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United Arab Emirates*

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I. General information about the State

A. Demographic, economic, social and cultural characteristics

General information about the United Arab Emirates

1. The establishment of the United Arab Emirates was announced on 2 December 1971. It is an independent and sovereign State, and the federation has its own flag, emblem and national anthem. The people of the Emirates are a single people and its citizens have a single nationality. It forms part of the Arab nation. Islam is the official religion of the Federation and the official language is Arabic.

2. Abu Dhabi is the capital of the United Arab Emirates. National Day is celebrated each year on 2 December. The official currency is the UAE dirham (Dh) and the exchange rate for the United States dollar is Dh 3.67. The UAE dirham has been officially anchored to the United States dollar since February 2002. The flag of the United Arab Emirates consists of horizontal rectangular stripes. The top stripe is green, the central stripe is white and the bottom stripe is black, and there is a vertical red rectangular stripe on the side of the flagpole.

United Arab Emirates Centennial 2071

3. The United Arab Emirates Centennial Plan 2071 has been launched. It is a comprehensive and long-term vision that spans five decades. The Centenary constitutes a clear roadmap for long-term government action and seeks to invest in the country's youth and provide them with the skills and knowledge that they require to respond to rapid changes. The United Arab Emirates Centennial 2071 is based on the following four pillars: a Government that is focused on the future with a view to ensuring the existence of new and diversified sources of sustainable governmental revenue and financial and investment capabilities; education for the future by promoting courses in advanced science and technology; development of an economy based on diversified knowledge through the implementation of diverse mechanisms, including the development of a generation of Emirati inventors and scientists, supporting their contribution to the development of science and technology, and ensuring coordination and integration with developed countries in this regard; development of a more cohesive society by promoting the values of tolerance and cohesion, empowering young people and women, promoting happiness and a positive lifestyle, and ensuring high-quality services in the health and sports sectors.

Geographic location

4. The United Arab Emirates is located on the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula in the continent of Asia, between latitudes 22 degrees and 26.5 degrees north of the Equator and between longitudes 51 degrees and 56.5 degrees east of Greenwich. Its coastlines are located on the southern and south-eastern part of the Arabian Gulf and on part of the western shores of the Gulf of Oman. The area of the United Arab Emirates is about 83,880 square kilometres and the Emirate of Abu Dhabi constitutes 87 per cent of the total area.

Topography

5. About 74 per cent of the land consists of desert, but the country nevertheless possesses a diverse landscape, with towering red sand dunes running from Liwa to Al-Ain, which is a natural oasis decorated with palm trees, and the steep Hajar mountain range, which descends to the fertile expanses of the flat coastal plains. The mountain range accounts for about 2.6 per cent of the country's total area. The territorial waters of the United Arab Emirates contain more than 200 islands, which differ in terms of size, formation, composition and importance. There is also a low coastal plain that blends with the desert sand dunes of the Rub' al-Khali (the Empty Quarter). Rugged mountains extend along the eastern border with the Sultanate of Oman, the highest peak of which is located in Jabel Jais at an altitude of 1,900 metres.

The climate

6. The United Arab Emirates has a desert climate. It is hot and humid in summer, and warm and sunny in winter. The climate is milder and less humid in the eastern mountains.

A brief history of the country

7. The British Government announced its withdrawal from the Persian Gulf in 1968. As a result, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, the ruler of the emirate of Abu Dhabi, rapidly initiated a movement to strengthen ties with the Trucial Coast States. The aim of the union was to serve as a nucleus for Arab unity and to protect the coast and its predicted oil wealth. An agreement was reached with Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al-Maktoum, the ruler of the emirate of Dubai, to establish a union, which was later known as the Trucial States. Accordingly, the rulers of the five other Trucial States were invited to participate in the negotiations on the establishment of the union. On 18 July 1971, the rulers of six of the Trucial States, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain and Fujairah, decided to form the United Arab Emirates. On 2 December 1971, the establishment of an independent sovereign federal State was officially announced. The emirate of Ras al-Khaimah joined the federation on 10 February 1972, and thus the union incorporated the seven emirates.

The population

8. Many factors have an impact on population growth in the United Arab Emirates, in particular economic factors, especially during periods of rapid growth. People of more than 200 nationalities reside and work in the country, and the number of expatriates and residents exceeds the number of citizens. According to official estimates issued by the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, the composition of the population is as follows:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Ratio of males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Ratio of females</i>	<i>Total</i>
2014	6 501 224	74%	2 297 617	26%	8 798 841
2015	6 589 518	74%	2 349 456	26%	8 938 974
2016	6 298 294	69%	2 822 873	31%	9 121 167
2017	6 415 942	69%	2 888 335	31%	9 304 277
2018	6 297 662	67%	3 069 166	33%	9 366 828
2019	6 302 724	66%	3 201 014	34%	9 503 738
2020	6 468 460	70%	2 813 950	30%	9 282 410

Economic situation

9. The region's economy relied heavily in the past on agriculture, the date trade, fishing, the pearl trade, and the import of basic commodities from neighbouring countries. After the discovery of oil in the 1950s, a radical change took place in the structure of economic life in the United Arab Emirates. The change was enhanced by its strategic location, government spending and State economic diversification policies. The United Arab Emirates adopts a liberal economic approach based on free trade, commercial exchanges and the free flow of capital and services. The policy is geared towards the development of the national economy and the diversification of sources of income. The Emirates also seeks to achieve balanced economic and social development for the country, since balanced social growth goes hand in hand with economic development. The Emirates also adopts economic strategies that stimulate economic diversification and that have successfully increased the contribution of non-petroleum sectors such as the following to the national economy: manufacturing, aviation, tourism, banking, real estate trading, services and alternative energy. The development of a competitive knowledge-based economy that promotes innovation is one of the pillars of the National Agenda for the Emirates Vision 2021. The National Agenda aims to make the Emirates a key economic, tourism and commercial centre in the region. Accordingly, the Government continues to promote the transition to a knowledge-based economy by encouraging innovation, consolidating the regulatory framework for key sectors,

and promoting high value-added sectors. With that end in view, it has developed the following 12 performance indicators:

- Non-petroleum gross domestic product growth rate
- Gross national income per capita
- Ratio of the net inflow of foreign direct investment to gross domestic product
- Global Competitiveness Index
- Percentage of employed citizens in the total labour force
- Ease of Doing Business Index
- Emiratization rate in the private sector
- Rate of contribution of small and medium-sized enterprises to the non-petroleum gross domestic product
- Global Entrepreneurship and Development Index
- Global Innovation Index
- Percentage of “knowledge workers” in the country’s labour force
- Research and development expenditure as a percentage of the gross domestic product

10. According to statistics for 2020 issued by the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, the gross domestic product totalled Dh 1,418.9 billion at constant prices and Dh 1,318 billion at current prices. The rate of inflation in the United Arab Emirates was -2.08 per cent and the consumer price index was 105.69.

Economic development indicators (Competitiveness and Statistics Authority)

Indicator

Average gross domestic product per capita (1,000 Emirates dirhams) (in thousands) for 2020	142
(1,000 United States dollars)	38.7
Size of the workforce (in percentage terms) in 2019	80.1 per cent
The workforce as a percentage of the total population; crude activity (participation) rate in 2009	66.9 per cent
The unemployed as a percentage of the total workforce (unemployment rate) in 2009	2.2 per cent

11. The budget for the fiscal year 2020 reflects the strength of the national economy and the sustainability of the resources available to finance economic, development and social projects in the country. The social development and social benefit sectors receive the largest share: Dh 21.90 billion of the total budget was allocated to the social development sector (31.13 per cent of the budget), and Dh 4.56 billion to the social benefit sector (6.49 per cent of the budget). A total of Dh 9.85 billion was allocated to the infrastructure and economic resources sectors (14 per cent of the budget) and Dh 22.95 billion was allocated to governmental affairs (32.61 per cent of the budget).



12. By virtue of its development policies, the country has succeeded in achieving a high rank among the countries of the world. It has made great leaps forward, particularly during the last 10 years, in the area of human development. It ranked third in the Arab world and 42nd globally in 2016, according to the World Human Development Report issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This reflects the Government's aspiration to raise people's standard of living and to improve their economic and social conditions. The Emirates ranked highly in the 2019 Global Competitiveness Report, which classifies 141 economies. The ranking is based on 103 indicators and the Emirates was ranked first globally in terms of a stable macroeconomic environment; second in terms of information and communications technology adoption; fourth in terms of a sound product market and public-sector performance; seventh in terms of security; eighth in terms of transport infrastructure; ninth in terms of future orientation of government and workforce diversity; sixth in terms of the efficiency of the legal framework in the settlement of disputes; seventh in terms of the quality of road infrastructure, the efficiency of air transport services, attitudes towards entrepreneurial risks, and the low impact of organized crime on the business sector; and ninth in terms of the low homicide rate, the low burden of non-tariff barriers, hiring and firing practices, financing of small and medium-sized enterprises, the development of specialized economic zones, and companies' acceptance of innovative ideas.

Health

13. The United Arab Emirates has continued to take legislative action to support people's right to health-care services in line with the provisions of the Constitution, which guarantees the right of all persons to health care and easy access to facilities for the prevention and treatment of diseases and epidemics. The right is enshrined article 19 of the Constitution, which stipulates that: "Society shall guarantee to all citizens health care and facilities for the prevention and treatment of diseases and epidemics and shall encourage the establishment of public and private hospitals, clinics and treatment centres." Accordingly, a number of laws were enacted to guarantee people's rights to health security and health care, such as Federal Act No. 13 of 2020 on Public Health, Federal Act No. 4 of 2016 on Medical Responsibility, Ministerial Decision No. 14 of 2021 on the Charter of Patients' Rights and Responsibilities, other federal laws and ministerial decisions that guarantee the right to health, and rules and regulations governing the country's health sector. In addition, a number of health policies have been launched, including the National Policy on Combating Communicable Diseases and the National Policy for the Promotion of Mental Health in the United Arab Emirates. In line with the National Agenda for the Emirates Vision 2021 and the National Innovation

Strategy, the Ministry of Health and Prevention launched its Innovation Strategy 2019-2021 as part of its agenda for future health care, under the slogan “Leadership in innovation for a world-class health system”, with a view to boosting the position of the Emirates as a global leader in the proactive confrontation of future challenges. The Strategy is also designed to make the Emirates a leading international destination for a sustainable future in smart health care by means of the renovation of all health-care services, the development of research centres, and the establishment of local and global partnerships. Action will be taken to integrate technology into diagnostic and therapeutic procedures by using analytical data, thereby enhancing preparedness to prevent and anticipate diseases and epidemics.

