



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

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

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

**Initial reports of States parties due in 2010**

**Saudi Arabia\***

[Date received: 1 July 2015]

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## Introduction

Saudi Arabia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol in 2008 and is now submitting its initial report in accordance with article 35, paragraph 1, of the Convention. The report was drafted in accordance with the United Nations guidelines on preparing reports concerning the Convention. It is divided into two principal parts:

Part 1: The core document, which contains general information about Saudi Arabia and national legislation of relevance to the subject of this report. This part is divided into six sections.

Part 2: The treaty-specific document, which forms the main focus of this report and includes information on:

1. The methodology used in preparing the report;
2. Matters relating to all articles of the Convention (arts. 1-50).

### I. Core document

#### A. Geography and population of Saudi Arabia

1. Saudi Arabia is located in south-west Asia. It is bordered to the east by the Arabian Gulf, the United Arab Emirates, the State of Qatar and the Kingdom of Bahrain, to the north-east by the State of Kuwait, to the north by the Republic of Iraq and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, to the west by the Red Sea, to the south by the Republic of Yemen and to the south-east by the Sultanate of Oman. Its territory covers 2,149,690 km<sup>2</sup>.

2. The overall population of Saudi Arabia is 30,770,375, according to data published by the Central Department of Statistics for 2014, as set out in detail in the following table:

<i>Citizens: 20 702 536</i>		<i>Foreign residents: 10 067 839</i>	
<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
10 398 993	10 303 543	6 867 332	3 200 507

#### B. Economic situation in Saudi Arabia

3. According to recent data collated by the Ministry of Economy and Planning, the Saudi economy is growing steadily. Gross domestic product (GDP) rose from 1,231 billion Saudi Arabian riyals (SRI) in 2005 to SRI 2,821 billion in 2014. Per capita GDP performed similarly, increasing from SRI 53,000 in 2005 to SRI 93,000 in 2013.

As a result of these remarkable advances, the Saudi economy rose in the rankings of world economies from 22nd place in 2005 to 19th in 2013. Saudi Arabia holds the unique position of being the only Arab country to belong to the Group of 20, which is comprised of the 20 largest economies in the world. In 2012, the Saudi economy experienced the second largest growth rate (6.8 per cent) in the Group of 20 after the economy of the People's Republic of China (7.8 per cent).

#### C. System of government in Saudi Arabia

4. Saudi Arabia is a fully sovereign Islamic Arab State. The national religion is Islam, and the Book of God and the Sunna of His Messenger (Peace be upon him!) form the cornerstone for the system of government. It has a monarchy, which descends through the male heirs of the founding King of Saudi Arabia, Abdulaziz bin Abdurrahman al-Faisal Al

Saud. The line of succession is determined in the light of the worthiness of each heir to rule in accordance with the Book of God and the Sunna of His Prophet (Peace be upon him!).

5. The system of government is based on the principles of justice, consultation and equality, in accordance with the sharia and national legislative instruments such as the Basic Law of Governance, the Statutes of the Shura (Consultative) Council, the Rules of Procedure of the Council of Ministers and the Provinces Act.

#### **D. Legal framework for the protection of human rights in Saudi Arabia**

6. Saudi Arabia has promulgated several new laws and updated and amended existing laws in order to take account of recent developments, in keeping with its obligations pursuant to the various international treaties to which it has acceded. These new and amended laws include constructive additions needed to supplement the existing legislation and regulations in order to safeguard human rights. They provide for measures designed, inter alia, to promote equality, combat discrimination and ensure that all individuals are able to enjoy their rights in full and on an equal basis. The following instruments are of particular relevance:

- Basic Law of Governance, promulgated by Royal Order No. A/90 of 2 March 1992;
- Statutes of the Shura Council, promulgated by Royal Order No. A/91 of 2 March 1992;
- Rules of Procedure of the Council of Ministers, promulgated by Royal Order No. A/13 of 21 August 1993;
- Statutes of the Board of Grievances, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/78 of 1 October 2007;
- Code of Procedure before the Sharia Courts, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/1 of 25 November 2013;
- Code of Criminal Procedure, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/2 of 25 November 2013;
- Code of Practice for the Legal Profession, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/38 of 15 October 2001;
- Code of Practice for Health-Care Professions, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/59 of 6 December 2005;
- Suppression of Trafficking in Persons Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/40 of 14 July 2009;
- Labour Law, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/51 of 27 September 2005;
- Disability Care Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/37 of 19 December 2000;
- Protection against Abuse Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/52 of 21 September 2013;
- Child Protection Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/14 of 25 November 2014;
- Health Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/11 of 4 June 2002;
- Ethics of Scientific Research on Living Creatures Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/59 of 24 August 2010;
- Mental Health Care Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/56 of 17 July 2014;
- Social Security Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/45 of 1 August 2006.

## **E. International and regional human rights instruments to which Saudi Arabia has acceded**

7. Saudi Arabia was among the States that took part in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and it has acceded to various international human rights instruments, including:

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which it acceded in 1995;
- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to which it acceded in 1997;
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which it acceded in 2000;
- The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, to which it acceded in 2007;
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, to which it acceded in 2008 (the subject of this report);
- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, to which it acceded in 2010;
- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, to which it acceded in 2010;
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, to which it acceded in 1997.

Saudi Arabia is also a party to several regional, Arab and Islamic instruments, including:

- The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, to which it acceded in 1990;
- The Riyadh Declaration on Human Rights in Peace and War, to which it acceded in 2003;
- The Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam, to which it acceded in 2006;
- The Arab Charter on Human Rights, to which it acceded in 2009.

## **F. Newly established national mechanisms (entities) for the promotion and protection of human rights**

### **Human Rights Commission**

8. Established pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 207 of 12 September 2005, the Commission is vested with extensive powers, pursuant to its Statutes, to promote and protect human rights in accordance with international standards, to increase awareness of such rights and to contribute to ensuring that such rights are enforced in the light of the sharia. It is the government body responsible for issuing opinions and advice on human rights matters.

9. The Commission enjoys full independence in the performance of its statutory functions, which include:

- Ascertaining that the relevant government bodies are implementing current laws and regulations on human rights, and investigating any abuses that constitute violations of human rights;
- Giving opinions on bills of law on human rights issues;
- Monitoring government bodies to ensure that they are applying and implementing the international human rights instruments ratified by Saudi Arabia within their respective areas of competence;
- Visiting prisons and places of detention at any time, without requiring permission from the relevant authority, and reporting thereon to the Prime Minister;

- Receiving and verifying human rights complaints and taking the requisite statutory action thereon;
- Formulating general policy to promote awareness of human rights.

10. In 2010, the Commission established a special unit for the human rights of persons with disabilities, staffed by persons with disabilities and by a number of activists in that field. The function of the unit is to ensure that the authorities responsible for providing services to persons with disabilities implement the provisions set out in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Further information on the role of this unit will be provided in the part of this report on article 33 concerning national implementation and monitoring.

#### **National Society for Human Rights**

11. Founded in 2004, the National Society for Human Rights is a civil society organization not subject to any government oversight or control. According to its Statutes, its objectives are to work for the protection of human rights in accordance with the Basic Law of Governance, current laws and human rights instruments and to cooperate with international human rights organizations.

12. The Society plays an active role in monitoring violations of the human rights of persons with disabilities and follows up with the relevant bodies to make sure that such violations are handled appropriately. Accordingly, it also works to raise awareness about such rights.

#### **Committee on Trafficking in Persons**

13. Established in 2009 pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 244, the Committee is headquartered at the Human Rights Commission and comprises representatives from the Ministries of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Social Affairs, Labour, and Culture and Information, and from the Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution.

14. The Committee is a key national mechanism for implementing the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons Act and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Its functions include:

- Following up on victims of trafficking to ensure that they are not exploited in such a way again;
- Formulating a policy to encourage a proactive approach to seeking out victims, and providing training in victim identification to relevant personnel;
- Coordinating with the authorities to repatriate victims to their place of origin in the country of which they are a national or, where requested, to their place of residence in any other country;
- Making recommendations regarding victims who should remain in Saudi Arabia, where appropriate, and regularizing the status of such persons so that they are able to work.

#### **National Family Safety Programme**

15. The aims of the Programme, which was established in 2005, are to prevent domestic violence, support victims, raise awareness and build professional partnerships with experts and with governmental, non-governmental and international organizations in order to provide a safe family environment within Saudi Arabia.

#### **Committee for the Coordination of Services for Persons with Disabilities**

16. Established pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 202 of 18 March 2014, the Committee coordinates the entities responsible for providing services to persons with disabilities in order to ensure that such persons are able to access such services with ease.

17. The Committee comprises representatives of a number of relevant bodies, namely the Ministries of the Interior, Social Affairs, Education, Health, Labour, Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Civil Service, in addition to the General Presidency of Youth Welfare. It also includes one representative for the Disabled Children's Association and three representatives from the private sector and charitable associations and foundations, one of whom must have a disability.

#### **Institutions for the care of children with paralysis**

18. These institutions are part of the Directorate General for the Care and Habilitation of Persons with Disabilities, which is attached to the Office of the Deputy Minister for Social Care and Development in the Ministry of Social Affairs. They provide medical, health, social, psychiatric and educational services for children with disabilities. They will be discussed in further detail later in this report.

#### **Non-governmental charitable associations and foundations**

19. A number of charitable civil society associations in Saudi Arabia provide services for persons with disabilities, of which the most prominent are the following:

##### **King Salman Centre for the Care of Older Persons**

20. The Centre provides services in the areas of social welfare, leisure, health and culture in order to meet the changing needs of Saudi society and of individuals and families across the widest possible social spectrum. The goal of the Centre is to provide modern state-of-the-art and practical care and support for older persons and to offer high-quality social, cultural, health, sports and charitable services and activities with a view to endowing members of society with the experience, knowledge and skills required to cope with social change.

##### **King Salman Centre for Disability Research**

21. The Centre's objectives are to:

1. Carry out scientific research into disabilities and provide all the necessary resources for such research;
2. Promote scientific research into disabilities and offer comprehensive support to researchers;
3. Apply the results obtained from research into disabilities and, on that basis, set up and implement suitable programmes;
4. Establish a centralized information centre, design and develop databases containing research into disabilities and persons with disabilities in Saudi Arabia and furnish researchers and experts with such data and with any other information that could contribute to the development and conduct of research in this field;
5. Set up targeted programmes to generate interest in research, as well as special programmes that focus on persons with disabilities.

