a \$23 million disability complex in A'ali, which would provide a full range of disability services, was nearly complete. The development of the complex, as well as urban development in general, had been informed by the principles of universal design. Decent housing for persons with disabilities was a public priority.

13. The Kingdom of Bahrain sought to engage all its communities, including persons with disabilities, in its ambitious plans, laid out in Vision 2030, to promote development. Everyone, if given the opportunity to do so, could contribute to the achievement of those plans.

14. **Ms. Boresli** (Country Rapporteur), noting that that Bahrain had been among the first countries in its region to have ratified the Convention, said that it would have been helpful had the delegation included representatives of civil society and the national human rights institution. The dialogue to follow would touch on the State party's incomplete efforts to combat the exclusion of persons with disabilities, which could be seen most clearly in its failure to ensure that organizations of and for persons with disabilities were well represented on the committees or other bodies responsible for disability affairs. In short, persons with disabilities in the State party, as well as their families, found it difficult to enjoy their rights, including their economic rights, on a footing of equality. The dialogue would focus on those difficulties. The aim was to ensure that persons with disabilities could live with dignity.

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15. **Mr. Al-Azzeh** (Country Rapporteur) said that he wished to know why Act No. 74 of 2006 had not been thoroughly reviewed with a view to ensuring that it was informed less by the medical model of disability, which was detrimental to the ability of persons with disabilities to exercise their rights, than by the human rights model. Similarly, he wished to know when the laws containing pejorative terms for persons with disabilities, including the Civil Code and the Criminal Code, would be amended. In addition, he wondered why the authorities had opted to refer to some persons with disabilities as "people of determination".

16. As discrimination was not defined in national law, it would be helpful to learn what legal steps could be taken to combat the discriminatory practices that affected persons with disabilities in particular. It would also be helpful to learn whether the effectiveness of the previous national strategy for persons with disabilities had been assessed, what measures were in place, including monitoring and reporting mechanisms, to protect women with disabilities from violence and what steps were taken to protect girls with disabilities from early marriage.

17. He wondered when the State party planned to amend article 4, on the establishment of institutional and other facilities for persons with disabilities, of Act No. 74. In that connection, he wished to know how many women and children with disabilities were living in care homes, in particular the National Bank of Bahrain Rehabilitation Home for Disabled Children.

18. He also wondered what was done to combat stereotypes about persons with disabilities. He would welcome, too, an indication of the measures that were taken to ensure

the accessibility of the built environment. In that context, it would be interesting to know what the penalties for failing to comply with accessibility rules were.

19. In connection with the right to life, he wished to know what steps were taken to protect persons with disabilities who were deprived of their liberty. What was done to protect detained persons with disabilities, such as blogger Abduljalil al-Singace and blind prisoner Jaafar Maatouk, whose lives were at risk at least in part because they had been denied the reasonable accommodation that they were entitled to?

20. **Ms. Dondovdorj** said that she wished to know whether the State party had a means of ensuring that all its laws were compatible with the Convention and, if not, whether it planned to develop one.

21. **Sir Robert Martin** said that he would appreciate information about the effective participation of organizations of persons with disabilities in consultations on the design and implementation of laws affecting them. He wished to know whether any representative organizations of persons with intellectual disabilities existed, as opposed to parents' groups. He would like to hear about any measures taken to raise awareness on the rights of persons with disabilities under the Convention and to combat stigma, negative attitudes, hate crimes and discriminatory language.

22. **Mr. Makni** said that he would like to know about measures to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities and the monitoring mechanisms and remedies available for denial of access to transport, telecommunications and other services.

23. **Mr. Kabue** said that he wished to know how organizations of persons with disabilities were enabled to participate in discussions on legislation, policies and programmes affecting them.

24. **Ms. Thongkuay** said that she would appreciate clarification on the extent to which the multiple discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities, especially intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, was legally recognized and whether it would be taken into account in the updated National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. She would like to hear about measures taken to ensure non-discrimination against women and girls with disabilities. She wished to know whether any mechanisms to provide redress and legal support to women and girls with disabilities whose rights had been violated had been established or considered.

25. **The Chair** said that she wondered whether widows with disabilities could inherit the property of their spouses. She wanted to know whether the many women with disabilities who were carers or assistants to other persons with disabilities received financial remuneration for their work.