14. The Government of the United Arab Emirates allocates a large share of its federal budget each year to the health-care sector in order to provide high-quality health-care services that meet the needs of its citizens. The federal budget allocation to health care in 2020 totalled Dh 4.84 billion, which is equivalent to 6.89 per cent of the federal budget.

15. The importance attached by the United Arab Emirates to the health-care sector is reflected in the fact that it has been ranked eighth globally in terms of the infrastructure of the health-care system. There are a total of 51 governmental hospitals and 149 primary health-care centres spread across the Emirates, which cover a variety of areas of medical specialization.

16. Citizens and non-citizens benefit from the country’s current health-care system. The health-care authorities in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and the Emirate of Dubai have introduced a mandatory health insurance system for all residents without discrimination. The insurance covers premium health-care services in governmental or private hospitals and clinics. The other Emirates implement a mandatory medical-card system, pursuant to which individuals can benefit from the health-care services provided by the Ministry of Health in governmental hospitals and clinics.

Birth rates

17. The Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority provided the following birth-rate figures for 2018:

Total number of births: 65,693;

Male: 48,892; female: 46,795.

Mortality rate

18. The Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority provided the following mortality rate figures for 2018:

Total number of deaths: 8,784;

Male: 6,230; female: 2,554.

Average age

19. The figures recorded during the last census, which was conducted in 2020, indicate that average life expectancy is 79.9 years, a figure that reflects the quality of the country’s health care. Life expectancy is 81.4 years for females and 78.0 years for males.

Education

20. Article 17 of the State Constitution stipulates that: “Education is a fundamental factor in social progress.” The State has established primary, intermediate and secondary schools, universities and vocational institutions in order to provide education that meets the highest international standards and to eradicate illiteracy. Since the founding of the State in 1971, the Ministry of Education has adopted two different approaches to illiteracy. The first focuses on education for the younger generation and the provision of educational opportunities for all, while the second focuses on education for adults in evening study centres from which they can easily benefit in order to complete their education. There are currently about 35 centres for educating older persons and eradicating illiteracy. In view of the requirements imposed by the technological revolution, the smart learning and distance learning platform was

adopted in 2020 for comprehensive implementation in all public schools. The digital infrastructure of educational institutions has also been enhanced with a view to providing smart learning platforms in schools, a unique learning environment, and smart classes to enable students to acquire knowledge by means of smart devices. Specialized training courses are also provided for teachers, and new curricula have been introduced to promote the advancement of the country's educational system.

21. Federal Act No. 11 of 1972 on Compulsory Education required parents or legal guardians to send children to school. In 2012 the Council of Ministers adopted a Federal Act on Compulsory Education that replaced the previous Act. Under the new Act, the compulsory grades of education and the compulsory age were amended to include the final grades or the age of 18 years instead of just the primary level. Special procedures were developed to guarantee the implementation of the State's compulsory education system, and provision was made for the imposition of penalties for any violations. The Act requires the educational authority to issue a warning to persons responsible for a child's care in the event of their non-compliance with educational provisions, and to impose fines and refer their papers to the judiciary in the event of continuous non-compliance.

22. Federal Act No. 3 of 2016 states that every child has the right to education and requires the State to ensure equality of opportunity for all children, in accordance with the laws in force. In the area of compulsory education, the State is required to take action to prevent children from dropping out of school by establishing specific and well-structured reporting and complaint programmes with a view to ensuring that all acts and forms of abuse that violate educational rights are investigated.

23. Pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 52 of 2018 concerning the implementing regulations of Federal Act No. 3 of 2016 on the Rights of the Child (Wadeema Act), the Ministry of Education issued Ministerial Decision No. 1044 of 2019 on the Establishment of a Child Protection Unit mandated to implement measures and procedures for the protection of children in educational institutions and to guarantee their rights, particularly those pertaining to education. In addition, the Ministry of Education issued Ministerial Decision No. 659 of 2020 on a Policy of Child Protection in Educational Institutions. It provides for procedures and measures to promote a safe school environment that is free from all forms of verbal, psychological, physical and sexual violence through preventive measures and procedures for reporting suspected cases of abuse, for monitoring such cases, and for enhancing schools' capacities to handle cases of child abuse. The aim is to provide protection in coordination with other competent authorities based on joint social responsibility.

24. Education is provided free of charge under Emirati law and non-citizen students can enrol in public schools for a nominal fee. In addition, a number of tolerance school branches have been opened since 2019 in different regions of the country in order to enrol students with limited income or living in exceptional circumstances and to provide them with educational opportunities. The schools accommodate more than 7,500 students and the fees for needy students who are enrolled in the schools are paid by the Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan Foundation for humanitarian activities, according to the results of a study of underprivileged families. In addition, the State has permitted the licensing of charitable schools in several regions to provide educational services to needy students for nominal fees or in some cases free of charge.

25. A special Educational Data Centre has been established in the Ministry of Education to monitor and update the country's educational data. It monitors, measures and studies national and international competitiveness indicators relating to student enrolment rates and annual dropout rates. In light of the Ministry's interest in monitoring the gap between the total number of school-age children in the population and the number of students enrolled in the education system, all public educational establishments have been ordered to use identity cards for the enrolment of students and to automatically include the card number in student data management systems. This enables the Ministry's personnel to compare the number of school-age students possessing an identity card with the number of students enrolled in public educational establishments, thereby accurately calculating enrolment rates and dropout rates.

Policies and initiatives

26. The State has developed a number of policies and initiatives that highlight the importance of education. The 2018 Inclusive Education Policy Framework provides a model for Emirati schools and focuses on providing high-quality education from the early stages through the five pathways (the specialized pathway, the general/academic pathway, the vocational pathway, the advanced pathway and the advanced vocational pathway). The country has a number of educational curricula that meet the needs of people from different cultures. The 18 curricula help to ensure equality of opportunity in education for children from foreign communities.

27. Pursuant to Federal Act No. 29 of 2006 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as amended by Act No. 14 of 2009, and in line with the State's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008, the Ministry has provided training courses on inclusive education for more than 70 per cent of members of administrative and educational bodies. Students with disabilities have been provided with supportive devices, technology and tools, and agreements have been signed with several federal and local bodies on the provision of specialized services to the students. A total of 743 special education teachers work on behalf of students belonging to this category as well as 276 assistants and 411 coaches. More than 190 professionals work with more than 9,000 students with disabilities as sign language interpreters and as pronunciation and language specialists. With a view to rendering the environment accessible, lifts had been installed in more than 50 per cent of schools by 2020. Special bathrooms have been provided for persons with disabilities and ramps have been constructed for about 70 per cent of schools. Assistive technologies, devices and tools have been provided for students and teachers in special education rooms, special education resource rooms and multisensory rooms, depending on the cases associated with each school. In addition, assessment and diagnosis units in 14 special education support centres have been equipped with all modern tools, devices and tests used by qualified specialists. Facilities for outdoor games have been installed for persons with disabilities in six schools, and 60 special buses have been provided for students with disabilities. The percentage of public schools with inclusive education facilities stood at 83.03 per cent in 2019/20. Standards for monitoring public and private schools are based on international norms governing inclusive education for persons with disabilities, and standards for monitoring educational support centres have also been developed. Monitoring teams apply the standards to public and private schools, examine the extent to which the standards are applied and develop plans to rectify any shortcomings.

28. The State launched the National Strategy for Higher Education 2030 in 2017 with a view to providing students with the technical and practical skills required to boost the public and private sectors of the economy, so that generations of specialists and professionals in vital sectors can serve as a driving force in the construction of a knowledge economy and actively participate in research, entrepreneurship and the labour market.

29. The Government of the United Arab Emirates allocates a large share of its annual federal budget to the education sector with a view to providing high-quality educational services that meet the needs of all members of society and that expedite the country's progress towards a knowledge-based economy. The federal budget allocated to the education sector in 2020 totalled Dh 10,41 billion, which represents 14.8 per cent of the total federal budget.

30. Schools are equipped in a manner that guarantees the safety of all groups of students and are provided with educational facilities to meet their needs. The Ministry also promotes the organization of a variety of activities and events for all students and encourages parents to participate in some of the activities. The Ministry also provides governmental and electronic grants, since hundreds of students are sent abroad each year to study in the most prestigious higher education institutions. Thanks to the country's outstanding educational infrastructure, some educational institutions have secured international recognition and international awards, a fact that underscores the high quality of education. Two approaches have been adopted with a view to providing students with access to smart learning systems. The first approach is to provide the necessary infrastructure, and to develop young people's skills and qualifications through the training portal. The second is to empower students

through specialized curricula and through pioneering activities and initiatives that simulate the future and provide young people with contemporary skills.

31. The Ministry of Education has established a health database for all the country's students through the Almanhal portal in order to provide students of all ages with the necessary health care. In addition, it organizes field tours throughout the school year, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Prevention, to raise health awareness and to highlight the importance of maintaining healthy lifestyles. It also organizes awareness-raising programmes for female students on gynaecological diseases.