##### **Disabled Children's Association**

22. This national charitable association addresses the issue of disability in a comprehensive, scientific and systematic manner. It provides training, development, medical care and social and educational services, in addition to raising awareness of the rights of children with disabilities. The association has nine centres — namely, the King Fahd Centre in Riyadh, the King Abdullah Centre in Jeddah, the Prince Sultan Centre in Al-Madinah, the King Salman Centre in Ha'il, the Makkah Centre and the Al-Jawf Centre. These centres have the capacity to receive more than 1,300 children a day.

##### **Saudi Autistic Society**

23. Established on 28 January 2003, this society has branches in all the provinces of Saudi Arabia. Its objectives are to: support persons with autism, as well as their families

and specialists; raise social awareness about autism; provide information about all forms of autism and about care centres and experts in Saudi Arabia in order to determine the prevalence of autism; provide training to specialist and non-specialist staff on how to work with persons with autism; and further develop the skills of care providers. It also ensures full coordination among organizations in all sectors — governmental, non-governmental and charitable — that are involved in providing care for persons with autism. In addition, it runs specialized vocational habilitation programmes to prepare participants for the job market and provides suitable employment opportunities for persons with autism.

#### **Saudi Association for Hearing Impairment**

24. The Association was founded on 4 October 2000 with the aim of creating an environment in which persons who are deaf or hard of hearing can communicate fully with non-deaf persons. Its objectives are to raise awareness and understanding of deafness, lobby for the enactment of laws and regulations to help persons with special hearing needs, assist in the establishment of training and educational centres for deaf persons, set up a database of services for deaf persons and support research into issues related to deafness.

#### **Ebsar Charitable Foundation**

25. The Foundation, established on 8 June 2003, provides training for persons who are partially sighted and for specialists in the field. It also provides persons who are partially sighted with options for restoring their sight, supplies them with technological assistive devices, offers support and training on how to use such devices and raises awareness of the causes of visual impairments and of ways to prevent them. The Foundation assembles and manufactures optical devices, establishes scientific research centres and specialized institutes that provide services for persons who are partially sighted, supports research and studies into vision loss and develops related research and services.

## **II. Treaty-specific document**

### **A. Methodology used in preparing the report**

26. The methodology used in preparing this report is based on the United Nations reporting guidelines for the preparation of periodic reports on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This report was prepared by a committee comprised of representatives of governmental bodies — namely the Ministries of Social Affairs, Health, Labour, Education, Municipal and Rural Affairs, Justice, the Interior and Foreign Affairs, and the Human Rights Commission, in addition to a number of civil society institutions such as the King Salman Centre for Disability Research, the Disabled Children's Association, the Saudi Autistic Society, the Saudi Association for Hearing Impairment, the Ebsar Charitable Foundation and the Saudi Schizophrenia Charity Association.

27. This report was prepared in the following stages:

1. An objective, fact-finding approach was followed, i.e. information was checked and verified for accuracy in order to provide a realistic portrayal of the rights of persons with disabilities in Saudi Arabia. The requisite information was obtained from the relevant sources and adapted for inclusion in this report in accordance with the above-mentioned reporting guidelines. In keeping with those procedural guidelines, much of the detail and information reflecting the progress made in the area of disabilities has been omitted. Annexes have instead been used to clarify some of the aspects excluded from this report due to considerations of length.
2. Governmental bodies, national associations and foundations (civil society organizations), academics and disability rights activists played a role in examining the information contained herein. They contributed directly through a series of meetings and symposiums and indirectly through other means of communication.

## **B. Information on matters relating to all articles of the Convention**

### **Articles 1-4**

#### **General obligations**

28. Saudi Arabia has made it a priority to discharge its responsibility to care for disadvantaged groups in society, such as persons with an illness or disabilities and those living in poverty. As provided for under the sharia, Saudi Arabia has made the promotion and protection of the rights of such persons a fundamental part of its legislation. Article 26 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates that “the State shall protect human rights in accordance with the Islamic sharia”, and article 27 requires the State to “guarantee the rights of its citizens and their families in cases of emergency, sickness, incapacity and old age, support the social security system and encourage institutions and individuals to participate in charitable work”. Saudi Arabia is therefore committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities enjoy all human rights and are treated with the same level of dignity as non-disabled persons. In ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Saudi Arabia reaffirmed its obligation to guarantee human rights and care for persons with disabilities.

#### **General provisions of the Convention**

29. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities contains a number of general provisions and principles, such as respect for dignity, equality, equal opportunities and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of natural human diversity. It also defines the concepts and terminology that relate to those provisions and principles, such as disability, reasonable accommodation and universal access.

#### **Conceptualization of the terms “disability”, “persons with disabilities” and “long-term”**

30. The Disability Care Act defines “disability” as a condition in which a person has one or more of the following disabilities: vision loss, hearing loss, intellectual, physical or motor disabilities, learning difficulties, speech or language disorders, behavioural or emotional disorders or autism. This includes dual and multiple disabilities and any other disability that requires special care. It defines “persons with disabilities” as persons who experience full or partial impairment, over a prolonged period of time, of their physical, sensory, intellectual, communication, learning or mental capabilities to an extent that reduces their ability to meet their daily needs in the same way as non-disabled persons.

31. This definition clearly demonstrates that the Disability Care Act embraces both the medical and the social models of disability. Under the Act, disabilities are deemed to be conditions that require medical care. However, persons with disabilities are considered to be individuals who experience full or partial impairment over a prolonged period of time, which reflects the long-lasting nature of such impairments and underscores the fact that the impairments reduce the ability of such persons to meet their needs in the same way as non-disabled persons and thus prevent them from enjoying their rights in full. This definition corresponds to the social model of disability as well as to the concept of “long-term”, as referred to in the Convention, on which information was requested.

#### **Conceptualization of “reasonable accommodation”**

32. In the legislation and regulations on creating, and facilitating access to, an urban environment for use by persons with disabilities, “reasonable accommodation” is defined as the technical changes required to create such an environment, ensure access to information and provide suitable means of transport. The regulations also underscore the need to avoid imposing any undue or unnecessary burden. Pursuant to Circular No. 7/E/A.H. 1402 issued by the Deputy Prime Minister on 19 November 1981, all government entities are responsible for verifying that such services are provided. The circular sets out technical standards for all public and private facilities, including the construction of access slopes, passageways and dedicated parking spaces for persons with disabilities, in addition to a list

of technical equipment that must be provided, such as lifts and electronic doors, in order to enable persons with disabilities to use the facilities without undue difficulty.

33. The concept of “reasonable accommodation” also includes facilitating access to information. Accordingly, communications companies that are operating in Saudi Arabia must guarantee that the digital means through which they provide services are accessible by persons who are blind or deaf in accordance with a set of technical specifications which will be discussed in greater detail later in this report.

34. The Government of Saudi Arabia strives to safeguard all the rights provided for in the Convention by, inter alia: upholding the principle of justice with regard to the rights of persons with disabilities and guaranteeing their right to equality and non-discrimination; supporting the right to life and upholding its related obligations to protect without pathos the lives of persons with disabilities, which is achieved by respecting their right to health and providing medical assistance devices; enforcing the right of persons with disabilities to education, whether through special education programmes or integrated mainstream educational programmes, which are based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination; respecting the right of persons with disabilities to be taken into consideration when drawing up development plans and to be integrated socially and economically; and safeguarding their right to access, mobility and independence. These efforts will be discussed in greater detail later in this report.

35. Saudi Arabia has introduced special privileges and grants to make life easier for persons with disabilities and to safeguard their rights by, inter alia, offering reduced-price tickets for public transport and flights, granting exemptions from certain fees and offering material and organizational support to charitable organizations operating in disability-related fields. More information will be provided in the parts of this report that refer to articles on facilitating access, ensuring an adequate standard of living and providing social protection.

## **Article 5**

### **Equality and non-discrimination**

36. All legislation and judicial procedures in force in Saudi Arabia are based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination on any grounds, including disability. These principles are rooted in the provisions of the sharia; in the words of the Messenger of God (Peace be upon him!): “You are all Adam’s offspring and Adam was created from clay. In the sight of God, the most noble of you is he who fears Him most” and “all people are equal like the teeth of a comb”. Saudi legislation complies with the provisions set forth in the Convention, as it does not provide, either directly or indirectly, for discrimination on any grounds, nor does it exclude persons with disabilities from enjoying the same rights and benefits accorded to all other citizens.

37. Saudi legislation provides for a number of measures that prove that the principles of equality and non-discrimination against persons with disabilities are being applied. Appointments to senior and management positions in the Civil Service are made in accordance with the principle of competence: for example, persons with disabilities may be appointed to the post of Grand Mufti or as members of the Shura Council or the Board of the Human Rights Commission, in conformity with the provisions of article 29 of the Convention concerning participation in political and public life.

38. The Saudi Government has adopted numerous measures, as will be detailed in this report, to promote positive discrimination in favour of persons with disabilities in order to enable them to exercise their rights on an equal footing with non-disabled persons. The decisions that it has taken to this end include:

- Requiring employers with 25 or more employees to allocate 4 per cent of jobs to persons with disabilities, in a manner consistent with the latter’s capabilities;
- Paying allowances to persons with disabilities, and to families who care for persons with disabilities to help them with such care;
- Providing financial support for small projects launched by persons with disabilities;

- Supplying assistive devices and audio and visual aids;
- Offering persons with disabilities half-price tickets for public transport and flights;
- Exempting persons with disabilities from certain fees, such as fees for hiring personal drivers, domestic employees and nurses; pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 229 of 14 June 2010, the State bears the costs of obtaining and renewing entry, exit and return visas and residence permits for their personal drivers, domestic employees and nurses;
- Financing special vehicles for persons with disabilities or their families.

39. Moreover, persons with disabilities receive numerous benefits in the form of positive discrimination, including with regard to health and social care, as will be discussed in further detail in the parts of this report concerning article 19 on living independently and being included in the community, article 25 on health, article 26 on habilitation and rehabilitation, article 27 on work and employment and article 28 on adequate standard of living and social protection.

## **Article 6**

### **Women with disabilities**

40. As previously indicated, the sharia constitutes the foundation for all Saudi legislation, including legislation on women's rights. In the eyes of the law, women are the sisters of men, as declared by the Messenger (Peace be upon him!). They share certain rights and obligations with men, such as the rights to human dignity, equality, freedom of contract, education and work. Gender-based discrimination against women is prohibited under the sharia and Saudi law. The nature of womanhood also entails certain special rights and obligations and they must be treated fairly as befitting their particular characteristics.