26. **Mr. Al-Azzeh** said that he would appreciate a response to concerns that a number of laws were incompatible with the Convention, not only because of their terminology but also because disability was considered a barrier to the enjoyment of certain rights. For example, one provision allowed for the termination of employment on health grounds. Article 33 of the Criminal Code provided for reduced penalties or placement in a treatment facility for persons lacking mental capacity because of illness, while article 87 stated that perpetrators with "madness" or mental illness were not criminally responsible. He wished to understand how mental illness was defined for the purpose of those provisions.

27. **Ms. Boresli** said that she would like to hear about measures taken to ensure the availability of sign language interpretation in public services. She wondered what had been done to provide captioning and sign language interpretation on television, including for non-news programmes, and to make sure that online and other publications met international accessibility standards and were readily available to persons with disabilities.

28. **Mr. Al-Azzeh** said that he would like to know why no organizations of persons with disabilities had submitted shadow reports to the Committee and what consultation mechanism had been used for the preparation of the State party's report. He was interested to learn about the representation of persons with disabilities on public bodies such as the Supreme Council for Women, the National Committee for Childhood and the National Committee for Older Persons.

29. **Mr. Makni** said that he would like to know whether the State party had a definition of non-discrimination and whether denial of reasonable accommodation was considered a form of discrimination.

30. **Ms. Boresli** said that she wished to receive information about policies on the inspection of rehabilitation centres by the Social Rehabilitation Department, the frequency of such inspections and the existence of any register of violations. She would appreciate a response to reports that over half of such centres had not been inspected.

31. **Mr. Al-Azzeh** said that he would like to know whether the bill on mental health, which had been submitted some 10 years previously, had ever been adopted and whether persons with psychosocial disabilities, their families and representative organizations had been involved in the drafting process. If it had not been adopted, he wished to know what policies were in place to uphold the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities, especially children, and whether the current rules allowed for involuntary hospitalization.

The meeting was suspended at 3.55 p.m. and resumed at 4.20 p.m.

32. **A representative of Bahrain** said that the Convention had been enshrined in national law through Act No. 22 of 2011. A number of laws based on the human rights model of disability had been adopted, including Act No. 35 of 2017, by which certain legal provisions had been amended to use the term “persons with disabilities” instead of the previous outdated terminology. A further bill to amend some disability-related definitions was currently before the National Assembly.

33. The National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was monitored by a team under the High Committee for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities, whose members were representatives of civil society, including organizations of persons with disabilities, and of the public and private sectors. The team had assessed the strategy to identify performance indicators and then produced a report based on its monitoring of implementation.

34. **A representative of Bahrain** said that 17 different NGOs working on the rights of persons with disabilities had been established pursuant to the law on social and cultural associations and clubs. Women with disabilities accounted for 55 per cent of their membership and held decision-making positions, including leadership roles. NGOs received technical support and grants for their development projects. The High Committee for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities included three NGO representatives, who participated in the development of reasonable accommodation measures, policies and strategies.

35. The Constitution and other laws ensured equal rights for women and girls with disabilities. The Supreme Council for Women played a major role in reviewing legislation, including laws relating to women with disabilities. It had developed many policies to improve the quality of services provided to women, including specifically to women with disabilities.

36. An award had been established for organizations promoting women’s empowerment. A unified framework for family counselling had been developed and a national domestic violence strategy had been implemented. The Supreme Council had established a women’s support centre providing legal advice and information on women’s rights. An initiative had been launched to ensure that women with different types of disabilities had access to banking services on an equal basis with others.

37. A campaign to enable women’s employment had been initiated and professional rehabilitation to help women join the labour market had been put in place. Working women were entitled to pensions and to special paid leave according to the nature of their disabilities. Female employees could take a daily two-hour break to discharge caring responsibilities.

38. No children were institutionalized in the National Bank of Bahrain Rehabilitation Home for Disabled Children; however, there were 25 individuals, all of them over the age of 18, with no access to a family environment or a trusted caregiver receiving residential care and all the necessary services there. In cooperation with NGOs, the Child Protection Centre promoted children’s rights, conducting seminars at schools across the country.

39. The Government played a major role in disability awareness-raising through audiovisual media. It conducted capacity-building to enable persons with disabilities to become media professionals and provided sign language interpretation for parliamentary

sessions and news bulletins on Bahrain Television. It organized training workshops and seminars and produced leaflets on disability.