32. Ministry of Education Decision No. 162 of 2020 established an Advisory Council to protect children in the school environment. The Council is headed by the Ministry of Education and its members are officials from agencies entrusted with child protection in the areas of education and health. Action is taken to promote coordination and cooperation with a view to developing joint policies, procedures and activities that guarantee a safe environment conducive to children's advancement and prosperity in the education system, and that enhance the potential of sustainable protection and development plans for children in the educational environment, in line with the country's guidelines for the future.

Social indicators

33. The Government of the United Arab Emirates attaches great importance to the provision of adequate housing for its citizens by distributing free land or housing, and by providing housing, residential and maintenance loans to eligible citizens. Grants awarded under the Sheikh Zayed Housing Programmes amounted to Dh 1,084,099 in 2019. The United Arab Emirates thus ranked first in the Arab region and 25th globally, according to the Global Competitiveness Report 2019 issued by the World Economic Forum. The report, which assesses the competitiveness of 141 countries, stated that the United Arab Emirates had moved up two places since the previous report was issued.

Social security

34. The State grants monthly financial aid to persons belonging to 21 different groups, including older persons, persons with disabilities, orphans, widows and divorced women. A total of 42,528 families have benefited from the programme; 2,997 children with disabilities have benefited from financial assistance; 673 orphans have benefited from financial assistance; and 205 children of unknown parents have benefited from financial assistance.

Care for persons with disabilities

35. The United Arab Emirates provides support for persons with disabilities and meets all their needs in terms of education, training and rehabilitation with a view to integrating them into society. A total of 100 specialized centres operate on their behalf, of which 42 are run by the public sector and 58 by the private sector. The centres provide educational, health-care and sports services, as well as vocational and professional rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. A total of 5,294 male and female students with disabilities were enrolled in specialized centres for the care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities during the academic year 2020/21. The Ministry of Community Development has prepared seven interactive educational applications for persons with disabilities, the two most important of which are *Tanmu* and *Tawasul*. They have been used by 19,000 persons with disabilities.

Older persons

36. Older persons in the United Arab Emirates are accorded high social status as an important part of the deep-rooted social, cultural and religious environment. All the society's institutions endeavour to ensure that the members of this important segment of the community enjoy the right to live in their natural family environment. The Government has taken steps to provide them with support by establishing a number of specialized homes and centres that offer comprehensive care, social security and other services. A total of 15,097 older persons benefit from social assistance. The State has also created nursing homes, mobile home-care centres, clubs and units, and special departments to provide care for older

persons. One of the most important programmes run by the State is a support initiative aimed at receiving donations from families, institutions, charities and community members to provide equipment for older persons.

Childcare

37. The State attaches great importance to childhood and has enacted legislation on the rights of children in terms of care and upbringing. It has also implemented a number of health-care, social and educational plans to provide for children's welfare. There are currently 258 public and private kindergartens and 665 nurseries, including 34 public-sector nurseries. A total of 40,723 boys and girls under four years of age are currently enrolled in nurseries, which provide the children with health, social, educational and psychological care and a number of skills, and organize promotional activities and programmes.

38. The United Arab Emirates has chaired the meetings of the Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT) on child protection from the risks of online exploitation and has won two permanent seats on the WePROTECT Advisory Board.

Juvenile care

39. The State has taken care of juvenile delinquents of both sexes and the Ministry of the Interior has been assigned responsibility for such action since 2016. Social education centres have been established to provide care and shelter for juveniles. The centres provide social care, education, rehabilitation and vocational training. There are currently 287 juvenile delinquents in social education centres. A number of interactive programmes for children under 18 years of age, including the Al-Sahib Sahib programme, are designed to raise awareness of appropriate ways and means of choosing good companions and avoiding bad companions in cooperation with sports and cultural clubs. There is a guidance programme aimed at raising juveniles' awareness of moral values consistent with appropriate social conduct, and the "Avoid Zero" programme for juvenile delinquents assists them in reviewing their personal values and restoring their personal balance and stability.

Enhancing the role of youth

40. The State has enhanced the role of youth in order to promote their active participation and their spirit of leadership. The 22-year-old Minister of State for Youth Affairs is considered to be the youngest minister in the world. She has launched a number of initiatives aimed at enhancing young people's national identity and fostering a spirit of allegiance.

41. In 2018, the United Arab Emirates established the Federal Youth Authority, which seeks to establish links between young people and all public-sector authorities. It has paved the way for the development of comprehensive youth strategies and policies in the public and private sectors. The Federal Youth Authority takes vigorous action to promote a youth participation policy and to enhance youth involvement at the regional level, through the Arab Youth Centre, and at the national and local levels. The Government has also established youth councils as a unique initiative aimed at ensuring that young people's views are taken into account and that their needs are met at all stages of the Government's decision-making process. The Council of Ministers adopted a decision in June 2019 requiring the participation of at least one representative, who should not be more than 30 years of age, in the boards of directors of public-sector agencies, institutions and companies.

Cultural indicators and pluralism

42. The cultural sector of the United Arab Emirates seeks to enrich all components of the cultural ecosystem, since the country has a long history of celebrating and cherishing cultural diversity. As a result, the measures taken by various institutions to develop the services required for intercultural dialogue among the communities residing in the country's territory have proved increasingly successful. A number of laws have been enacted to protect the cultural heritage, including Federal Act No. 2 of 2017 on the Immunity of Foreign Cultural Objects from Seizure or Confiscation, Federal Decree Law No. 18 of 2016 on Reading, Federal Act No. 6 of 2008 establishing a National Council for Tourism and Antiquities, Federal Act No. 11 of 2017 on Antiquities, and Federal Decree No. 90 of 2005 on the State's

accession to the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, The Hague, 14 May 1954.

43. The United Arab Emirates views the diversity of cultures and religions in its society as a source of strength and enrichment. This has motivated the State to take vigorous action to raise awareness of the values of cultural diversity and to promote such values by adopting the Act on Places of Worship and the Interfaith Dialogue Initiative. The Emirate of Dubai was also ranked first in the region and sixth in global terms for the criterion of cultural interaction in the 2020 Global Power City index.

44. The United Arab Emirates is committed to international treaties aimed at protecting and promoting the expression of cultural diversity. In 2010, the State ratified the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). It is aware that the 2005 Convention and its implementation play an important creative and economic role at the local and international levels.

45. The country's membership of the Intergovernmental Committee for the 2005 Convention during the period from 2021 to 2025 reflects the important role that it plays in protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions. The Committee serves as a platform for enhancing international efforts to support and develop relevant mechanisms and strategies. The United Arab Emirates was elected at the eighth session of the Conference of the States parties to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

46. In line with the State's vision and belief that diversity serves a stimulant for the growth and development of societies, the Cultural Agenda 2031 is the primary State strategy for the cultural sector in the United Arab Emirates. It includes a roadmap comprising seven strategic goals and 75 initiatives for the period from 2018 to 2031. The initiatives in the Agenda contribute to the promotion of cultural diversity at the local and regional levels. Some of the initiatives are based on innovative approaches designed to protect and implement the principles that support cultural diversity in the country. The United Arab Emirates signed an agreement in 2018 with UNESCO to rebuild the cultural heritage of Iraq. It allocated a budget of US\$ 50.4 million for the five-year project in order to renovate and reconstruct the Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret, and to reconstruct the Al-Tahera and Al-Saa'a churches in Mosul. The project also provides for the construction of a memorial site/museum as well as community and educational centres. The United Arab Emirates aims, by means of this project, to restore the spirit of solidarity and coexistence that characterizes the city of Mosul.

47. The State has adopted a number of laws and strategies aimed at organizing the cultural sector, developing an integrated system that promotes social development, achieving cooperation between the various stakeholders that are involved in cultural work, defining roles and responsibilities, and ensuring the complementarity of roles. It also regulates the country's cultural sector by implementing international treaties on cultural matters that have been ratified by the State with a view to preserving all forms of heritage.

48. Civil society institutions play a vital role in discussions of cultural policies and regulations. Governmental agencies seek to promote the involvement of non-profit institutions in formulating their strategies and planning their activities. They also provide them with continuous support to ensure sustainability in the performance of their duties.

49. The United Arab Emirates has the region's highest concentration of free media zones, which represent business communities for the media sector. The country's 42 free zones have evolved into specialized zones for particular sectors. They provide a strong regulatory environment and streamlined services for the acquisition of permits and visas, thereby permitting media company start-ups and enabling established businesses to plan growth and innovation strategies. Media companies that are established in the free zones can be 100 per cent foreign-owned, and they are exempt from personal, income and corporate taxes as well as from customs duties for goods and services. Furthermore, the free zones offer a variety of office spaces, production and business facilities, talent development initiatives, and training and business support services.

B. Constitutional, political and legal structure of the State

The Permanent Constitution of the United Arab Emirates

50. The Constitution, which was promulgated in 1971, consists of 152 articles that clarify the components of the Federation and the rights of citizens in the following 10 sections: the Federation and its objectives; basic social and economic pillars of the Federation; freedoms, rights and public duties; the federal authorities; federal legislation and decrees and the competent authorities; the Emirates; distribution of legislative, executive and international jurisdictions between the Federation and the Emirates; financial affairs of the Federation; armed forces and security forces; and final provisions. Article 7 of the Constitution stipulates that Islam is the official religion of the Federation and that the Islamic sharia is the main source of legislation.

51. Part II of the Constitution concerning basic social and economic pillars of the Federation enshrines the principles of equality, social justice and the provision of safety, security and equality of opportunity for all citizens. Part III of the Constitution concerning freedoms, rights and public duties stipulates that all persons are equal before the law and that there shall be no discrimination among citizens of the Federation on grounds of race, nationality, religious belief or social status. It also states that no person may be subjected to torture or degrading treatment.