41. Current disability-related Saudi legislation applies to both sexes and does not make a distinction between persons with disabilities on the grounds of gender (male or female). This is in conformity with the principle of equality. On some occasions, however, women with disabilities are entitled to receive special treatment; for example, in situations in which women benefit from positive discrimination pursuant to national legislation.

42. In its desire to support women with disabilities, the Saudi Government has opened more than 15 assessment, diagnosis and early intervention centres specifically for women in Riyadh, Al-Qassim, Jeddah, the Eastern Province and Taif. These centres are equipped with the latest tools for assessing and diagnosing patients and providing ongoing training, such as instruments for measuring auditory acuity, inner ear pressure, soft palate movements and hypernasality, electronic hearing measurement devices, devices for assessing hearing aids, programmable hearing devices and speech analysis laboratory equipment. The Government also supplies hearing aids and devices and training tools to institutes and special educational programmes for women, and prepares reference materials for early-intervention language programmes for women who are hard of hearing. In addition, it runs ongoing programmes to provide specialist and non-specialist training in pronunciation standards for use in educational and training programmes in modern speech, language and auditory training.

43. Saudi Arabia has a number of model programmes for specialist centres that provide care services for female students with disabilities and study how best to support such students, such as the Service Centre for Female Students with Disabilities that was established as part of King Saud University in 1995. The aim of the Centre is to ensure that female students with disabilities are treated in the same way as their peers at the university, with a view to encouraging their inclusion in both academia and society. The Centre plays a key role in providing the support required by female students and in encouraging the appointment of persons with disabilities as faculty staff members. The objectives of the Centre are:

- To monitor and resolve problems faced by female students with disabilities;
- To help female students with disabilities to overcome academic obstacles;

- To provide the equipment, tools and facilities required by female students and employees with disabilities to fulfil their academic, social and professional responsibilities;
- To respect the unique qualities of all female students at the university and to safeguard all aspects of their rights;
- To make female university staff more aware of ways to meet the requirements of colleagues and students with disabilities;
- To provide the support needed to enable female students with disabilities to live and study independently and to achieve social and academic success at the university;
- To provide technological tools to facilitate learning and study for female students with disabilities at the university;
- To provide support, physical facilities and human resources to enable female students and employees to participate fully in all university activities.

## **Article 7**

### **Children with disabilities**

44. The Saudi Government accords special care and attention to children as they are the foundations on which society is built. Through its child-care policies, the Government strives to create an appropriate environment for children, provide them with adequate protection and foster a culture that supports children's rights. To that end, the Kingdom was among the first States to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocol and International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 on prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, which was ratified by Royal Decree No. M/3 of 16 April 2001.

45. The Saudi State plays a role in ensuring the health, social and educational well-being of children. Within the framework of its provision of health and social care for children with disabilities, the Government has established institutions for the care of children with paralysis which are attached to the Ministry of Social Affairs/Directorate General for the Care and Habilitation of Persons with Disabilities. These institutions specialize in providing medical, health, social and psychological care for children with paralysis, congenital defects or motor disorders in order to develop their capabilities, help them to accept their disabilities and facilitate their social and psychological adaptation.

46. The mandate of these institutions is to provide services to children with paralysis, congenital defects or motor disorders using various means to ensure the provision of proper care consistent with their needs and the nature of their disabilities. This is achieved through:

- Institutional care: Children with paralysis may be placed entirely within the care of an institution, in which they benefit from a comprehensive programme of social, physiotherapeutic and personal care, in addition to appropriate cultural, sports and entertainment programmes and surgical procedures at specialist hospitals. Children with paralysis who are living with their families also receive physiotherapy and health-care services at such institutions.
- Day-care services for children living outside the institution: The children receive financial assistance and live with their families and relatives but attend the institution on a daily basis to make use of the educational and habilitation services provided.
- Financial assistance programme for children with paralysis: The State provides financial assistance for the families of children with paralysis, according to the condition of each child and the needs of the family, in order to enable families to meet the needs of their child. This programme was initiated on 23 October 1979. It should be noted that the Saudi Government has made great strides in its efforts to eradicate poliomyelitis. Statistics gathered by the Ministry of Health show a decline in the incidence of this form of disability among children by virtue of those efforts, in addition to a growing social awareness of health issues.

47. The Saudi Government has launched a number of programmes to provide care for children with disabilities, including:

- The adoption of a national project for the treatment of children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 4 of 8 January 2009;
- The adoption of a national project for the treatment of children with autism or developmental disorders pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 227 of 18 November 2002.

48. On 14 October 2004, the Minister of Health issued Decision No. 140921/20/26 concerning the introduction of a national programme to prevent and combat hearing loss and deafness in children, together with a plan for implementation of the programme through, inter alia, the establishment of specialist centres in a number of principal hospitals.

49. In 2003, the Ministry of Health initiated a programme to study genetic metabolic diseases and cases of hypothyroidism in newborns throughout Saudi Arabia, which had an impact on early detection and lowered the incidence of the condition among newborns.

50. Pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 110 of 15 April 2008, the Healthy Marriage Programme was introduced with the aim of reducing the occurrence of disabilities by ensuring that the married couple are genetically compatible. For a marriage to be deemed “healthy”, the prospective couple must undergo the requisite medical tests to determine whether either person is a carrier of any genetic blood diseases, on the basis of which medical advice is issued concerning the probability of the carrier passing the disease to the other person or to any children that they have and of their children developing a disability. There are 170 centres and 91 laboratories in Saudi Arabia that offer this service. Marriage contracts cannot be certified unless these tests have been carried out. According to the latest statistics published by the Ministry of Health, more than 3 million people have undergone these tests since the programme was introduced, averaging 270,000-300,000 persons per year.

51. The Saudi Government has introduced a number of measures, policies and programmes to safeguard the right of children with disabilities to receive primary, intermediate and secondary education in a way that respects their needs and to study at the same schools and institutes as other children, except in circumstances in which the nature of their disability requires otherwise. Special education is divided into two types:

- Independent institutes with supplementary programmes and classes: There were 27,650 students in institutes of this kind during the 2013/14 academic year;
- Total integration programmes: The Directorate General for Special Education in the Ministry of Education manages special “total integration programmes” within the public education system, the aim of which is to remedy the problems that some students in mainstream education face within the normal school environment, without resorting to separating those students from their peers. The progress achieved in the area of education will be discussed in greater detail in the part of this report on article 24.

52. The Disabled Children’s Association carries out local charitable work in the areas of caring for and habilitating children with disabilities. It is a national charitable organization that deals with disability in a comprehensive and scientific manner. It provides training, developmental and medical care, in addition to social and educational services, and also works to raise awareness concerning the rights of children with disabilities. The Association has several centres, as noted in the section of this report on the institutional framework for human rights.

## **Article 8**

### **Awareness-raising**

53. The Saudi Government has taken steps to introduce policies and programmes designed to meet the objectives set forth in international treaties in regard to the promotion of a culture of human rights. These policies and programmes include an explicit component

concerning awareness-raising in society as a whole in order to ensure that persons with disabilities are treated with dignity and their human rights are respected, in addition to the introduction of human rights-related educational programmes and curricula. They were based on previously announced media policies aimed at promoting respect for, and raising awareness of, human dignity with a view to reinforcing individuals' roles as citizens and highlighting their respective rights and duties.

54. With regard to the legislative measures and procedures adopted to promote social awareness concerning persons with disabilities and the need to respect their rights and treat them with dignity, article 2 of the Disability Care Act stipulates that the State must guarantee the right of persons with disabilities to protection, care and habilitation services, to be provided through specialist bodies in various fields, including in the media. Organizations and individuals are also encouraged to participate in charitable work in the field of disabilities. Under the same article, the media are required to participate by:

- Providing information about disabilities, including their various forms and causes and ways to identify and prevent them;
- Promoting the social status of persons with disabilities, educating the public about their rights, needs, abilities and contributions, providing information on the services available to them, and making them aware of their duties towards themselves and of their contributions to society;
- Producing special programmes targeting persons with disabilities with a view to helping them to live in harmony with the wider society;
- Encouraging individuals and organizations to provide material and moral support for persons with disabilities and to engage in voluntary work for their benefit.

55. One of the main measures taken to promote a culture of human rights was the introduction in 2009 of a programme to that end, the purpose of which was to develop social awareness of human rights, as guaranteed by Islam, and of the laws, directives and procedures enforced in Saudi Arabia for the purpose of protecting and promoting human rights. The programme was also designed to warn the public of the gravity of committing human rights violations and of the consequences of doing so, to help to ensure that the regulations, procedures and professional conduct of bodies dealing with the public comply with the principles and concepts of human rights, and to advocate ways and means of protecting human rights in all their aspects.

56. The Saudi policy on human rights education focuses on strengthening respect for human dignity and reaffirming the equal rights of all individuals, including persons with disabilities. The Government is working to implement the policy through educational programmes, curricula and plans, such as the following:

- A culture of human rights was incorporated into a "development" programme designed to ensure that new teachers have a thorough understanding of the human rights system and to prepare them for work in Ministry of Education schools.
- The Government has contributed to the preparation of an Arab plan for human rights education aimed at incorporating human rights teaching into the education system at various academic levels and increasing public participation in the promotion of a culture of human rights.
- The Ministry of Education carried out a diagnostic survey on the way in which human rights were portrayed in textbooks used during the 2008/09 school year with a view to stimulating broader discussion of the principles and values of human rights in educational curricula and identifying the extent to which human rights in Islam are represented in textbooks used in the public education system. During the survey, 189 textbooks used in primary, intermediate and secondary public schools were analysed and the results showed that the word "rights" appeared more than 2,559 times.
- The Ministry of Education prepared a matrix of human rights concepts for inclusion in school curricula during the 2012/13 school year. It is also working with an educational development company on a comprehensive project to develop the

curricula for primary and intermediate schools by, inter alia, incorporating new concepts to teach human rights and the values and principles that underpin them.

57. Various bodies in Saudi Arabia are involved in raising social awareness of disability, its forms and its causes, in addition to ways to cope with it and mitigate its adverse effects. They also publicize the international days that are held for various forms of disability, such as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, World Sight Day, White Cane Day, Universal Children's Day and World Autism Awareness Day, and the regional weeks, such as Gulf Disability Week, Arab Deaf Week and Gulf Autism Week.