40. **A representative of Bahrain** said that the Government had adopted regulations on accessibility and produced a guide to facilitate the mobility of persons with disabilities. Car parks, pavements and pedestrian crossings had been made accessible. Public transport was accessible and free of charge for persons with disabilities. With a view to ensuring access to all public buildings, a guide on universal design had been adopted along with a strategic plan on accessibility. A coordination committee had been established to monitor the implementation of universal design and ensure that building regulations were brought into line with international standards.

41. A working group had been established to assess public infrastructure, including education and health-care institutions, leisure facilities and religious buildings, and produce a plan for its renovation. Persons with disabilities who faced accessibility issues could complain through the “Tawasul” system used by all government departments.

42. The National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which had been prepared in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, and the related action plan were compliant with the Convention. Persons with disabilities had held a conference on the Strategy. Civil society organizations had taken part in preparing his country’s report to the Committee.

43. In 2023, 96 inspections had been conducted in the country’s 49 rehabilitation centres and some minor violations had been identified. Under the applicable law, violations had to be rectified within 10 days. When necessary, they were referred to the prosecution service. The Ministry of Social Development worked with other relevant authorities to ensure inspections of unlicensed facilities on an ongoing basis.

44. **A representative of Bahrain** said that the Civil Code and the Criminal Code contained outdated terminology because they had both been adopted before the entry into force of the Convention. They were regularly reviewed and amended by the legislature. Both Codes contained provisions based on the concept of lack of capacity, including in relation to health care and property. Lack of capacity was determined through judicial proceedings.

45. Judges were also responsible for determining whether persons with mental illnesses should face reduced penalties or be placed in treatment facilities under article 33 of the Criminal Code, based on a psychological assessment. Persons completely lacking mental capacity had no criminal or civil responsibility and could not be punished but only placed in a treatment facility.

46. The law on domestic violence covered all women, including those with disabilities. The right of widows to inherit assets from their deceased husbands was governed by sharia law and established in the Family Code, which set out the proportions of assets due to each heir. Inheritance proceedings were overseen by judges. Widows had the right to inherit assets from their deceased husband unless there was some legal reason preventing them from doing so.

47. Under the Family Code, no person under 16 years of age could enter into marriage unless his or her parents or guardians obtained the prior authorization of a court. Such marriages were subject to judicial oversight. The courts were required to establish that both parties to a marriage were willing to marry, that the marriage was in the interest of both parties, and that it would not have any adverse social impact or result in any medical harm for either party.

48. Discrimination was considered to have occurred when a person was subjected to certain acts. In such cases, the authorities considered the extent to which the rights of the person concerned had been violated. In the case of persons with disabilities, the question of whether the violations particularly related to disability was not taken into account. However, the authorities did consider whether the rights in question had been partially or totally violated.

49. The Labour Code prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, opinion, belief and disability. It also prohibited wage discrimination, ensuring the right to equal pay for equal

work for all persons, including persons with disabilities. A number of laws protected the rights of vulnerable groups, such as children and adolescents, as well as the rights of the press and associations, including political associations. A circular issued by the Central Bank of Bahrain established that all banks must execute banking transactions without discrimination on the basis of religion, race, disability or social status.

50. All citizens were entitled to submit a complaint if they faced discrimination relating to their medical situation. The authorities would consider the complaint and take the measures necessary to ensure that justice was served. Specialized offices had been established to receive complaints from citizens, including persons with disabilities. The Government had launched an electronic system for receiving complaints and suggestions from the public. The Council of Ministers oversaw the system and ensured that follow-up action was taken in relation to complaints.

51. An office within the Ministry of Justice received complaints and forwarded them to the competent agencies. Persons with disabilities could submit complaints in different ways and were not required to pay the cost of legal proceedings in the event of family conflicts. They also benefited from various forms of technical and administrative assistance, including sign language interpretation. Legal assistance was provided to persons with disabilities who could not afford a lawyer.

52. Any person who suspected that his or her personal data had been used in an illegal or illegitimate manner was entitled to file a complaint with a dedicated office within the Ministry of Justice. The office would then carry out an inquiry and, where appropriate, award compensation to the complainant. The Ministry also had an office that received complaints relating to employment. Persons with disabilities could submit a complaint to the office if they were unjustly dismissed by an employer or deprived of wages or benefits to which they were entitled. The Ministry was empowered to deal with any complaint of discrimination submitted by a person with a disability.

53. **A representative of Bahrain** said that, under article 37 of the Constitution, treaties that had been ratified and published in the Official Gazette had the force of law. Under Act No. 22 of 2011, the Convention was an integral part of national law. No law could be enacted if it contravened the Convention, and legal provisions that were not in compliance with the Convention would be considered null and void.