52. Part VII of the Constitution outlines the distribution of legislative, executive and international jurisdictions between the Federation and the Emirates. The Federation has exclusive legislative and executive jurisdiction in a number of areas, primarily management of foreign affairs and defence, protection of the Federation's security from internal or external threats, and matters relating to the federal judiciary, education, public health, cash and currency, federal citizenship, passports, residence and immigration. Article 123 of the Constitution stipulates that member Emirates of the Federation may conclude limited agreements of a local and administrative nature with neighbouring countries provided that such agreements are not incompatible with the interests of the Federation or with federal legislation, and provided that the Supreme Council of the Federation is notified thereof in advance. If the Supreme Council objects to the conclusion of such agreements, the matter shall be placed on hold until the Federal Court decides as quickly as possible on the objection.

The political system

53. Part IV of the Constitution lists the federal authorities in the following order: the Supreme Council of the Federation; the President and Vice-President of the Federation; the Council of Ministers of the Federation; the Federal National Council; and the Federal Judiciary.

The Supreme Council of the Federation

54. This is the highest authority in the State and consists of the rulers of all the component Emirates of the Federation or the alternate of the ruler in the event of a ruler's absence. Each Emirate has one vote in Council proceedings. The fields of competence of the Supreme Council, which are specified by the Constitution, include the formulation of a general policy on all issues for which the Federation has responsibility, consideration of all matters pertaining to the furtherance of the Federation's goals and the mutual interests of the member Emirates, endorsement of federal laws, endorsement of decrees relating to matters within its jurisdiction, and endorsement of decrees of accession to international treaties and conventions.

The President and Vice-President of the Federation

55. 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 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. The President exercises the right to grant pardon or to commute a penalty.

Council of Ministers of the Federation

56. The Council of Ministers of the Federation 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 Council of Ministers deals with all 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: monitoring the implementation of the Federal Government's general domestic and foreign policy; proposing draft federal laws and referring them to the Federal National Council; preparing the draft federal budget and overseeing the implementation of federal laws and decisions, as well as the international treaties and conventions to which the State is a party; drafting the necessary implementing regulations for federal laws, as well as disciplinary and administrative regulations.

The Federal National Council

57. The Federal National Council has the status of a parliamentary body representing the people of the Federation before the Federal Government. It serves as a legislative authority and also plays the role of an advisory body. The Council held its first session on 2 December 1972 and gradually built an outstanding relationship between the federal authorities through its participation in the discussion and enactment of legislation, and its discussion of citizens' issues and needs. It has also enhanced the effectiveness of various executive bodies, and invested in the areas of human development, infrastructure, development of procedures for political participation, and other areas.

58. The Federal National Council has played a role in the political empowerment of Emirati women. An Emirati woman took office as President of the Council for the first time in 2015, thus becoming the first woman to head an Arab parliamentary institution. With a view to enhancing the role of women in the Federal National Council, His Highness the President of the Federation issued Presidential Decision No. 1 of 2019 on Raising Women's Representation in the Council to 50 per cent. As a result of the Decision, the National Council of the United Arab Emirates has acquired the status of a global role model, especially with regard to the political empowerment of women.

The judiciary

59. Articles 94 to 159 of the Constitution regulate the judiciary. They state that justice is the basis of government and that judges are independent in the performance of their duties and are subject to no authority other than the law and their own conscience. The Federation has a Federal Supreme Court and federal courts of first instance. The Federal Supreme Court has jurisdiction in a number of areas. In particular, it issues rulings on disputes between member Emirates or between an Emirate and the Federal Government. It examines the constitutionality of federal laws and the constitutionality of other legislation if it is challenged by a federal authority or if it receives a request from any court. The Federal Supreme Court is also mandated to interpret the provisions of the Constitution and to hold ministers and senior federal officials to account. It issues rulings on crimes that directly affect the interests of the Federation, such as its internal or external security, and crimes of forgery of official records or seals, and it also hears cases on conflict of jurisdiction. A judgment handed down by the Federal Supreme Court is final and universally binding.

60. The local judicial authorities in each Emirate have jurisdiction in all judicial matters that do not fall within the jurisdiction of the federal judiciary. It was ranked third globally in the index on the speed of the governmental response to change.

61. Article 1 of Federal Act No. 3 of 1983 on the Federal Judiciary stipulates that: "Justice is the basis of government. Judges are independent in the performance of their duties and are subject to no authority other than the provisions of Islamic sharia, the law in force and their

own conscience. No person or authority may undermine the independence of the judiciary or interfere in matters of justice.”

62. The judicial system in the United Arab Emirates is composed of the federal judiciary and the local judiciary. The federal judicial system is headed by the Federal Supreme Court as the country’s highest judicial authority. The Emirates of Sharjah, Ajman, Fujairah and Umm al-Qaiwain apply the federal judicial system. The local judiciary operates at the level of local governments that are members of the Federation, namely the Emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Ras al-Khaimah. Articles 99, 105 and 104 of the Constitution regulate the relationship between the federal judiciary and the local judiciary.

63. With regard to the operation of the local judicial system, article 105 of the Constitution grants each of the seven Emirates the right to choose to participate in the federal judiciary or to maintain the local order. However, it is not permissible under the Constitution for a local court to withdraw from the jurisdiction of the competent federal court.

64. With a view to ensuring that justice is served, the United Arab Emirates has adopted three degrees of litigation at the federal and local levels: courts of first instance, appeal courts, and the Federal Supreme Court for the federal judiciary and the Court of Cassation for the local judiciary.

65. A Judicial Coordinating Council was established by Cabinet Decision No. 77/3 of 2007 under the chairmanship of the Minister of Justice and with members including heads and directors of federal and local judicial bodies, in addition to directors of the country’s law colleges. The Council is tasked with promoting cooperation, coordination and exchange of expertise between the federal and local courts, examining problems and challenges common to both, recommending appropriate solutions, and harmonizing legal principles and judgements handed down in similar cases heard by the two sets of courts.

The Public Prosecution Service

66. The Constitution stipulates that the Federation shall have a Prosecutor-General appointed by a federal decree and assisted by a number of public prosecutors. It requires the law to regulate matters pertaining to the members of the Federal Public Prosecution Service in terms of their appointment, rank, promotion and the requisite qualifications. The Public Prosecution Service is responsible for the conduct of investigations and the disposal of criminal cases, and the Prosecutor-General is represented by public prosecutors who appear before the courts.

67. The law regulates all matters pertaining to federal courts of first instance and appeal courts in terms of their classification, formation, territorial jurisdiction and the procedures to be followed. Act No. 11 of 1992 promulgating the Code of Civil Procedure, as amended, regulates proceedings before federal and local courts. Federal Act No. 3 of 1983 regulates all matters pertaining to the Federal Judiciary, including the formation of the Supreme Council of the Federal Judiciary and its fields of competence, the categories of courts and their jurisdiction, and all conditions governing the appointment of judges, their promotion, salaries, termination of their mandate, their mandatory duties, their accountability and the penalties that may be imposed upon them. The Act also addresses matters pertaining to members of the Public Prosecution Service in this regard.

Laws of the United Arab Emirates concerning non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and public welfare associations

68. NGOs are recognized in Part III of the Constitution concerning freedoms, rights and public duties. Article 30 stipulates that freedom of opinion and freedom to express one’s opinion orally, in writing or by any other means of expression are guaranteed by law. Article 33 stipulates that freedom of assembly and association is guaranteed by law. The articles of Federal Act No. 2 of 2008 on Civil Associations and Institutions of Public Interest specify registration methods and administrative and financial procedures. They also define the action framework for NGOs which, according to the available statistics, totalled 534 in 2021. The United Arab Emirates has taken action since its inauguration to provide support and enact legislation on the establishment of NGOs and associations of public interest, and it continuously strives to keep abreast of the latest changes in this regard. The provisions of

Federal Act No. 6 of 1974 on Associations of Public Interest were enhanced by Federal Act No. 2 of 2008 on Civil Associations and Institutions of Public Interest in order to expand the scope of community participation and to add new types of non-profit organizations such as civil institutions of public interest. The Act provides a supportive and enabling legislative environment for the associations' activities, such as registration, publicity and the organization and supervision of their work. The legislation was also expanded through Federal Decree Law No. 35 of 2020, which seeks to promote integration and coordination between the Ministry of Community Development and local authorities that interact with associations, and to encourage residents to participate in the establishment of associations. In addition, Federal Act No. 13 of 2018 on the Regulation of Voluntary Work plays a pivotal role in supporting and facilitating the establishment of voluntary teams and in encouraging the participation of all members of society in voluntary work. All civil associations, institutions, social solidarity funds and social clubs are declared and licensed in the United Arab Emirates.

II. General framework for the protection and promotion of human rights

C. Acceptance of international human rights norms

Ratification of international human rights instruments

69. The United Arab Emirates strives to uphold the conventions and treaties to which has acceded. It is developing appropriate strategies for the application and periodic review of national laws in order to ensure that they comply with its obligations under those instruments, in accordance with articles 46, 47, 120 and 125 of the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates. The United Arab Emirates has taken care to incorporate into its Constitution and laws the fundamental human rights principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It has also endeavoured to accede to and ratify the core international human rights treaties, thereby helping to promote the human rights principles to which the international community is committed. In that connection, it has acceded to the following instruments:

- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (in 1974)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (on 3 January 1997)
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (on 2 March 2016)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (on 4 October 2004)
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (on 19 March 2010)
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (on 19 July 2012)

70. No provisions of the aforementioned human rights instruments have been repealed, limited or restricted. However, they are difficult to uphold on the islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb, which are under the occupation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The position of the United Arab Emirates is firm regarding its legitimate right of sovereignty over the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. The islands are being occupied by Iran in flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and in total disregard of all historical records that clearly affirm that the United Arab Emirates has ownership of the islands and that the islands have been under Arab rule since ancient times. In all international forums, the United Arab Emirates has called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to peacefully resolve the issue through direct negotiations or via the International Court of Justice. Iran has not responded to these calls, however.

71. The United Arab Emirates has expressed general reservations regarding certain articles of some human rights instruments, as those articles contradict either national legislation or the principles and provisions of Islamic sharia. The State is currently studying the possibility of withdrawing its reservations to certain instruments.