58. The Ministry of Culture and Information plays an active role in raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and of their abilities and contributions to society. It also helps to promote positive images of persons with disabilities by providing them with an opportunity to participate in the preparation and presentation of radio and television programmes for persons with disabilities, such as the following:

- Television: Between 2006 and 2010, a programme for persons with disabilities, entitled "*Those with Determination*", was broadcast on Saudi TV Channel 1, following which a new programme entitled "*Pearls*" was launched and continues to be shown. This programme includes a section called "*Innovations*", specifically for persons with disabilities, in which the creative and inventive experiences of persons with disabilities who excel in their fields are discussed.
- The "*Beacons*" programme on the Saudi News Channel: This programme targets the general public. One of its aims is to raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and to underscore that they are fundamental rights, not gifts granted by society. The participants also discuss general issues relating to disabilities.
- Radio: "*The Gateway to Determination*" is a weekly radio programme that lasts one hour and is rebroadcast following the initial live recording during which persons with disabilities can contact the presenters to voice their opinions and needs. The programme hosts officials from various sectors to discuss the facilities available to help persons with disabilities to meet their needs in fields such as employment and education.
- In 2011, the Ministry of Culture and Information introduced sign-language interpretation for local news programmes and for broadcasts from the Holy Mosque in Makkah.
- The Ministry has issued 350 media licences to persons with disabilities so that they can engage in commercial information activities.
- In 2013, Saudi newspapers featured more than 120 articles on persons with disabilities and the problems that they face.

59. The Ministry of Culture and Information has helped to raise public awareness of disability-related issues by giving persons with disabilities the opportunity to participate in the activities that it organizes and by including discussions of disability-related issues during such activities. For example:

- The King Fahad Cultural Centre, which is operated by the Ministry, opens its doors to all events organized for the benefit of persons with disabilities, such as theatrical performances and art exhibitions. In 2013, two plays were staged in which persons with disabilities performed.
- The Office of the Deputy Minister for Cultural Affairs, in collaboration with the Association of Persons with Disabilities, formulates various programmes for persons with disabilities.
- At the Riyadh International Book Fair, which is held every year under the auspices of the Ministry, facilities are provided to enable visitors with disabilities to access and view the various exhibits; special passageways are installed and the premises are adapted as far as possible to enable them to access facilities at the fair with ease.

60. The Ministry of Social Affairs also plays a key role in this field; it has helped to prepare a number of informative programmes on television and radio and in the press,

specifically for persons with disabilities, with a view to raising awareness of the various forms of disability and ways to cope with them and making persons with disabilities more familiar with their rights and the services available to them.

61. The Ministry of Health participates in annual international days relating to the health and support of persons with disabilities, such as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December, World Physical Therapy Day on 8 September and World Mental Health Day on 10 October. It holds country-wide campaigns that include informative lectures and awareness-raising brochures and media handouts to raise awareness and overcome misconceptions about mental health conditions and the side effects associated with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. It also uses touch screens and text messages at many of its facilities to raise awareness concerning mental health.

62. With regard to studies and scientific research that help to raise social awareness of disability and the rights of persons with disabilities, the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology has placed research into the fields of disability and habilitation on its list of strategic research priorities. The King Salman Centre for Disability Research also supports, coordinates, manages and funds research and academic activities in this field and in the humanities in general. The Centre brings together scientific, technical and human resources from across the country and from abroad with the aim of producing the most advanced and influential scientific and practical research. The Centre focuses on applied, rather than theoretical, research with a view to overcoming the medical, psychological, educational and social challenges faced by persons with disabilities. It also emphasizes the importance of research that helps to raise social awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and to present a positive image of such persons. The Centre has reached an agreement with the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology on establishing a special fund for disability research at the City, as part of its strategy for science and technology, with the aim of achieving greater progress in the field and providing sufficient ring-fenced funding to encourage a wide range of research activities into disabilities.

63. The Human Rights Commission plays an important role in raising awareness about persons with disabilities through its programme designed to promote a culture of human rights and its activities to promote social awareness of human rights issues. The Commission has organized a number of seminars and lectures to raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, combat the stereotypes and the forms of discrimination and prejudice that they face and make participants more familiar with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It has also published brochures and flyers on the rights of persons with disabilities. In December 2012, for example, a lecture was held at King Saud University on the rights of persons with disabilities and the ways in which those rights are infringed upon and, in December 2013, a lecture on the facilitation of access and the programme of universal access was held in Dammam.

64. The National Society for Human Rights works actively to raise social awareness of disabilities by, inter alia, holding seminars and ongoing courses about persons with disabilities, their rights and society's duties towards them. It has also published a number of leaflets, including the "Know your rights" series.

## **Article 9**

### **Accessibility**

65. The urban environment must be adapted to enable persons with disabilities to live independently while, at the same time, being integrated into society and to ensure them equal access to the surrounding material environment, to the available means of transport, to information and to communications. The Saudi Government has introduced various initiatives to facilitate access to the urban environment and to information and to remove the obstacles that prevent persons with disabilities from participating in society. Article 2 of the Disability Care Act stipulates that the State shall guarantee the right of persons with disabilities to protection, care and habilitation services and encourage organizations and individuals to contribute to the provision of such services through specialist bodies in every field. Such services include adapting public transport to enable persons with disabilities to travel in safety and security and at a reduced price for them and their companions and providing technical devices to improve access.

66. The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs has published a brochure on the technical requirements and standards which municipal authorities must take into consideration when designing and improving services for persons with disabilities in order to make it easier for such persons to move around, and on the appropriate specifications for the adaptation of public and private places frequented by persons with disabilities. Municipal councils and local authorities must comply with these specifications and ensure that they are met when issuing public and private construction permits, in conformity with Ministerial Circular No. 887/4/F/Q of 5 February 2006. The brochure also covers the requirements that must be met when designing mosques and selecting sites for them in order to facilitate access thereto.

67. The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, in collaboration with the King Salman Centre for Disability Research, has prepared a guide to the universal access standards, and recommends that municipal councils and local authorities use it when reviewing designs and building governmental and private facilities in accordance with Ministerial Circular No. 25183 of 2 May 2011, with a view to overcoming any difficulties and facilitating the movement of all members of society, including persons with disabilities.

68. In Circular No. 44816 of 8 July 2013, the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs instructed municipal councils, engineering consultancy offices and companies and organizations that are contracted to carry out public and private projects to comply with the requirements set out in the Saudi Building Code in order to meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

69. Prime Ministerial Decree No. 35362 of 29 July 2013 called for the adoption of a fully-fledged universal access programme, which includes four sets of guidelines for implementation at national level concerning universal access to the urban environment and to means of land transport, means of sea transport and tourist and accommodation facilities.

70. The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs has issued guidelines for the design of pavements, which include specifications intended to facilitate the movement of persons with special needs with which municipal councils are required to comply pursuant to Ministerial Circular No. 52776 of 2 April 2005.

71. In Ministerial Circular No. 3505 of 21 November 2013, the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs instructed municipal councils to ensure compliance with the signs and notices placed for the benefit of persons with disabilities and to impose municipal fines and penalties on anyone who removes them.

72. The Holy Mosque in Makkah, the Prophet's Mosque in Al-Madinah and all other pilgrimage sites are easily accessible to persons with disabilities, as all the entrances thereto have designated safe ramps and passageways for wheelchairs. Electric and manual wheelchairs are provided free of charge at both the Holy Mosques and dedicated passageways are provided for wheelchair users performing the *Sa'y* and *Tawaf* rituals in Makkah.

73. Numerous regulations issued by the Ministry of Transport contain provisions designed to facilitate access by persons with disabilities to means of transport. For example:

- Pursuant to article 8, paragraph 15, of the schedule of procedures and conditions for granting licences for school transport services, as adopted by the Ministry on 9 June 1994, vehicles for students with disabilities should be equipped with the special devices needed to conform with the specifications and requirements set by the education authority.
- Pursuant to article 4, paragraph 24, of the regulations governing taxis, as adopted in Ministerial Decision No. 01/4772 of 1 November 2012, persons with special needs must be assisted when entering and leaving the vehicle. Drivers who violate this article by failing to assist elderly or incapacitated passengers or passengers with disabilities are liable to a fine of SR1 500.

74. The Ministry of Transport has simplified some of the requirements imposed by regulations and has granted exemptions therefrom for companies that wish to provide transport services to persons with special needs. One such company was, for example,

exempted from the requirement concerning the minimum number of public taxis that must be provided; by reducing the requirement from 50 vehicles to between 5 and 10 vehicles, the Ministry made it possible for the company to obtain a licence to provide taxi services to persons with disabilities.

75. The Ministry of Transport has included a number of programmes for improving transport within the national transport strategy. One such programme, which focuses on passengers, is intended to further improve the regulations and services relating to urban transport and passenger flows through, inter alia, the introduction of rules to facilitate access to transportation by persons with disabilities by:

- Ensuring that all means of public transport are adapted to make them easily accessible to persons with disabilities;
- Providing specially equipped vehicles, if requested, to meet specific needs of persons with disabilities.

76. The Ministry of Transport's five-year plan includes a number of objectives and requirements, such as meeting all the transport needs of persons with disabilities. The key points of the plan are as follows:

1. The Ministry must take the needs of persons with disabilities into account when preparing studies and legislation on transport and when designing public transport systems;
2. All transport strategies, policies, regulations and systems must be formulated in a manner consistent with the requirements of persons with disabilities.

77. The Ministry of Transport, in collaboration with the King Salman Centre for Disability Research, has drawn up standards and specifications to ensure that roads and means of transport meet the needs of persons with disabilities. The objective of this joint endeavour was to:

- Assess the current level of universal accessibility provided for in transport legislation and achieved in existing roads, public facilities and infrastructure and, in particular, compare existing standards of accessibility against the basic standards and best practices at the regional and international levels;
- Establish a framework for universal accessibility that lays down quality standards for improving accessibility;
- Draw up guidelines on ensuring universal accessibility.

78. As regards facilitating access to information, the Communications and Information Technology Commission has distributed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to all communications companies in Saudi Arabia for their reference, which generated the following responses:

- Saudi Telecom Company launched a package specifically for persons with disabilities which includes certain benefits, such as free minutes for video calls, an allowance of free text and multimedia messages and lower tariffs for Internet usage and international calls;
- Mobily, which is owned by Etihad Etisalat, has created a package specifically for persons who have a speech disorder or are hard of hearing, which includes a monthly free allowance of video calls and text messages and lower tariffs for other services.

79. The Saudi Press Agency (SPA) has developed a communication tool that includes a dedicated channel with closed captions for persons who are hard of hearing. It has also developed a tool for communicating information to blind persons through audio messages.