54. **A representative of Bahrain** said that all places of deprivation of liberty, including correctional and rehabilitation facilities, complied with human rights standards. The Government made every effort to protect the rights of persons with disabilities in correctional and rehabilitation centres. All prisoners enjoyed their rights in accordance with the law governing prisons, including the right to health and the right to communicate with family members and receive visits. Prisoners with disabilities were given special support, depending on their situation.

55. The staff of public hospitals provided round-the-clock health care to inmates in places of detention. Inmates could see a doctor in their place of detention and, if necessary, be transferred to a hospital. Hearing aids were provided to hard-of-hearing prisoners. The Ministry of the Interior had paid for a prisoner with a disability to have a prosthetic eye implant. Inmates in Jaw Prison had been provided with mobility devices, and handrails had been installed in the prison bathrooms. On the basis of recommendations made by the Ministry of the Interior, steps had been taken to make all prison buildings more accessible to persons with disabilities. In that connection, six buildings had been made accessible for wheelchair users.

56. The Directorate for the Rights of Prisoners had visited a correctional facility in 2021 and had subsequently issued recommendations for the installation of facilities that would improve the lives of the prisoners. A number of bodies, including the National Institution for Human Rights, a commission for the rights of prisoners and a commission for monitoring the situation of victims, sought to protect the rights of prisoners. Those bodies were empowered to take action against any prison guard who violated those rights. Prisoners whose rights had been violated, including prisoners with disabilities, could file a complaint with the Ministry of the Interior.

57. In 2017, the Government had adopted a law on alternative sentences, under which more than 5,000 sentences, including sentences handed down to persons with disabilities, had been commuted to alternative sentences. Prisoners whose state of health prevented them from serving their sentence in a normal prison were held in a special institution where they received medical care. Prisoners who required surgery were treated in private hospitals, with the cost being met by the Ministry of the Interior.

58. **A representative of Bahrain** said that, under national law, persons with disabilities could not be confined to a health institution without their consent. No laws or regulations restricted the freedom of persons with disabilities for reasons relating to their disability. The mental health bill that had been submitted by the Government prohibited the confinement of persons with a mental disability without their consent. Children with a psychological or mental illness were treated in outpatient facilities and hospitalized only if they required a specific treatment or if they suffered from epilepsy or a similar condition.

59. It was widely known that disability had a medical basis as well as psychological, social and other dimensions. In Bahrain, disability was defined in accordance with functional classifications rather than on the basis of medical definitions. In 2006, a decision had been taken to establish a committee responsible for assessing and diagnosing disability. As disability was defined in functional terms, the committee operated under the Ministry of Social Development rather than the Ministry of Health. It included experts from a wide range of spheres, including physiotherapists, speech therapists and mobility therapists.

60. **A representative of Bahrain** said that, under Act No. 74 of 2006, any person with a disability could apply to the Ministry of Labour for a certificate attesting to his or her fitness for work. Such certificates were issued following a determination of the functions or jobs that the person in question could perform. Under article 11 of the Act, persons with disabilities who held such a certificate were exempted from the physical fitness conditions established for certain jobs. Therefore, persons with disabilities were not prevented from holding any post, in the public or the private sector, provided that they obtained the relevant certificate from the Ministry of Labour.

61. **A representative of Bahrain** said that the term “people of determination” was a term specific to Bahrain. Following the ratification of the Convention by Bahrain, the Government had taken legislative measures to remove discriminatory terminology, including the term “disabled”, from national law. With regard to harmful stereotypes, the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities contained a special chapter on awareness-raising that set out a number of relevant indicators.

62. **A representative of Bahrain** said that children’s rights to education, quality health care and family care were established in law. The Government had established the National Committee for Childhood and the Child Protection Centre to protect children, including children with disabilities, against ill-treatment. The Centre provided a comprehensive range of psychosocial services, in coordination with relevant stakeholders, in order to promote children’s best interests. It also implemented preventive programmes run by specialists in children’s affairs. The Government employed qualified professionals to support children with disabilities. It cooperated with regional and international organizations working in children’s affairs and drafted national reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also managed a free helpline for children that was staffed around the clock.

63. Laws intended to protect and promote children’s rights were being developed and enacted. For instance, the Act on restorative justice for children and their protection from ill-treatment had been adopted in 2021. Clubs established under the Ministry of Social Development offered a range of activities designed to build the skills of all children, including children with disabilities. A national strategy for children had been launched and had been updated for the period 2023–2027 in cooperation with civil society organizations. The Education Act established the right of children with disabilities to be enrolled in educational facilities and to benefit from any reasonable accommodation that they required for their education.