The United Arab Emirates has also ratified the following international and regional instruments related to human rights:

- International Labour Organization (ILO) Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 1)
- ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)
- ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)
- ILO Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1948 (No. 89)
- ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)
- ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
- ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)
- ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
- ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)
- United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (in 2007)
- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (in 2009)
- United Nations Convention against Corruption (in 2006)
- First, Second, Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions (Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea, Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War and Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War)
- Arab Charter on Human Rights, 2008
- Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, 1990
- Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) Human Rights Declaration, 2014

D. Legal framework for protecting and strengthening human rights at domestic level

Constitutional guarantees regarding human rights

72. Essential guarantees of human rights and fundamental freedoms are enshrined in the Constitution, in current legislation and in practice. Such guarantees are at the forefront of the provisions of the Constitution, chapter 3 of which is devoted to public freedoms, rights and duties and contains several provisions guaranteeing the protection of those rights and freedoms (articles 25 to 44). Chapter 2 of the Constitution sets out the “fundamental social and economic pillars of the Union”, which includes numerous human rights principles, in addition to civil, political, economic, social and cultural freedoms and rights, such as equality, personal freedoms, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of movement, freedom of religion, the right to privacy and property, the right to education and health, the right to work, and the right to freedom of assembly and association.

73. The Constitution contains numerous provisions intended to preserve human dignity and personal liberty and to protect them against infringement, including prohibitions on the

physical or moral mistreatment of accused persons. The Constitution also sets out the principle of presumption of innocence with regard to crimes and stipulates that accused persons have the right to a fair trial, as reflected in the following articles:

- Article 26: No person may be apprehended, searched, detained or imprisoned except in accordance with the law. No person may be subjected to torture or to degrading treatment.
- Article 27: All offences and penalties shall be determined in accordance with the law. No person may be punished for any action or omission committed before the relevant law is brought into force.
- Article 28: Punishment is personal, and accused persons are innocent until proven guilty in a fair and legal trial. Accused persons are entitled to engage competent counsel to defend them at trial.
- Article 36: Dwellings are inviolable and may not be entered without the inhabitant's permission, save in accordance with the law and only in cases prescribed by law.
- Article 31: The freedom and confidentiality of postal and telegraphic correspondence and other means of communication are guaranteed by law.
- Article 39: The public expropriation of funds is prohibited. The penalty of expropriation of private funds may be applied only by judicial ruling and in the cases prescribed by law.
- Article 41: Any person may submit a complaint to the competent authorities, including judicial bodies, concerning violations of the rights and freedoms set forth in the present chapter.

Legal guarantees regarding human rights

74. The State has issued numerous pieces of national legislation that contribute to promoting human rights and that translate into practice the provisions of the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates and the principles of international human rights conventions. The most important of these laws are:

- Federal Act No. 14 of 2014 on combating communicable diseases;
- Federal Act No. 1 of 2015 amending certain provisions of Federal Act No. 51 of 2006 on combating human trafficking;
- Federal Act No. 3 of 2016 on children's rights (Wadeema Act);
- Federal Decree-Law No. 11 of 2016 amending certain provisions of Federal Act No. 3 of 1983 on the judiciary;
- Federal Decree-Law No. 12 of 2016 amending certain provisions of Federal Act No. 10 of 1973 on the Federal Supreme Court;
- Federal Decree-Law No. 8 of 2016 on accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography;
- Federal Act No. 21 of 2016 amending certain provisions of Law No. 6 of 1999 on the establishment of the General Pension and Social Insurance Authority;
- Federal Decree-Law No. 15 of 2016 on the establishment of the Emirates School Establishment;
- Federal Decree-Law No. 16 of 2016 on the establishment of the Emirates Health Services organization;
- Federal Act No. 17 of 2016 on the establishment of centres of reconciliation for civil and commercial disputes;
- Federal Act No. 5 of 2017 on the use of remote communication technology in criminal proceedings;

- Federal Act No. 15 of 2017 on auxiliary service workers;
- Federal Act No. 8 of 1980 on the regulation of labour relations (Labour Code): The Labour Code contains numerous principles in support of the rights of workers, such as equality in employment and occupation, protection for wages, working hours and vacations, worker safety, health and social care for workers, compensation for work injuries and occupational diseases, and the settlement of individual and collective labour disputes. The Labour Code does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, social affiliation or creed with regard to the right to take up or continue work. All persons are equal before the law in this regard. The State continues to make efforts to improve these laws with the support of international organizations; for example, the Ministry of Labour is currently working with ILO to develop a national programme of action for the comprehensive review of the state labour system and procedures.
- In 2015, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, issued Decree-Law No. 2 of 2015 on combating discrimination and hatred. The aim of the Decree-Law is to foster a culture of universal tolerance and confront manifestations of discrimination and racism through a solid legal system which fosters an environment of tolerance, coexistence and acceptance. The Decree-Law prohibits discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of religion, sect, creed, race or colour. In February 2016, the position of Minister of State for Tolerance was established for the first time in the United Arab Emirates. (On 5 July 2020, the Ministry was renamed the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence.)
- Federal Act No. 10 of 2021 on the regulation of cemeteries and burial procedures;
- Federal Act No. 11 of 2021 on the regulation and protection of industrial property rights;
- Act No. 12 of 2021 on the National Human Rights Institution;
- Federal Act No. 3 of 2021 on the regulation of donations;
- Federal Act No. 5 of 2021 amending Federal Act No. 17 of 2016 on the establishment of centres of reconciliation for civil and commercial disputes;
- Federal Act No. 6 of 2021 on mediation for the settlement of civil and commercial disputes;
- Federal Act No. 8 of 2021 on access to genetic resources and their derivatives and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilization;
- Federal Decree-Law No. 2 of 2021 amending Federal Act No. 4 of 2015 on private health facilities;
- Federal Decree-Law No. 24 of 2021 on the accountability of ministers and senior employees of the United Arab Emirates;
- Federal Decree-Law No. 26 of 2021 amending Federal Decree-Law No. 20 of 2018 on combating money-laundering crimes and combating the financing of terrorism and the financing of illegal organizations;
- Federal Decree-Law No. 29 of 2021 on the entry and residency of foreign nationals;
- Federal Decree-Law No. 30 of 2021 on the control of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances;
- Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021 regulating labour relations;
- Federal Decree-Law No. 34 of 2021 on combating rumour-mongering and cybercrime;
- Federal Decree-Law No. 44 of 2021 on the establishment of the Emirates Data Office;
- Federal Decree-Law No. 45 of 2021 on the protection of personal data;
- Federal Decree-Law No. 46 of 2021 on electronic transactions and trust services;

- Federal Decree-Law No. 47 of 2021 on the consolidated general labour rules in the United Arab Emirates;
- National institutions and mechanisms in the field of human rights.

National Human Rights Commission

75. The National Human Rights Commission was established in late 2019. It is chaired by His Excellency Dr. Anwar Gargash, Diplomatic Advisor to the President. The Commission replaced the Standing Committee on Follow-up of the Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights. Having taken on additional tasks and competencies, the Commission represents a natural extension of, and complement to, the important work carried out by the Standing Committee. The Commission is currently following up on the preparation of the National Human Rights Plan, which will serve as an integrated national programme of action and a road map in relation to the rights of women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons and workers; to economic, cultural and social rights; to civil and political rights; and to training and capacity-building in the field of human rights. In its promotional aspects, the Plan will also highlight the efforts and achievements of the State in the field of human rights and will serve as a continuation of those efforts.

National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking

76. The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking was established pursuant to Council of Ministers Decree No. 15 of 2007 in order to facilitate and unify the process of coordination with the relevant authorities and help overcome obstacles to their work, thereby supporting efficient national action against human trafficking. Federal Act No. 51 of 2006 sets out the competencies of the Committee, which has 17 members, drawn from various government institutions, the public prosecution service and civil society institutions.

National Committee for International Humanitarian Law

77. The National Committee for International Humanitarian Law was established in 2004 as part of the State's efforts to disseminate the provisions and principles of international humanitarian law in line with its international humanitarian obligations. It is the first committee of its kind to be established among GCC States. The Committee exchanges experiences with organizations working in the field of international humanitarian law with a view to consolidating awareness and knowledge of international humanitarian law among government authorities and institutions. To further enhance cooperation and support the implementation of international humanitarian law, the Committee coordinates with the relevant authorities, reviews relevant legislation and provides recommendations as required. It also holds internationally accredited training courses on international humanitarian law for trainers. Its members include representatives from 10 different entities, namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Federal National Council, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education, the General Command of the Armed Forces, the United Arab Emirates University, the Institute of Training and Judicial Studies and the Red Crescent Authority.

Human rights units of the Ministry of the Interior

78. The Human Rights Department of the Ministry of the Interior oversees issues related to the protection of the public rights and freedoms of all members of society, in accordance with the Constitution, current law and international human rights instruments. The Department reviews compliance with the controls and regulations related to the protection of those rights by the relevant authorities within the Ministry of the Interior, and it strives to promote a human rights culture through the publication of pamphlets and periodicals. The General Directorate of Human Rights of the General Command of the Dubai Police and the Human Rights Section of the General Command of the Abu Dhabi Police also play an important role in the promotion and protection of human rights at national level.

Office of the Inspector General

79. The Office of the Inspector General is an independent oversight body, which reports directly to the Minister of the Interior. It is responsible for administrative oversight, online and in the field, of all police and security agencies, with the aim of ensuring the integrity of procedures and the legitimacy of decisions. It periodically inspects police agencies, including penal and correctional facilities, to ensure their compliance with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. The Office contains a department responsible for verifying complaints related to errors made by police officers. To that end, it promotes the concepts of community policing, community justice and the provision of quality services to the community, thus indirectly helping to promote a culture of respect for human rights.