## **Article 10**

### **Right to life**

80. The sharia, which is the basic source for all Saudi legislation, considers the right to life to be one of the most fundamental natural rights. In the words of Almighty God: "Take

not life, which God hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law” (Koran, 6:151). Under the sharia, every person has a guaranteed right to life. All individuals, communities and countries must defend that right against any abuse and must provide the necessary means to ensure that all persons have access to food, medicine and protection. Further information on these obligations will be provided in the section on health care and security. Moreover, the sharia regards the act of taking another person’s life as a crime against humanity and thereby safeguards everyone’s right to life; accordingly, abortion and the act of killing another person are illegal under Saudi law. In the words of Almighty God: “Whosoever kills a person except for an act of homicide or other heinous crime, it shall be as if he had killed all humankind, and whoever saves a life, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all humankind” (Koran, 5:32).

81. Saudi Arabia therefore takes all necessary measures to safeguard the right to life and to ensure the security and well-being of all its citizens, including persons with disabilities, on an equal footing. Further details will be provided in the part of this report that relates to article 17 on protecting the integrity of the person.

#### **Article 11**

##### **Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies**

82. The Saudi Government strives to protect all Saudi citizens in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies and has classified such protection as one of its most important obligations. Under article 27 of the Basic Law of Governance: “The State shall guarantee the rights of its citizens and their families in cases of emergency, sickness, incapacity and old age and shall support the social security system and encourage institutions and individuals to participate in charitable work.”

83. The Council of Ministers duly issued Decision No. 669 of 14 May 1963 establishing the Saudi Red Crescent Society, followed by Decision No. 371 of 22 December 2008 changing its name to the “Saudi Red Crescent Authority” and Decision No. 213 of 13 June 2011 promulgating the Authority’s Statutes. The Saudi Red Crescent Authority is a governmental organization, the Statutes of which are based on the Geneva Conventions and on the principles adopted during the International Conferences of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent. The goal of the Authority, pursuant to its Statutes, is to alleviate human pain and suffering without discrimination on any grounds.

84. Pursuant to Royal Decree No. M/10 of 21 January 1986, the Civil Defence was established as part of the country’s efforts to protect citizens during emergencies. This government agency is responsible for providing a range of services to protect the entire population, including persons with disabilities, and public and private property in the event of fires, disasters, war and various other incidents. It also provides disaster relief, ensures the continued operation of transport and communications services and of public facilities and safeguards national resources. It works with governmental and non-governmental organizations from all sectors to provide these services during times of peace, war and emergency.

85. With regard to the protection of persons with disabilities, the Minister of the Interior, who chairs the Civil Defence Council, issued Decision No. 12/2/F/2/DQ of 13 May 1999 approving the promulgation of a bill of law on safety and protection requirements that must be met in centres for persons with disabilities. It also placed all the public and private sectors under an obligation to comply with Saudi technical specifications for buildings, which are in conformity with international safety standards.

#### **Article 12**

##### **Equal recognition before the law**

86. In keeping with the provisions of the sharia, the Basic Law of Governance emphasizes the principle of equal recognition before the law; article 8 thereof states that “governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be based on justice, shura (consultation) and equality, in accordance with Islamic sharia”. Nothing in the Basic Law of Governance or in any other regulations in force in Saudi Arabia can be considered as being contrary to the principle of equal recognition before the law, in all circumstances, for all persons.

87. The legal capacity of persons with disabilities is assessed in the light of their entitlement and level of competence. It is a quality that the sharia bestows on a person that makes it possible for that person to be subject to a rule of law. There are two forms of legal capacity: capacity of obligation and capacity of performance. The first of these, which all persons possess by virtue of being human, refers to the capacity of a person to possess legal rights and obligations; in other words, all persons have rights vis-à-vis other persons. Capacity of performance is ascribed to individuals when they are deemed sufficiently intelligent and discerning to carry out actions and make statements in a manner recognized by the law; in other words, they are capable of exercising their rights and fulfilling their obligations vis-à-vis other persons. Persons with disabilities who are capable of managing their own affairs are therefore deemed to have capacity of obligation and performance.

88. The Saudi Government has adopted a number of measures to protect minors and other persons lacking legal capacity; this includes persons with disabilities who do not have a legal guardian to protect their rights. On 11 April 2006, for example, the Council of Ministers agreed to establish the Commission for Guardianship of the Property of Minors and Persons of Equivalent Status, which reports to the Minister of Justice. The Commission safeguards property that is not protected in practice or by a legal ruling. It has the authority to act as, inter alia, a legal or testamentary guardian, a custodian, an agent or a trustee, with all the obligations that each of those roles entails. It safeguards the property of persons who are deficient or lacking in legal capacity for whom a legal custodian has not been assigned and monitors the actions of custodians and legal and testamentary guardians.

89. Measures are in place to protect the right of persons with disabilities to equal treatment in regard to owning property, opening bank accounts and accessing banking services. For example, on 30 November 2008, the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency, the country's central bank, issued rules on opening and managing accounts at commercial banks in Saudi Arabia which included the following regulations and requirements to ensure that banks protect the transaction rights of persons with disabilities:

- Banks must grant priority to customers who have disabilities and must treat them with special care. They must ensure that they are received as promptly as possible and the procedures for the relevant banking services are expedited by, inter alia, providing assistance and sign-language interpreters.
- Banks must, upon request, open bank accounts for blind persons and provide them with ATM cards and chequebooks. Blind customers have the right to access all banking services, including telephone and Internet banking and credit cards, provided that they have been informed of the relevant conditions and regulations and have signed the requisite paperwork to confirm that such services have been rendered to them of their own free will and that they are aware of the associated risks and their legal liability in respect of all transactions carried out through such services.

### **Article 13**

#### **Access to justice**

90. Saudi Arabia guarantees the independence of the judiciary and judges; as stated in article 46 of the Basic Law of Governance, the judiciary is an independent authority and, in their administration of justice, judges are subject to no authority other than the Islamic sharia.

91. All persons are equal before the law, as stipulated in article 47 of the Basic Law of Governance: "All citizens and residents of the Kingdom have a guaranteed equal right to seek legal remedy and the requisite procedures therefor shall be prescribed by law." Saudi Arabia therefore guarantees equal recognition before the courts for persons with and without disabilities, in conformity with the provisions of the Convention.

92. Article 1 of the Code of Procedure before the Sharia Courts stipulates that: "The Courts shall apply the provisions of the sharia to all cases brought before them, in accordance with the Koran and the Sunna and with the regulations promulgated by the Ruler, provided that they do not conflict with the Koran or the Sunna. The procedures followed when hearing cases shall comply with the provisions of this Code."

93. As stated on the website of the Ministry of Justice, all citizens and residents of Saudi Arabia have a guaranteed right to seek legal remedy and, as litigants, can invoke numerous rights, such as:

- All claims concerning the enforcement of rights that are submitted to the competent judicial body must be heard.
- Officers of the court must treat litigants fairly and with respect for their human dignity, regardless of their gender, colour, religion or appearance.
- Women, prisoners and persons who are ill, including persons with disabilities, should be granted priority in the litigation proceedings.
- Litigants have the right to avail themselves of the services of an attorney or personal representative.
- Persons with disabilities are entitled to seek sign-language interpretation or any other form of assistance when presenting their pleas and may request the court to provide such assistance.

94. The Code of Criminal Procedure promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/2 of 25 November 2013 provides appropriate procedural accommodations for persons with disabilities and persons of equivalent status in order to facilitate their effective role as participants, including as witnesses. It contains the following binding instructions to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in legal proceedings:

- Pursuant to article 177 of the Implementing Regulations: “If a mute person from whom a spoken statement is required can write, the statement shall be taken in writing. If a person being questioned is deaf and can read, he or she shall be questioned in writing. If a deaf or mute person from whom a statement is required is illiterate, the statement shall be delivered through an expert.”
- According to article 148 of the Code, if a victim of an offence has neither legal capacity nor a legal or testamentary guardian, the court before which the criminal proceedings are brought must appoint a representative to present his or her civil claim.
- Article 149 stipulates that civil actions may be brought against respondents if they possess legal capacity. If they do not have legal capacity, including for reasons of intellectual disability, such claims may be brought against their legal or testamentary guardian. If the respondent does not have a legal or testamentary guardian, the court must appoint a legal guardian for him or her.
- Under article 167, if a witness is a minor or if the witness’s testimony is inadmissible for any reason, his or her statement should not be accepted as evidence. However, the court may decide to hear the statements of such persons if it deems them beneficial. If the witness has an ailment or major disability that prevents the judge from understanding him or her, assistance may be sought from a person capable of understanding the witness. Such statements should not be accepted as evidence.

#### **Article 14**

##### **Liberty and security of person**

95. As mentioned previously, Saudi law is based on the sharia, which advocates liberty and respect for human dignity. However, liberty is regulated by the requirements of public and private interests. In the words of Almighty God: “Verily, we have honoured the children of Adam” (Koran, 17:70). Accordingly, no person is made subject except to the provisions of the sharia, which does not discriminate between the sexes or on any other grounds and which emphasizes the obligation to protect the safety and security of all persons, including persons with disabilities, and to meet their needs as required to ensure that they can live in dignity.

96. Article 37 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates that homes are inviolable and may not be entered or searched without the permission of their occupants, except in

circumstances in which such is permitted by law. According to article 2 of the Code of Criminal Procedure: “No person may be arrested, searched, detained or imprisoned except as provided by law. Persons may be detained or imprisoned only in facilities designated for that purpose and only for the duration specified by the competent authority.” Economic freedom and freedom of ownership in conformity with the sharia are also guaranteed. Under article 18 of the Basic Law of Governance, the State guarantees the freedom and inviolability of private ownership and stipulates that no person may be divested of his or her property except in the public interest and provided that the owner receives fair compensation.

97. All persons, including persons with disabilities, have the right to claim protection from the State for themselves, their homes and their possessions. In accordance with article 41 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, persons, as well as their homes, offices and vehicles, enjoy an inviolability that must be safeguarded. The inviolability of persons extends to their body, clothes, possessions and personal effects and the inviolability of homes extends to all places enclosed by a wall or barrier of any kind or intended for use as a shelter.

98. Under article 27 of the Basic Law of Governance, the State guarantees the rights of its citizens, including persons with disabilities, and their families in cases of emergency, sickness, incapacity or old age, supports the social security system and encourages individuals and institutions to participate in charitable work.