64. **A representative of Bahrain** said that the law on correctional facilities governed the rights of inmates and persons held on remand. The Ministry of the Interior was committed to ensuring that officials did not violate the rights of inmates, including inmates with

disabilities. Police officers working in correctional and rehabilitation facilities were trained to deal with persons with disabilities. The Ministry had issued a code of conduct for police officers, who were held to account if they failed to comply with it. Complaints made against police officers were investigated by the Ministry of the Interior and the Ombudsman Office, among other bodies. A number of independent bodies were also authorized to investigate such complaints.

65. The National Institution for Human Rights visited correctional facilities to monitor the human rights situation within them. The Institution received complaints from inmates, including those with disabilities. The Government had established a commission for the rights of detainees and prisoners to supervise detention centres and prisons. The Department of Audit and Internal Investigation of the Ministry of Interior was authorized to receive complaints. Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross had also visited prisons in Bahrain. A number of international bodies had praised the standard of health care afforded to prisoners in Bahrain, especially during the pandemic.

66. **A representative of Bahrain** said that his Government held consultations with civil society organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities in order to promote their work and to build strategic partnerships for the promotion and protection of human rights. Those organizations participated in the preparation of periodic reports to various human rights treaty bodies and in setting comprehensive national strategies and action plans on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Articles 11–20

67. **Mr. Kabue** said that he wished to know whether there were any organizations formed and run by persons with disabilities in the State party and, if so, whether they had been involved in the development of legislation, policies and programmes, particularly those relating to issues affecting them.

68. **Ms. Fefoame** said that, when replying to the Committee's questions, the delegation should focus specifically on persons with disabilities. For example, when it came to violence, the Committee wished to know whether women and children with disabilities had access to counselling services, what percentage of victims of violence were women and children with disabilities, and whether they were able to use the free helpline for victims of violence. With regard to underage marriage, she wondered what kind of adverse social impact a judge might deem to potentially arise from such a marriage and how any such consequence that was not medical in nature was addressed.

69. **Mr. Al-Azzeh** said that he wished to clarify whether the State party's definition of disability was based on that of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, and whether the purely medical definition contained in Act No. 74 of 2006 had therefore been suspended. Given that the delegation had reported that no children were institutionalized in the National Bank of Bahrain's Rehabilitation Home for Disabled Children, he would welcome clarification of the information available on the Bank's website concerning the criteria for the admission of children to the home. He invited the delegation to comment on article 50 of the Public Health Act, which provided for the institutionalization of persons with disabilities for the purpose of protecting others. He wondered what mechanisms were available to support persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities in making their own decisions, without substitute decision-making, and to ensure the full exercise of their legal capacity. He would like to know whether blind persons or persons with visual impairments were able to have access to banking services without assistance and whether any relevant guidelines were in place. He wished to know whether there were clear rules for the provision of accommodations, including sign language interpretation and documentation in easy-to-read formats, for accused persons and witnesses with disabilities during investigations and litigation and whether such accommodations were provided in judicial and administrative facilities, as well as in courts. He wondered if the State party planned to end all forms of deprivation of liberty on the basis of disability. He wished to know the extent to which persons with disabilities who were residents of the State party but were not citizens and did not have a Bahraini mother could have access to the necessary services.

70. **Mr. Schefer** said that the Committee was concerned that there were currently between 25 and 30 people on death row in Bahrain and that, since 2011, at least 51 people had been sentenced to death. Furthermore, the investigations by the Special Investigation Unit into allegations of torture had been deemed not to comply with minimum international legal standards by the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims. He wished to know whether the State party had explicit legal provisions exempting persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities from being sentenced to death and executed, whether information was available on the number of such persons who had been sentenced to death or executed, and what process was in place to determine whether a person had an intellectual or psychosocial disability for the purposes of applying the death penalty. He would welcome information on whether persons had acquired disabilities as a consequence of torture by Bahraini officials and what health services and rehabilitation were provided to them.

71. **Ms. Kayess** said that she would like to know how the State party was addressing serious concerns that human rights defenders, including those with disabilities, had been subjected to arbitrary detention, infringements of the rights to freedom of expression and opinion and patterns of medical negligence and ill-treatment in detention.