Office to Promote a Culture of Respect for the Law

80. The Office is responsible for disseminating a legal culture and knowledge of current laws among individuals and social groups, in all languages spoken in the country. It is also responsible for the implementation of a number of initiatives to inform members of the public about their rights and duties, promote culture and involve the public in the ongoing process of development.

Child Protection Centre of the Ministry of the Interior

81. The Centre was established to develop, implement and codify initiatives and procedures aimed at providing safety, security and protection for all children living in or visiting the United Arab Emirates.

General Women's Union

82. The General Women's Union was established on 27 August 1975, under the leadership of Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, as the national mechanism for the advancement and empowerment of women in the United Arab Emirates. It is the official umbrella organization supporting the Government's efforts in the area of women's issues in local, regional and international forums with a view to empowering and supporting Emirati women and increasing their involvement in the sustainable development process by all available means, and across all fields, at the local, regional and international levels. The United Arab Emirates ranks first in terms of competitiveness and is a regional leader for gender equality, according to international reports.

Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood

83. The Supreme Council is responsible for coordinating action aimed at enhancing the level of care and attention devoted to motherhood and childhood affairs, providing support for mothers and children in all areas, guaranteeing the safety and security of children and mothers, monitoring and assessing development plans aimed at ensuring their welfare, encouraging studies and research, and disseminating a culture of childcare. The Council developed the country's first National Strategy for Motherhood and Childhood, in cooperation with civil society institutions. The Council is also recognized as a strategic partner of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the Arab Gulf region. Their partnership focuses on the following areas:

(a) Development of policies aimed at implementing the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the United Arab Emirates;

(b) Development of a database for the purpose of maintaining and updating child health, education and protection indicators, and analysing and reviewing all legislation concerning childhood in the United Arab Emirates, the aim being to ascertain the extent to which legal provisions reflect international norms governing children's rights, and to submit proposals for amendments in cooperation with legislators and decision makers;

(c) Organization of workshops and training courses on children's rights.

United Arab Emirates Gender Balance Council

84. The Council was established in 2015 in order to reduce the gender gap and to take steps towards achieving gender balance in the public and private sectors, particularly in decision-making positions. The Council is responsible for reviewing existing legislation, policies and programmes, and proposing new or updated legislation and programmes in order to achieve gender balance in employment. It is also responsible for creating a database on gender balance in employment, and for issuing recommendations on the implementation of laws, regulations, decisions and international treaties concerning gender balance in employment in order to eliminate discrimination against women.

Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority

85. The Authority was established pursuant to Act No. 21 of 2019 and it is affiliated with the Executive Council. Its primary functions include: development of a comprehensive strategy for early childhood in the United Arab Emirates; submission of the strategy to the Executive Council for approval and supervision of its implementation; reviewing and assessing early childhood policies and programmes in the United Arab Emirates in coordination with the competent authorities; submission of proposals concerning legislation, policies and regulations on early childhood for adoption in accordance with the applicable legislation; and management and implementation of activities pertaining to early childhood in the United Arab Emirates.

Sharjah Supreme Council for Family Affairs

86. The Council's objectives include protection of the rights of the child by boosting the family's role in society so that it can perform its functions in keeping with new developments, thereby achieving comprehensive development for children and girls in line with the civilized values of Emirati society. It also takes action to improve the services provided to children.

Dubai Community Development Authority

87. The Authority was established pursuant to Local Act No. 12 of 2008. Its organizational structure includes a human rights division that provides assistance and advice to members of society, raises their awareness of human rights in general and children's rights in particular, and monitors human rights issues with the competent authorities.

Dubai Foundation for Women and Children

88. The Foundation was established in 2007 in order to provide immediate support to victims of domestic violence, human trafficking victims of other nationalities who are resident in the country and victims of child abuse. The support that it provides includes the provision of safe shelters, training opportunities, and care and rehabilitation services, in line with the best international standards and practices.

Abu Dhabi Centre for Shelter and Humanitarian Care

89. The Centre was established by the Executive Council of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi pursuant to Decision No. 118 of 2020 and it is affiliated to the Department of Community Development. The Centre provides safe shelters, health care and psychological care for human trafficking victims of other nationalities who are resident in the country, and for victims of domestic violence and all other forms of violence. It also develops and implements rehabilitation programmes for victims of violence with a view to their reintegration into society, in cooperation and coordination with the competent authorities. It takes the necessary steps to meet their needs, to protect their rights and to provide them with the necessary advice.

Aman Shelter for Women and Children

90. The Shelter was established in the Emirate of Ras al-Khaimah in 2017 to provide shelter for women and child victims of domestic violence and for human trafficking victims of other nationalities who are resident in the country. The Shelter's specialized teams provide psychological and social care for residents, and seek to rehabilitate victims by means of education and training with a view to their reintegration into society. The Shelter operates in

cooperation and partnership with all public and private sectors in order to guarantee a safe and secure environment for victims.

Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care and Persons with Special Needs

91. The Organization, which was established pursuant to Act No. 2 of 2004 of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, seeks to rehabilitate persons with special needs with a view to their reintegration into society by means of training, educational, vocational and therapeutic services, psychological care and family counselling services, and sports. The Organization's Care Sector for Persons with Special Needs runs 12 care centres throughout the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The Organization also runs the Dar Zayed for Family Care, whose mission is to provide a sound educational environment for orphans with a view to building a calm and composed personality that is capable of adaptation and integration into society.

Family Development Foundation

92. The Foundation was established in May 2006 with a view to enhancing family development and care based on a comprehensive concept that is designed to promote the family, women and children. It is responsible for implementing social legislation, submitting proposals for legislative developments aimed at guaranteeing the rights of women and children, and undertaking studies and analyses of present and future phenomena, problems and challenges facing the family, women and children.

Institutions responsible for the care of orphans and minors

93. These institutions are responsible for taking care of minors' funds, investing them for their benefit, developing their funds in a manner that safeguards and guarantees their future, and organizing training programmes that enable them to handle all life's circumstances.

National Committee for the Prevention of Bullying

94. The Committee was established pursuant to Ministry of Education Decision No. 710 of 2018 by means of a procedure involving 23 federal and local authorities. Its mission is to develop policies and programmes to prevent bullying and to raise awareness of the phenomenon of bullying throughout the United Arab Emirates.

The Emirati Children's Parliament

95. The Parliament was established on 22 February 2020 pursuant to an agreement signed by the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood with the Federal National Council and in cooperation with a number of strategic partners. The Parliament's goals are as follows: to achieve equality and participation in decision-making by means of dialogue and expression of one's views in the context of a framework organized on behalf of children; to train a generation that is capable of playing its role in society and of effectively contributing to community building and development; to familiarize children with their rights and how to defend them; and to train them to express their views and accept other people's views in accordance with parliamentary procedures. The Emirati Children's Parliament is composed of 40 male and female members, who are selected from among the country's Emirates in accordance with the rules and procedures adopted by the General Secretariat of the Federal National Council in consultation with the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood. The members include persons with disabilities. The Council is composed of the following standing committees: Committees on Legislative and Legal Affairs and Children's Rights; a Committee on Educational, Youth, Sports, Cultural and Media Affairs; and a Committee on Health, Social and Employment Affairs.

The Children's Advisory Council

96. The Council was established in 2018 pursuant to a decision issued by Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Chairwoman of the General Women's Union, President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, and Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation. It reports to the Office of the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood. The Council's mission consists in creating a

platform from which children can freely express their views, describe the means of facilitating their lives to which they aspire, and outline the prosperous future of which they dream. The Children's Advisory Council held its first introductory session, immediately after its formation, at the headquarters of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood. The Chair of the Children's Advisory Council and the members of the committees were elected during the session. The Council is composed of children with outstanding talents as well as children with disabilities from the different Emirates. Their three-year term of office is renewable for similar periods.

Independent human rights institutions

The National Human Rights Institution based on the Paris Principles

97. His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, issued Federal Act No. 12 of 2021 concerning the establishment of a national human rights institution. The National Human Rights Institution was established pursuant to the Act as an independent body with its headquarters in Abu Dhabi. It is entitled to open branches and establish offices in other Emirates. The Institution has a separate legal personality and enjoys financial and administrative independence in the performance of its duties and activities. Its mission consists in promoting and protecting human rights and freedoms, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, the legislation in force in the Emirates and relevant international treaties. The Institution's terms of reference and duties include, inter alia: cooperation with the authorities and competent bodies in developing a national action plan for the promotion and protection of human rights in the country and in proposing a procedure for its implementation; action to disseminate a culture of human rights and to raise public awareness thereof, for instance by organizing seminars, conferences and discussion panels on human rights; submission of proposals, recommendations and advice to the competent authorities and other bodies on all matters pertaining to the protection, promotion and monitoring of human rights; submission of proposals to the competent authorities regarding the compatibility of legislation with international human rights treaties that the State has ratified and monitoring the outcome; surveillance of human rights violations, ascertaining the underlying circumstances and reporting them to the competent authorities; and participation in international and regional forums regarding human rights.

E. Framework for raising awareness of human rights at the national level

Publication of human rights instruments

98. The Government of the United Arab Emirates seeks to ensure that human rights principles are firmly rooted among citizens and residents by disseminating a culture of human rights and complying with the provisions of international treaties that have been signed and ratified by the State. The Ministry of Justice continuously publishes the country's laws and implementing regulations on its website in Arabic and English so that they are universally accessible. International human rights instruments are also published on the website.

99. The Abu Dhabi police force has developed a human rights policy, which is the first of its kind among the country's governmental bodies. It incorporates a set of international human rights norms and principles that have been endorsed by the United Arab Emirates and are applicable to various police duties, such as general principles governing high-ranking officers, the rights of such officers, and the human rights norms applicable to law enforcement, places of detention and emergency situations. Standards have also been set for human rights groups in order to achieve equality.