99. Persons with disabilities have a fundamental right to liberty and to live in their natural family environment. They enjoy all human rights and they must not be deprived of their liberty because of their disability except where it is in the interest of their health and well-being that they remain within a care facility. Persons with disabilities have the right to be cared for by their families. The Disability Care Act stipulates that the State guarantees the right of persons with disabilities to protection, care and habilitation services, to be provided through a number of institutions such as the Ministries of Social Affairs, Health and Education, and encourages individuals and institutions to participate in charitable work in the field of disabilities. Pursuant to the Regulations on Social Habilitation promulgated by Council of Ministers Decision No. 34 of 28 January 1980, persons with disabilities should be cared for within their family environment and provided with assistive devices and those who are unemployed should receive, inter alia, permanent financial allowances and home-based care. These provisions do not apply to persons who are placed under the permanent care of social habilitation centres for severe disabilities, shelters for children with paralysis or psychiatric sanatoriums, such as the following:

- Social habilitation centres for severe disabilities: These centres have been set up for the purpose of accommodating persons with severe disabilities who do not respond to occupational habilitation due to the severity or multi-faceted nature of their disabilities. They provide all forms of health and social care and run various leisure activities. There are currently three large social habilitation centres in Saudi Arabia.
- Care centres for children with paralysis: These centres provide children with paralysis with full accommodation, comprehensive social care programmes, physiotherapy services and personal care, in addition to suitable cultural, sports and leisure programmes. Surgical procedures are performed at specialist hospitals.
- Sanatoriums for persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities: These institutions are managed by the Ministry of Health. There are 16 psychiatric hospitals and more than 40 psychiatric clinics throughout Saudi Arabia. Of the three hospitals providing addiction treatment services, two do so in combination with other mental health services. These hospitals have a bed capacity for 3,003 patients. In 2009, they received 436,497 outpatients and 20,085 inpatients.

## **Article 15**

### **Freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**

100. As mentioned above, Saudi Arabia ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment under the terms of Royal Decree No. M/11 of 8 August 1997. It has also ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, thereby reaffirming its international commitment to combat

torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. This commitment is reflected in Saudi law, which contains a number of provisions that prohibit and prevent torture of any kind. The Kingdom has also adopted measures intended to prevent torture and cruel treatment.

101. Pursuant to article 2 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, no person may be arrested, searched, detained or imprisoned except as provided by law. Persons may be detained or imprisoned only in facilities designated for that purpose and only for the duration specified in a court order or by law. Detainees must not be subjected to physical or mental harm or to torture or degrading treatment. In cases not involving *flagrante delicto* offences, article 35 of the Code stipulates that no person may be arrested or detained except by order of the competent authority. Accused persons must be treated in a manner that respects their dignity and must not be subjected to physical or mental harm. They must be informed of the reason for their arrest and they have the right to contact any person whom they wish to notify of their arrest.

102. Under the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons Act, all forms of trafficking in persons are prohibited. This includes the following acts: using coercion, threats, ruse, deception or abduction; exploiting official position or influence; abuse of authority over the victim; exploiting the victim's weaknesses; giving or receiving money or benefits for the purpose of obtaining consent to an act of sexual assault on a person under the authority of the receiver; forcing a person to work, provide services, beg, act as a slave or perform tasks similar to slavery or servitude; removing a person's organs; and subjecting a person to medical experimentation.

103. The Ethics of Scientific Research on Living Creatures Act was issued in order to regulate medical and scientific research performed on human beings, including persons with disabilities. Pursuant to article 11 of section 2 of the Act, "researchers must not conduct research on any person without first explaining the research to, and obtaining consent from, the person in question or his or her legal guardian in accordance with the procedures set out in the regulations". Article 17 stipulates that "researchers must not in any way exploit or coerce any person on whom research is being conducted". In order to ensure that persons with disabilities are not subjected to exploitation or abuse while undergoing scientific or medical research, article 25 of section 10 includes the following provision: "Research must not be conducted on minors, persons deficient in legal capacity or persons with disabilities except where it is in the interest of such persons. Researchers must respect the ethical code set out in the regulations when conducting research on such persons."

104. A charter on the rights and responsibilities of patients was adopted by the Ministry of Health in 2007. It stipulates that patients with disabilities have the right to respect for their dignity, independence and personal choice. Health institutions have specific policies for protecting children, persons with special needs and older persons against abuse of any kind and for providing patients or their testamentary guardian with full, up-to-date information on the diagnosis and treatment from the attending physician in a language that the patient or guardian understands.

105. Under the Code of Criminal Procedure, members of the Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution (Office of the Attorney General) may visit prisons and detention centres, without obtaining prior permission, with a view to monitoring the implementation of the relevant executive instruments and preventing torture and exposure to cruel and degrading treatment. Article 38 of the Code stipulates that: "Officials of the Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution may visit prisons and detention centres within their areas of jurisdiction at any time, even outside official visiting hours, in order to verify that no persons are imprisoned or detained unlawfully. They may also examine the records maintained at prisons and detention centres, speak with prisoners and detainees, listen to their complaints and take action in that regard. Wardens of prisons and detention centres must provide members of the Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution with all the information required to fulfil their mandate."

106. Pursuant to article 5, paragraph 6, of the Statutes of the Human Rights Commission promulgated by Council of Ministers Decision No. 207 of 12 September 2005, the Commission has jurisdiction to visit prisons and detention centres at any time, without

requesting permission from the relevant authorities, and to submit reports thereon to the Prime Minister. In 2012/13, the Commission paid a number of visits to a convalescence centre for persons with severe disabilities in Riyadh and to comprehensive habilitation centres in various parts of Saudi Arabia. It submitted reports on the conditions in those centres and on their treatment and development requirements within the context of caring for, and protecting the rights of, persons with disabilities.

107. Saudi law prohibits all forms of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, particularly when committed against persons with disabilities. In that regard, a number of harsh sentences have been handed down by the courts against individuals convicted of committing acts of torture or other cruel treatment against persons with disabilities, regardless of whether or not they were living in a care home, thereby putting into practice a number of legal provisions calling for more severe penalties in respect of acts of violence or degrading treatment committed against persons with disabilities. Article 4 of the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons Act likewise provides for more severe penalties where the offence is committed against women or persons with disabilities. Examples of such rulings include the following:

- On 16 December 2012, the Afif Court imposed prison sentences of 1 year and 6 months on several employees of the comprehensive habilitation centre in 'Afif governorate who had been convicted of violently mistreating and kicking a resident at the centre on more than one occasion while the resident was eating. The court judgment was posted at all comprehensive habilitation centres in Saudi Arabia.
- On 17 July 2008, Jeddah Summary Court sentenced two female domestic servants to 2 years and 6 months in prison for abusing a girl with disabilities in her home by tying her up and gagging her and subsequently fleeing.

#### **Article 16**

##### **Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse**

108. The Government of Saudi Arabia, being aware that persons with disabilities are subjected more frequently than non-disabled persons to exploitation, abuse and violence, has issued a number of regulations and enactments that prohibit the subjection of any person, including persons with disabilities, to violence or exploitation and permit independent oversight bodies to monitor prisons and care homes. Regulatory and awareness-raising programmes condemning all forms of violence against, and exploitation of, persons with disabilities have also been implemented. Saudi Arabia has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibits violence against, and exploitation and abuse of, children. By ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Saudi Arabia reaffirmed its commitment to take measures in the areas of legislation, social awareness and education to protect persons with disabilities against all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse.

109. Under the aforementioned Suppression of Trafficking in Persons Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/40 of 14 July 2009, trafficking in persons is prohibited in all its forms, including: using coercion, threats or deception; exploiting the victim's weaknesses, which also applies to persons with disabilities; giving money or benefits to another person; giving or receiving money or benefits for the purpose of obtaining consent to an act of sexual assault on a person under the authority of the receiver; or forcing a person to work or provide services. Article 4 of the Act provides for more severe penalties if the victim is female or has a disability.

110. The Government has introduced a national family safety programme pursuant to Prime Ministerial Order No. 11471/MB of 18 November 2005 with a view to protecting families against violence, especially when a member of the family has a disability, and providing support for women and children who are victims of violence. Various studies have been conducted as part of the programme, which plays an active role in protecting the rights of women, children and vulnerable persons. Training courses are conducted and advisory leaflets are handed out in order to raise awareness among families and among professionals working with victims of violence. Over the past five years, numerous specialist training courses have been held throughout the country with the participation of

more than 2,000 professionals of both sexes who work with cases of child abuse and domestic violence in the fields of health, social care, psychology, education, security and human rights.

111. Royal Decree No. M/52 of 21 September 2013 approving the Protection against Abuse Act was followed by Decision No. 43047 issued by the Minister of Social Affairs on 9 March 2014 and approving the implementing regulations for the Act. These two legislative instruments contain detailed provisions on the implementing mechanisms to be used by the relevant bodies in order to enforce the provisions on protection against abuse and the applicable penalties. This protection is also afforded to persons with disabilities, who are at greater risk of exposure to abuse.

112. On 25 November 2014, Royal Decree No. M/14 approving the Child Protection Act was promulgated with the aim of protecting children — including, without question, children with disabilities — against all forms of maltreatment, neglect and abuse to which they might be exposed within the family, school or local environment or in public places, alternative care or educational facilities or governmental or civil society organizations. Additional goals include limiting the incidence of maltreatment, neglect and abuse, providing the requisite care for children who are subjected to such treatment and raising awareness of the child's right to live a life without maltreatment or neglect. The Ministry of Social Affairs is currently drawing up implementing regulations that will set out the procedural mechanisms for the application of the Child Protection Act. It should be noted that this Act is linked to the Protection against Abuse Act with regard to all persons who are most at risk of abuse, including persons with disabilities.

113. The Ministry of Health has established 64 protection-against-violence centres at health facilities in collaboration with other institutions in the health sector. Employees at these centres work with cases of violence, which they record in the national register of cases of violence and abuse. Employees are given ongoing training to enable them to detect cases of violence and abuse. On 7 May 2011, the Ministry established the Protection against Violence and Abuse Unit attached to the Directorate General for Mental and Social Health. The number of centres for the protection of children against violence and abuse has risen to 23.

114. In order to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are being respected by government agencies and civil society organizations, inspectors from the Human Rights Commission, in accordance with article 5 of the Commission's Statutes, pay periodic unannounced visits, without requesting permission, to comprehensive habilitation centres and care homes during which they inspect the conditions in which residents are living, identify any irregularities and seek to resolve any issues with the competent bodies. The Commission also receives, investigates and addresses complaints and reports of violence and exploitation.