72. **Mr. Makni** said that he wished to know whether the State party had adopted a strategy to support persons with disabilities during natural disasters, including medical emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. He wondered whether information on protection against HIV was provided to persons with disabilities.

73. **Ms. Kim Mi Yeon** said that she wondered what specific measures the Government of Bahrain was taking, including the introduction of specific legislation and policies, to protect and promote the rights of women and girls with disabilities and children with disabilities.

74. **Ms. Thongkuay** said that she wished to know what steps were being taken to abolish the Family Code, under which women were discriminated against in relation to divorce and inheritance; criminal law provisions stipulating that marital rape was not a criminal act; article 353 of the Criminal Code, which exempted the perpetrators of rape from prosecution if they married their victims; article 334 of the Criminal Code, which reduced penalties for so-called honour crimes; and other provisions of the Criminal Code criminalizing adultery and consensual extramarital sexual relations. She also wished to know whether steps had been taken to develop legislation on same-sex relations. She wondered what steps had been taken to abolish the Nationality Act of 1963, which stipulated that children could only acquire Bahraini citizenship if their father was Bahraini, and to withdraw the State party's reservations to article 9 (2) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in relation to the rights of women with respect to the nationality of their children.

75. **Mr. Kabue** said that he wondered what support, particularly legal support, was provided to persons with disabilities who appeared in court following the violation of their rights. He wished to know what steps the State party was taking to address the torture and unsuitable conditions to which persons with disabilities were subjected in reform institutions and the use of physical and chemical restraints in psychiatric institutions. He would like to know what support was provided to persons with disabilities to enable them to live independently and to migrants with disabilities who were living independently in the State party.

76. **Sir Robert Martin** said that he wished to know what steps had been taken to replace guardianship and other systems based on substitute decision-making with supported decision-making mechanisms and whether training on supported decision-making was available for persons with disabilities, their families and professionals working in the judicial system. He wondered whether a person's legal capacity could be reinstated once removed, whether assistance to appeal that removal was available and whether information on those processes was available in Easy Read and other alternative formats. He wished to know whether persons with disabilities were able to decide where, how and with whom they lived and to receive support in making that decision. In the light of reports that the disability allowance intended to support independence was insufficient, he wondered what assistance persons with disabilities received to cover the costs they incurred as a result of their disability.

77. **Mr. Al-Azzeh** said that he wished to know whether inclusive design standards for buildings, services and transport were legally binding and, if so, what penalties could be incurred for non-compliance. He wished to know whether emergency response plans provided for emergency care for persons with disabilities and for training for those working in civil protection. He wished to know the current condition of persons with disabilities who were deprived of their liberty, such as Abduljalil al-Singace and Jaafar Maatouk, whose physical well-being was threatened by long prison sentences and difficult living conditions. He wondered whether there was a time frame for the abolition of Decree No. 24 of 2006, which provided for institutionalization, and whether measures would be taken to prevent children and young persons with disabilities from being sent to institutions in other countries. He would like to know whether training on the use of assistive mobility devices was available to persons with disabilities.

78. **Sir Robert Martin** said that he wondered how young persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities who were institutionalized as part of habilitation programmes or housed in the institution run by the Ministry of Social Development were reintegrated into the community and where those young persons lived when they became adults. He wished to know whether definitions of mental disability were conducive to the inclusion of those persons in the community.

79. **Ms. Boresli** said that she wished to receive clarification on whether the Green Building Manual referred to disability and accessibility. She also wished to know how the guide on inclusive design standards could be accessed. She wondered how the State party would ensure that there was a sufficient budget available for the participation of organizations of persons with disabilities in strategic plans and issues affecting persons with disabilities. She was eager to learn what reasonable accommodation was available in emergency situations, whether persons with disabilities had participated in the development of any emergency response plans and whether those plans included measures to address power and Internet blackouts during emergencies, to facilitate situation management with stakeholders, to ensure safe evacuations and the provision of food and medical supplies and to provide information in accessible formats. She wondered whether hospitals and schools were accessible and whether relevant training was provided to their staff. She wished to know whether there was a database on persons with disabilities, disaggregated by disability, age and location.

80. **The Chair** said that she wished to know what factors could prevent widows with a disability from receiving an inheritance from their spouse. She wondered whether the State party planned to amend legal provisions stipulating that persons with an intellectual or psychosocial disability who had committed a crime were liable for lesser sentences, which was not in the spirit of articles 12 and 13 of the Convention on equality before the law.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.