100. The objective of the policy is to boost legal guarantees aimed at protecting the rights of individuals and groups, in the context of the legislation in force and the State's general human rights policy, and at improving the quality of security services. It should be noted that the reference to human rights in the policy, with a quotation from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, focuses on the fundamental rights that all human beings enjoy on an equal footing and without discrimination on grounds of nationality, place of residence, gender, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language or any other specific status. In addition,

human rights belong to all people because humanity is shared and inherent in every human being.

101. Governmental bodies and competent institutions print and disseminate international human rights treaties and publish them on their websites so that they are accessible to the general public.

102. The federal laws of the United Arab Emirates during the period from 1971 are accessible on the Emirati legal portal in both Arabic and English. The portal is designed to enhance the understanding of the general public, specialists and all parties interested in the legal system of the United Arab Emirates, and to archive the contemporary legal culture for future generations.

Human rights awareness-raising and education (at the institutional level)

103. The State, represented by the competent authorities, has adopted national strategies aimed at disseminating a culture of human rights. For example, the Ministry of the Interior has developed strategic initiatives aimed at promoting and disseminating a culture of human rights in various branches of the police force. The initiatives are consistent with the strategy and vision of the Federal Government.

104. The Ministry of Justice launched a strategy for the period from 2017 to 2021 that includes provisions aimed at the protection of rights and freedoms, in accordance with the directives of the State's wise leadership and its ambition for the United Arab Emirates to become one of the world's leading countries in terms of human rights protection. In addition, the Ministry provides innovative legal and judicial services to clients of all categories based on efficiency, effectiveness and high quality. It disseminates legal information and culture on behalf of all segments of society through multiple and innovative channels of communication, and builds local and international strategic partnerships that promote judicial cooperation and sharing of experience.

105. The initiative aimed at spreading a culture of human rights among the employees of the Ministry of the Interior, in accordance with the State's instructions concerning the promotion of the human rights portfolio at the local and international levels, involves training sessions, awareness-raising messages, material on the website of the Ministry of the Interior, the organization of conferences, workshops and seminars, and participation in other events organized by the relevant authorities in order to enhance the positive image of the Ministry of the Interior.

106. The National Committee on International Humanitarian Law has developed a strategy aimed at spreading and consolidating awareness of the principles and objectives of international humanitarian law among institutions and individuals. The strategy also provides for the sharing of experience with associations, organizations and other entities operating in the field of international humanitarian law in order to boost cooperation and ensure the implementation of its provisions by promoting coordination among competent authorities, reviewing legislation related to international humanitarian law and providing the necessary recommendations.

107. During the past three years, the Human Rights Department has organized 311 lectures and workshops for employees of the Ministry of the Interior and high-ranking police officers on various human rights issues, including the police force and human rights, the rights of the child under national legislation and international treaties, violence against women and respect for human rights, and adoption of a human rights-based approach to the treatment of inmates employed in penitentiaries and correctional institutions. A total of 12,829 persons benefited from the courses.

108. Twenty training courses were organized for the staff of the Ministry of the Interior. They included four courses on the protection of children's rights, the roles and responsibilities of the police force in the area of children's rights, and international treaties on children's rights ratified by the State. Sixty staff members benefited from the courses. In addition, 16 training courses and workshops were held to provide guidance on the investigation of cases of child abuse in the country.

109. Training was provided under the Safety Ambassadors programme for 100 staff members employed in 10 schools on “Cases of violence against children, sexual harassment of children, and behavioural, psychological, social and health-related matters pertaining to children”.

110. A total of 619 training courses, lectures and workshops, some of which are listed below, were held for child protection staff in various public and private bodies during the period from 2015 to 2019.

111. Training courses on childhood were held for education sector staff employed in 214 kindergartens, 365 schools (150 public schools and 215 private schools) and 65 Global Education Management System (GEMS) schools.

112. A training programme for staff in the sports sector was attended by 85 child protection coordinators belonging to 33 clubs run by the United Arab Emirates Football Association and the United Arab Emirates Special Olympics Foundation.

113. A workshop on child protection was held in Arabic and English for the medical staff of the Al-Jalila Children’s Hospital and for nurses employed in schools in the Emirate of Sharjah, kindergartens and child-care institutions.

114. An awareness-raising lecture on child protection was attended by 50 shelter employees.

115. The Police General Command offices in the Emirates also organized a number of training courses and workshops, some of which are listed below.

116. A total of 54 workshops on ensuring respect for human rights and on the maintenance of law and order were attended by 745 staff members of the Police General Commands.

117. Eighteen training courses on investigation procedures involving children were held for the staff of police stations and relevant departments in order to enhance the capacities of investigators. Some of them were conducted in cooperation with UNICEF and a law firm.

118. Four lectures on legal and security matters were held on behalf of 673 supervisors, specialized school staff and employees in civil society institutions in order to increase their knowledge of law enforcement responsibilities.

119. An on-site social service course focusing on family-related social problems was held on behalf of 52 Police General Command employees. The aim was to alert security personnel to the priorities to be observed when dealing with social problems, and to provide them with the necessary communication skills.

Action to raise awareness of respect for all human rights throughout the country (at the community level)

120. The National Human Rights Commission opened a social media platform on 8 July 2021 with a view to raising awareness of international human rights instruments to which the United Arab Emirates is a party. The goal of the platform is to raise awareness and to disseminate a culture of human rights.

121. Annual pamphlets and reports are issued, such as the annual report of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking. In addition, special training courses on human rights are held for public-sector employees and students.

122. The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization and the Ministry of Community Development hold mandatory courses for workers at specialized centres such as Tadbir in order to familiarize them with their rights prior to the issuance of a worker’s residence permit. The workers are also provided with SIM cards so that they can remain in touch with law enforcement agencies and so that they may receive brief messages regarding their rights in the languages of their countries of origin.

123. Official bodies such as the Ministry of the Interior hold seminars and workshops on the dissemination of a culture of international humanitarian law for their staff and for all parties involved in the enforcement of human rights law in the country. The aim is to raise

awareness of all matters relating to the protection and promotion of human rights and the implementation by the State of the provisions of international humanitarian law.

124. Lectures and workshops are organized in women's institutions and civil society organizations on behalf of mothers, families, students and female teachers in order to raise their awareness of children's rights, employment rights and women's rights.

Development aid with a view to promoting human rights in other countries

125. The provision of foreign aid by the United Arab Emirates forms part of the country's policy, since its establishment, of providing humanitarian and development aid and support to diverse fraternal and friendly countries and peoples. The State has taken steps to increase the effectiveness of its humanitarian and charitable development aid with a view to improving the quality of life of needy individuals and groups, regardless of their race, identity, language or religious beliefs. This approach stems from the country's firm belief in the important role played by foreign aid in promoting global peace and stability by eliminating all forms and manifestations of poverty.

126. The United Arab Emirates has pledged to support fraternal and friendly countries both through its support for development projects and through its humanitarian response to disasters and crises, thereby promoting prosperity and stability in the countries concerned and alleviating human suffering, in cooperation with regional and international partners and United Nations agencies operating in the humanitarian and development sectors. Foreign aid by the United Arab Emirates amounted to Dh 29.4 billion (US\$ 8 billion) in 2019, which represents an increase of Dh 782 million.

127. The United Arab Emirates has used its foreign aid to address priority areas and has succeeded in promoting their development through its efforts to achieve international development cooperation. The areas in question have included humanitarian aid, poverty eradication, child support, global sectoral programmes such as transport and infrastructure, enhancement of governmental effectiveness and empowerment of women and girls. Such action demonstrates the scale of the country's commitment to assisting millions of people around the world, particularly the most vulnerable groups, such as refugees and internally displaced persons who are the victims of crises and conflicts. The United Arab Emirates has also provided assistance for the building of roads, bridges and renewable energy infrastructure, and has pledged to provide multi-year support for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. In addition, it contributes to the reinforcement and upgrading of the development capacities of the countries benefiting from such assistance.

Ratio of official development aid to gross national income

128. With regard to the status of the foreign aid provided by the United Arab Emirates in terms of international measurement standards applicable to international donors of foreign aid, the ratio of official development assistance to gross national income has been set at 0.7 per cent on the basis of United Nations criteria. The United Arab Emirates recorded a higher percentage between 2013 and 2018, thereby ranking first on the list of top international donors in terms of the percentage of gross national income. In 2019, however, the ratio of the country's official development assistance to its gross national income failed to reach the target percentage. Nevertheless, it maintained its position for the eighth consecutive year among the top 10 donors in terms of the ratio of official development assistance to gross national income. As its official development assistance of Dh 8.19 billion (US\$ 2.2 billion) represented 0.55 per cent of the gross national income of the United Arab Emirates, it was ranked tenth in 2019.

F. Reporting process at the national level

129. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation chaired the Standing Committee for the Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights from 2010 and currently chairs the National Human Rights Committee, which was established at the end of 2019 pursuant to Cabinet Decree No. 12/11 F of 2019 and which replaced the previous Committee. It monitors the universal periodic report and all human rights issues relating to the Universal

Periodic Review before the Human Rights Council. It also oversees the implementation of the recommendations accepted by the State during the periodic review procedure and proposes the necessary measures for their implementation. In addition, the Committee monitors periodic reports to regional committees and to United Nations human rights treaty bodies and special procedures concerning instruments to which the State is a party, and oversees the implementation of their concluding observations and recommendations.

(a) Methodology for follow-up to a review

130. Once the final documents concerning periodic reports are adopted following the conclusion of the interactive dialogue with treaty bodies, the competent national task forces oversee the implementation of the recommendations, in coordination and cooperation with local and federal authorities operating within their specific fields of competence. The country is currently studying the possibility of technical cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) regarding the installation of the National Recommendations Tracking Database (NRTD) application. The application is a digital tool that facilitates the management of digital information by national monitoring and review mechanisms.

(b) Preparation of the report and consultation procedures

131. The National Human Rights Committee undertakes a number of procedures relating to consultations on the preparation of national reports. It holds a series of meetings and organizes a number of workshops, forums and events with numerous civil society organizations and government bodies in order to discuss its proposals on the best action to be taken on the outcome of the review of national reports, on the procedure for preparing future reports and on monitoring of the implementation of recommendations.