115. In its capacity as a civil society organization concerned with human rights, the National Society for Human Rights also pays periodic visits to detention centres, care homes, comprehensive habilitation centres and hospitals in Saudi Arabia, during which its inspectors examine the living conditions of their inmates and listen to any complaints, including complaints of exploitation, torture and violence, on which they subsequently follow up with the competent authorities.

116. A number of seminars, lectures and workshops have been held in recent years, and various publications have been issued, in order to raise awareness of the issues of violence, abuse and exploitation, to study these issues as a social phenomenon with implications for human rights and to explain the dangers that they pose and the various social effects that they have on the family and society. For example:

- The Human Rights Commission has held a number of seminars and workshops on various topics, including issues relating to domestic violence and to violence against and exploitation of, *inter alia*, persons with disabilities, in addition to informational sessions on the subject of the international treaties and obligations to which Saudi Arabia is committed.

- The Ministry of Education has launched programmes to raise awareness of the rights of the child, including programmes to prevent violence, encourage kind behaviour towards children, and especially children with disabilities, and ensure their personal protection.

## **Article 17**

### **Protecting the integrity of the person**

117. Under the sharia, on which Saudi law is based, protection of the person and protection of the mind are immutable obligations which must be strictly respected. Accordingly, article 27 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates that “the State shall guarantee the rights of its citizens and their families in cases of emergency, sickness, incapacity or old age, and shall support the social security system and encourage individuals and institutions to participate in charitable work”. Hence, the laws and regulations on security, the right to health and preventive care, as well as all other aspects of protection of the integrity of the person, apply to all citizens, including persons with disabilities, on an equal footing.

118. Under the Disability Care Act, the State has an obligation to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities to protection, care and habilitation services and encourage individuals and institutions to participate in charitable work in the field of disabilities. These services are provided through specialist bodies in various fields, including health care, as will be discussed in further detail in the part of this report on article 25 of the Convention.

119. The Ministry of Health also provides persons with disabilities with all requisite health-care services, including early detection services and medical and therapeutic devices. All maternity wards at hospitals managed by the Ministry are implementing the Neonatal Early Detection Programme to Prevent Disability.

120. The Ministry of Education has opened a number of diagnosis and early intervention centres designed to provide special educational support services. There are now more than 36 such centres throughout the country which are accessible to all students. They have the latest tools and equipment needed to assess and diagnose patients and provide training, such as instruments for measuring auditory acuity, inner ear pressure, soft palate movements and hypernasality, electronic hearing measurement devices, devices for assessing hearing aids, hearing devices that can be programmed according to the needs of students with disabilities, and speech analysis laboratory equipment.

121. The Code of Practice for Health-Care Professions contains a number of provisions on protection of the integrity of the person in the medical field which apply to all persons, including persons with disabilities, such as:

- Article 5: “Health-care professionals shall serve the best interests of individuals and society within a framework of respect for the human right to life, integrity and dignity, and shall observe the prevailing customs and traditions of Saudi Arabia and refrain from exploiting other persons”;
- Article 7 (b): “Health-care professionals shall not use diagnosis or treatment methods that have not been established scientifically or which are prohibited in Saudi Arabia”;
- Article 8: “Health-care professionals who observe, or are made aware of the fact that, a person who is ill or injured has entered a critical state shall provide all possible assistance and ensure that the patient receives the requisite care”;
- Article 9 (a): “The best interests of the patient shall always be at the heart of health care, and health-care professionals shall make every effort when providing care for all patients”;
- Article 15: “When making diagnoses, health-care professionals shall exercise due care, use appropriate technical means, seek assistance from specialists or assistants as required and provide the patient, upon request, with accurate, objective reports on his or her state of health and test results”;

- Article 19: “Medical interventions may be performed only where consent has been granted by the patient or, if the patient is legally incompetent, by his or her representative or legal guardian. As an exception, in the event of an accident or emergency and in cases of critical illness where immediate or urgent medical intervention is required in order to save the patient’s life or one of the patient’s organs or to avert severe damage that might result from delaying intervention and where the consent of the patient or of the patient’s representative or guardian cannot be obtained promptly, health-care professionals must intervene medically without waiting for such consent. Under no circumstances may the life of a terminally ill patient be terminated, even if so requested by the patient or the patient’s family”;
- Article 22: “Physicians shall not perform abortions on pregnant women unless needed to save the life of the woman. An abortion may be performed, however, if the woman is less than four months into the term of her pregnancy and if it has been established conclusively that the continuation of the pregnancy would have serious consequences for the mother’s health. The decision to allow the abortion shall be taken by a medical committee formed in accordance with the terms and conditions specified in the Implementing Regulations of this Code.”

122. As previously mentioned, the Ministry of Health regulates the conduct of medical research and experimentation for the benefit of human well-being. Pursuant to article 11, concerning scientific research on human beings, in section 2 of the Ethics of Scientific Research on Living Creatures Act, “researchers must not conduct research on any person without first explaining the research to, and obtaining consent from, the person in question or his or her legal guardian in accordance with the procedures set out in the regulations”. This provision also applies to persons with disabilities with a view to protecting their integrity.

123. The Ministry of Health plays a role in educating the public and raising awareness of the need to look after the health of persons with disabilities, protect them against diseases and preserve their integrity in order to avoid complications caused by their disabilities by, inter alia, ensuring that such persons are sitting correctly and taking steps to prevent bed sores. The Saudi Red Crescent Authority conducts campaigns to raise awareness of the need to apply the safety rules concerning the transport of patients by ambulance in order to prevent such complications.

### **Article 18** **Freedom of movement and nationality**

124. Saudi Arabia guarantees the equal right of persons with disabilities and non-disabled persons to enjoy freedom of movement and to obtain citizenship documents. The right to freedom of movement both in Saudi Arabia and abroad is guaranteed for all Saudi citizens, including persons with disabilities, as is the right to choose their place of residence, within the limits of the law. No person may be deprived of the right to freedom of movement except as provided by law.

125. The right to nationality is guaranteed under Saudi legislation for all persons, including persons with disabilities. Pursuant to article 7 of the Saudi Arabian Nationality Act, as amended by Royal Decree No. M/54 of 17 July 2004: “Persons who are born in or outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to a Saudi father or to a Saudi mother and a father who is stateless or of unknown identity, or who are born in the Kingdom to unknown parents, shall be considered to be of Saudi nationality. Foundlings shall be considered to have been born in the Kingdom unless proven otherwise.”

126. The implementing regulation of the Nationality Act were amended in 2012. Changes were made to, inter alia, article 7 on persons born in the Kingdom to a foreign father and a Saudi mother and article 21, paragraph 6, on foreign women married to Saudi men. It was decided to naturalize the children of Saudi women who are married to non-Saudis, thereby ensuring that the Act applied to males and females alike.

127. Under the Nationality Act, a child of unknown parents is deemed to be a Saudi national by virtue of his or her birth within Saudi territory, regardless of whether he or she has disabilities. The child is therefore accorded the same rights and privileges as other

Saudi nationals. The child is registered at birth or, in the case of a foundling, upon discovery. A birth notification certificate is issued and the child is given a quadrinomial name. The child's date of birth is noted on the certificate, as well as the name of the mother, if known, or a pseudonym if not. When the child reaches 15 years of age, he or she is issued with a birth certificate, a passport and an identity card in the same way as all other citizens.

128. Children with disabilities are treated in the same manner as all other children: they must be registered immediately at birth; they have the right to a name and a nationality; and they have the right to be cared for by their parents. The State facilitates all the requisite procedures and provides support to ensure that all children born in Saudi Arabia and all Saudi children born abroad are registered immediately, regardless of the place of birth, the sex of the child, the nationality of the parents or the circumstances of the birth, in accordance with article 32 of the Civil Status Act.

### **Article 19**

#### **Living independently and being included in the community**

129. Under article 2 of the Disability Care Act, the State guarantees the right of persons with disabilities to protection, care and habilitation services and has an obligation to implement measures and accommodations to ensure that such persons can live independently and are integrated in the community. For example:

- Pursuant to article 3 of the Disability Care Act, architects and engineers must comply with the specifications and conditions laid down to meet the needs of persons with disabilities in facilities used for the purpose of habilitation, training, education, care and treatment and in public spaces, in addition to all other spaces that are used for the purposes of the Act. The competent bodies must issue the requisite instructions to that end.
- Means of public transport must be adapted to enable persons with disabilities to travel easily, safely and securely and at a sufficiently reduced price to enable them to live independently.
- Pursuant to the Social Rehabilitation Regulations promulgated by Decision No. 24 of 28 January 1980, day-care, home-care and support services must be provided to persons with disabilities to enable them to live within their family environment.
- Assistive medical and technical devices, such as wheelchairs and vehicle modifications, are provided for persons with disabilities. Pursuant to Prime Ministerial Order No. 7/1285/M of 31 January 1989, the Ministry of Social Affairs modifies vehicles owned by persons with disabilities to enable them to drive with their hands rather than their feet and must supply wheelchairs to persons with disabilities in need thereof.
- Under Prime Ministerial Order No. 7852/1 of 16 April 2008, prosthetic and assistive devices required to live independently, like modified vehicles, must be provided for use by persons with disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities are given preferential treatment in the allocation of housing grants. Pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 76 of 25 April 2004, persons with disabilities are exempted from the minimum age requirement (18 years) for housing grants and are accorded priority in the allocation of such grants.
- Under article 31 of the Implementing Regulations for the Housing Support Scheme promulgated by Council of Ministers Decision No. 82 of 7 January 2014, additional points are assigned to persons with disabilities when determining the order of priority for access to housing support; the more severe the disability, the more points are assigned, as follows:

(a) Five points are awarded for every person in the family who has a chronic incapacitating ailment or a severe disability; three points are awarded if the ailment or disability is of moderate severity; and one point is awarded if the ailment or disability is mild. In all cases, the maximum number of points that can be awarded pursuant to this paragraph is 10. The types of ailments and the levels of

severity to be taken into account during such calculations shall be determined in a report issued, in the required form, by a body approved by the Ministry.

- As stated in the part of this report on article 5 of the Convention, concerning equality and non-discrimination, the State bears the costs of obtaining and renewing entry, exit and return visas and residence permits for personal drivers, domestic employees and nurses employed by persons with disabilities, in accordance with Council of Ministers Decision No. 229 of 14 June 2010.
- Pursuant to the Disability Care Act issued by Royal Decree No. M/37 of 19 December 2000, special devices and equipment for use by persons with disabilities are exempt from customs duty.