G. Other related human rights information

Follow-up to international conferences

132. The State is committed to involvement in United Nations multilateral action in the area of human rights and actively participates in many forums, such as the Human Rights Council and the United Nations General Assembly, as well as in many international conferences on human rights and related matters. The State has accepted many commitments in these forums and implements its obligations through the country's laws and policies, including its legal framework.

III. Information on non-discrimination and equality and effective remedies

Non-discrimination and equality

133. Article 25 of the Constitution stipulates that: "All persons are equal before the law and there shall be no discrimination among citizens of the United Arab Emirates on the grounds of origin, place of residence, religious belief or social status." Article 32 of the Constitution stipulates that: "The freedom to perform religious rites in accordance with established traditions shall be safeguarded, without prejudice to public order or public morals." The United Arab Emirates promulgated Federal Decree Law No. 2 of 2015 on combating discrimination and hatred, which criminalizes acts involving the defamation of religions and their sacred places, combats all forms of discrimination and rejects the expression of hate speech by any means. The Decree Law also prohibits insults to deities, religions, prophets, messengers, divine books and places of worship, as well as discrimination among individuals or groups on the grounds of religion, creed, doctrine, confessional group, religious community, race, colour or ethnic origin. In addition, it makes it a criminal offence to engage in speech or conduct that incites discord, strife or discrimination among individuals or groups by way of the Internet, telecommunication networks, websites, manufactured items, information technologies or any print or audiovisual media, using verbal, written, graphic or

other means of expression. The Decree Law stipulates that offenders shall be absolved from punishment if they report the offence to the judicial or administrative authorities before it is discovered. If the offence is reported after it has been discovered, the court may absolve the persons concerned from punishment if the information provided leads to the arrest of other offenders.

134. The United Arab Emirates is a party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which it ratified in 1974. The State's combined eighteenth to twenty-first periodic reports were reviewed by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in August 2017.

135. The United Arab Emirates cherishes the values of tolerance, peace, cultural pluralism and mutual acceptance. Persons of some 200 nationalities reside on its territory in peace and in social and religious harmony. The Government has facilitated the construction of places of worship for many religions and denominations, and has granted them land on which to build their places of worship free of charge. The country hosts 83 places of worship in which non-Muslims can perform their religious rites. People of different religions residing in the United Arab Emirates enjoy complete freedom to participate in religious rites and ceremonies in an atmosphere of tolerance, coexistence and freedom of worship.

136. When forming a Government in 2016, the United Arab Emirates established the Ministry of Tolerance with a view to promoting tolerance as a fundamental social value at the local and regional levels. In addition, the Council of Ministers adopted the National Tolerance Programme in June 2016. The Programme focuses on five main themes: strengthening the Government's role as a guarantor of tolerance; consolidating the family's role in nation-building; promoting tolerance among young people and protecting them from fanaticism and extremism; enriching scientific and cultural content; and contributing to international efforts to promote tolerance. In addition, the Council of Intellectuals for Tolerance and the United Arab Emirates Centre for Tolerance were established, and the Tolerance Responsibility Programme for Institutions and the United Arab Emirates Charter of Tolerance, Coexistence and Peace were launched.

The State's efforts to combat discrimination and hatred

137. The United Arab Emirates is proud of its policy of disseminating values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence and promoting dialogue between religions and cultures within the country, for instance by facilitating the construction of places of worship for many religions and denominations by granting them land on which to build their places of worship free of charge. The country currently hosts 83 places of worship for non-Muslims. The policy led to the establishment by the United Arab Emirates of a Ministry of Tolerance in February 2016, the adoption of the National Tolerance Programme in June 2016, the proclamation of 2019 as the Year of Tolerance, and the establishment of the International Institute for Tolerance to promote a culture of open-mindedness and civilized dialogue. The Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Tolerance Award was launched with a view to honouring groups and institutions that have played an outstanding role in promoting values of tolerance at the national and international levels.

138. The United Arab Emirates has announced the establishment of the Abrahamic Family House project in Abu Dhabi, which will include a mosque, a church and a synagogue. The aim is to create a community conducive to interactive dialogues and exchanges of ideas between persons belonging to different religions. A key event that confirmed the effectiveness of the policy was the visit by His Holiness Pope Francis of the Catholic Church to Abu Dhabi in early February 2019, which led to the signing of the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together by His Holiness the Pope and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. In response to an initiative presented to the General Assembly in December 2020 by the United Arab Emirates, in cooperation with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Arab Republic of Egypt, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution proclaiming 4 February each year as the International Day of Human Fraternity. The United Arab Emirates also promulgated Decree Law No. 2 of 2015 on combating discrimination and hatred, which is designed to promote a culture of global tolerance and to combat ethnic, religious, cultural and all other forms of discrimination and racism.

139. The Ministry of Education published and circulated the Teachers' Tolerance Charter in 2016 for public and private schools and universities. The Charter highlights the need to disseminate a spirit of tolerance and equality in the various sectors of education throughout the country.

Remedies

140. The need to guarantee the protection of rights and freedoms is underlined in article 41 of the Constitution, which stipulates that: "Any person may submit a complaint to the competent authorities, including judicial bodies, concerning violations of the rights and freedoms set out in the present chapter."

141. The rulers of the United Arab Emirates and senior officials maintain the tradition of holding open councils, which provide a forum for citizens and others to discuss and debate public affairs. The rulers regularly visit citizens in their own areas and even in their homes to observe their situation. This is an established and effective practice in the United Arab Emirates and represents the traditional channel for working actively in parallel with modern channels of representation and participation.

142. Article 35 of the Code of Criminal Procedures stipulates that: "Law enforcement officers shall accept reports and complaints received in respect of offences. They and their subordinates shall seek to obtain clarifications and conduct the necessary inquiries to facilitate investigation of the facts reported to them or brought to their attention by whatever means. They shall take every precaution to preserve evidence of the offence."

143. All persons who believe that they have suffered harm are entitled under the laws of the United Arab Emirates to institute proceedings for compensation before the domestic courts, in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Code. The Code of Civil Procedure stipulates that: "Civil proceedings, whatever their value, for compensation for damages arising from an offence may be instituted before the criminal court for consideration in conjunction with the criminal proceedings after payment of the fees prescribed by law." Article 4 of the Martial Law Act empowers the competent authorities to seize temporary control of any facility, institution, company, premises, real estate or movable property, taking into account the owners' right to fair compensation. Article 21 of the Constitution further stipulates that private property shall be protected and that no persons may be stripped of their property, except where such action is required in the public interest, in accordance with the law and in return for fair compensation.

Legal aid mechanisms and measures to facilitate access to the justice system

144. The judicial authorities provide free legal aid and impartial legal guidance to underprivileged persons in order to support their right to easy access to justice, either before or during a lawsuit, regardless of their legal status in the proceedings. This approach is consistent with the norms of the State's judicial authorities and their belief in the need to provide legal and judicial assistance to indigent persons, in accordance with the State's legal principles, which require all persons to have easy access to a lawful judge. Moreover, a person's economic or social status should not impede his or her access to justice.

145. The Ministry of Justice launched a number of initiatives in 2017 with a view to facilitating public access to justice, bolstering the Ministry's partnerships at the local and international levels, and disseminating a legal culture. Furthermore, as judges' discretion and impartiality should be accompanied by their openness to different cultures and scientific development, the Ministry has adopted a series of internal and legislative reforms, including legislation on legal fees to ensure easy access to justice, promulgation of the Peacemakers Act to promote a culture of peace, and promulgation of the Act on the use of video-conferencing in criminal court trials in order to expedite litigation proceedings. The Ministry of Justice also seeks to facilitate access to justice by using and developing online systems and smart services that take into account the needs of the general public, and the requirements of confidentiality, safety and impartiality in legal proceedings.

146. As a result of the Government's plan to promote digital transformation and its international leadership in that regard, it was ranked among the top 20 countries in the Global Competitiveness Index. The Ministry of Justice has utilized modern digital technology to

legalize electronic litigation, to facilitate clients' access to justice and related services, and to develop the technology used in the justice sector.

Victim compensation and support system

147. As there is no specific legislation concerning compensation for violations of fundamental rights, general legal provisions are applicable in such circumstances. The Federal Civil Code entitles persons to apply to the courts for compensation, and civil liability is incurred by the individual, the Government or the public welfare associations that caused the damage. Such damage may result from non-implementation or defective implementation of a contract, from accidental damage, or from the perpetration of a minor or major offence. The courts determine the amount of compensation required to provide redress for material and moral damage. Direct victims and rights-holders who are recognized as indirect victims may benefit from the compensation.

148. The Directorate of Social Support Centres provides care and psychosocial support for victims of violence and crime, particularly women, children and older persons involved in diverse incidents and accidents. It takes the necessary steps to protect them from abuse and bullying and to organize aftercare. The Victim Support and Shelter Department provides psychological and moral support for victims of domestic violence, especially women and children, in coordination with other professional bodies. It also raises awareness among police officers of the need to improve procedures for dealing with victims of crime and domestic violence, and proposes plans and programmes for the training and rehabilitation of victims.

Monitoring of penitentiaries

149. Federal Act No. 43 of 1992 on the Organization of Correctional Institutions and Penitentiaries contains provisions governing monitoring by members of the Public Prosecution Service, who have the right to enter correctional institutions and penitentiaries at any time in order to ascertain that the laws and regulations are being properly implemented. All prisoners are entitled to meet with members of the Public Prosecution Service who are visiting the facility in order to submit their complaints. All prisoners are also entitled to submit a complaint to the Minister of the Interior, the Attorney General, the director of the competent department or the governor of the facility. In addition, the Act establishes the right of diplomats and public interest associations involved in human rights to visit prisons and inspect prisoners' conditions after obtaining written permission to do so from the competent public prosecution office.