130. The Government gives persons with disabilities the option of living in residential habilitation centres or with their families; in the latter case, their guardians are entitled to claim benefits. In that regard, articles 23 and 24 of the Basic Regulations for Habilitation Programmes for Persons with Disabilities, promulgated by Council of Ministers Decision No. 34 of 28 January 1980, stipulate that annual benefits shall be paid, subject to certain conditions and medical reports, to the guardians of persons with disabilities who cannot be accommodated at a habilitation centre or whose guardians wish to care for them.

## **Article 20**

### **Personal mobility**

131. The Government has adopted a range of legislative and other measures with a view to adapting the surrounding environment and providing equipment to enable persons with disabilities to move around freely and independently. Under article 2 of the Disability Care Act, the State guarantees the right of persons with disabilities to supplementary services, such as the adaptation of public transport to them to travel in safety and security and at a reduced price for themselves and their companions, depending on the nature of their disability, and the provision of assistive technical devices.

132. The Ministry of Social Affairs provides an array of services for persons with disabilities to ensure that they are able to move around freely and independently. For example:

- It provides assistive devices, such as manual and electric wheelchairs, manually and electrically adjustable medical beds, walking aids and seating aids.
- It supplies audiovisual aids, such as prescription hearing devices and eyewear, and issues modifications to vehicle specifications in a manner consistent with the abilities of persons with disabilities who are able to drive.
- It provides discount cards for persons with disabilities and persons accompanying them, which can be used to obtain a 50-per-cent reduction on the price of airline tickets.
- It issues car parking cards for persons with disabilities.
- It issues permits to enable persons with disabilities to park within the grounds of public facilities.
- It issues car window stickers that allow persons with disabilities to access and park in all areas without restrictions.
- It issues cards to persons with autism to help them to identify themselves when travelling.
- It provides persons with disabilities with vehicles that have been adapted either to be driven by them or to accommodate them during travel.

133. The Ministry of the Interior regulates the use of parking spaces for persons with disabilities by imposing penalties on all persons who break the law by parking in such spaces in violation of Group 4 of the Schedule of Traffic Offences issued by the Ministry.

134. As mentioned previously, pursuant to article 2 of the Disability Care Act, public and communal transport must be adapted to enable persons with disabilities to travel in safety

and security. Accordingly, certain transport companies now have additional vehicles specifically for use by persons with disabilities as part of their fleet. In addition, all trains that operate in and around holy sites have been adapted for use by pilgrims and visitors with disabilities.

135. In order to protect the right of persons with disabilities to work, inspectors from the Ministry of Labour monitor companies in the private sector to verify that they provide suitable means of transport for use by persons with disabilities. They also monitor persons with disabilities in their place of work to ensure that they enjoy good working conditions in an accommodating environment, with accessible entrances, exits and parking spaces and manual and electric wheelchairs suited to their needs in order to enable them to move around the workplace with ease. Employers in the private sector are also required to provide electric lifts and bathrooms for use by persons with disabilities.

## **Article 21**

### **Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information**

136. Pursuant to article 39 of the Basic Law of Governance: “All mass media, publications and vehicles of expression shall use decent language, comply with national regulations, contribute towards the education of the nation and support national unity. Any word or act that promotes disorder and division, undermines the security of the State or its public relations or violates human rights or dignity shall be prohibited. Legislation shall be promulgated to that end.” The Government has therefore issued a number of enactments and decisions regulating freedom of expression and opinion and means of access to information.

137. Article 26 of the Saudi Media Policy, which was issued by the Higher Media Council in 1982 pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 169 of 11 August 1982, stipulates that: “Freedom of expression in the Saudi media is guaranteed within the framework of the Islamic and national goals and values that are upheld by the Saudi media.” Respect for the rights of individuals, including persons with disabilities where relevant, is at the heart of this policy guaranteeing the rights of all social groups.

138. With regard to the promotion of dialogue, the supply and exchange of information and the provision of opportunities for persons with disabilities to express their views on the nation and to exchange information with other persons, the King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue was established on 24 July 2003. The Centre provides a suitable, supportive environment for national dialogue between male and female members of various social groups for the general benefit of the public. Persons with disabilities of both sexes have participated in the Centre’s annual activities, such as the fifth preparatory meeting for the Seventh National Intellectual Dialogue Forum held on 27 February 2008 on the topic “Labour and Employment: Dialogue between society and social institutions”.

139. Certain governmental service agencies — such as the Civil Status and Passport Department of the Ministry of the Interior, some hospitals and municipal councils under the management of the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, and the employment offices of the Ministries of Labour, the Civil Service, Education, Social Affairs and Health — provide facilities to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access information and assistance from these agencies in the same way as non-disabled persons. By providing reception offices specifically for persons with disabilities and employing sign-language interpreters and guides for blind clients, these agencies ensure that any persons with disabilities who visit are processed promptly and that any official requests made or procedures required are carried out.

140. The King Salman Centre for Disability Research has a focal point for sign language which provides sign-language interpretation and runs training courses to teach sign language and promote its use. Saudi universities also have special education departments that teach and promote sign language and deaf culture through social activities.

141. Sign-language interpreting is also provided on Saudi television for some news broadcasts and programmes relating to social affairs and disability.

142. The Ministry of Education plays an active role in providing educational services for blind persons and facilitating their access to information by establishing libraries that contain numerous publications in Braille, as well as audio programmes, for blind students.

143. The King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex in Al-Madinah prints copies of the Koran in Braille, which it distributes to blind persons in and outside Saudi Arabia. In addition, the service centre for female students with disabilities at King Saud University prints books in Braille as required by students for their studies.

144. It is also noteworthy that several government agencies and communications companies provide services to facilitate access to information by persons with disabilities, as already explained in connection with article 9 of the Convention concerning accessibility.

## **Article 22**

### **Respect for privacy**

145. Under the sharia, no person — including persons with disabilities — may be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or communications. Pursuant to article 37 of the Basic Law of Governance, a person's home is inviolable and must not be entered or searched without the permission of its occupants, except as provided by law.

146. The Basic Law of Governance also endorses respect for privacy by prohibiting any violation of the privacy of Saudi nationals, including persons with disabilities; article 40 thereof stipulates that “telegraphic and postal correspondence, telephone conversations and other means of communication shall be inviolable and not subject to seizure, delay, surveillance or eavesdropping except as provided by law”.

147. In that connection, the Code of Criminal Procedure provides for the inviolability of the home and the obligation to protect it; pursuant to article 41 of the Code, persons, their homes, their offices and their vehicles are inviolable and must be protected. Furthermore, the inviolability of persons extends to their body, clothes, property and personal effects, and the inviolability of homes extends to all places enclosed by a wall or barrier of any kind or intended for use as a shelter. The Code also guarantees protection for the privacy of personal information, including that of persons with disabilities; article 56 thereof stipulates that “postal and telegraphic correspondence, telephone conversations and other means of communication shall be inviolable and not subject to seizure, delay, surveillance or censorship except by a substantiated order and for a specified period of time in the manner provided for herein”.

148. Article 3 of the Communications and Information Technology Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/12 of 4 June 2001 guarantees the right to access public communications networks, devices and services at a reasonable price. It also underscores the obligation to uphold the principles of equality and non-discrimination on any grounds, protect the public interest and the interests of users and ensure the confidentiality of communications and the security of information.

149. The Anti-Cybercrime Act promulgated pursuant to Royal Decree No. M/17 of 27 March 2007 contains a number of provisions on combating violations of cybersecurity. All persons, including persons with disabilities, are accorded full privacy protection under the Act, which criminalizes infringements of such privacy.

## **Article 23**

### **Respect for home and the family**

150. The sharia encourages marriage, which it considers to be an inalienable right. As stated in the Koran: “And among His signs is this: He created for you mates from among yourselves that ye may dwell in tranquillity, and He has put love and mercy between you. Verily, in that are signs for those who reflect” (Koran, 30:21) and “We sent messengers before thee and appointed for them wives and offspring” (Koran, 13:38). The sharia also accords importance to the family and its formation, as the family is the nucleus of society. All persons have a religious duty to care for and respect all members of the family, show filial devotion and kindness towards their parents and provide them with care if they are in

need thereof or have disabilities. As stated in the Koran: “Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him and that ye show kindness to parents” (Koran, 17:23). The head of the family also has a responsibility to care and provide for his wife and children.

151. Saudi Arabia therefore attaches importance to the development of the basic constituents of the family, which it clearly regards as the nucleus of society. The Basic Law of Governance stipulates that “the nucleus of Saudi society is the family and its members should be raised in the Islamic faith” (art. 9) and “the State shall endeavour to strengthen family bonds, maintain Arab and Islamic family values, care for all members of the family and provide conditions conducive to the development of their talents and abilities” (art. 10). Accordingly, in conformity with the sharia, persons with disabilities — including persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities — have the right to marry and form a family provided that, inter alia, both parties freely consent to the marriage and undergo a prenuptial medical examination, as required by the Marriage Contract Licensing Regulations promulgated by the Ministry of Justice and applied in the Saudi courts.

152. A number of civil society organizations in Saudi Arabia, such as *Harakia*, an association for adults with disabilities, run collective wedding programmes for persons with disabilities with a view to encouraging persons with disabilities to marry and helping them to form a family and live independently. Through these programmes, the organizations provide material and social support, cover all the costs of marriage, assist in finding independent accommodation and monitor the situation of persons with disabilities after they get married. Given the successful pioneering role that these programmes have played in helping persons with disabilities to marry, other organizations have started running similar programmes.

153. The Ministry of Health plays a variety of roles in family life, from health and protection services to education. The Saudi Health Council requires all institutions in the Saudi health sector to adopt and implement programmes to promote healthy marriage, defined as a state of genetic compatibility between husband and wife. These programmes therefore play a role in ensuring the formation of healthy families. The Ministry also holds seminars and prints and distributes educational publications on health and the family.

154. The Ministry of Social Affairs also carries out a number of programmes and activities in the area of family development, especially for families that require support and assistance owing to their health or social circumstances, such as families in which one or more of the children or parents have disabilities. This is in conformity with the Basic Regulations for Habilitation Programmes for Persons with Disabilities, promulgated by Council of Minister Decision No. 34 of 28 January 1980, pursuant to which home care and reproductive assistance — through free in vitro fertilization — must be provided for to such persons. The Ministry also conducts family-related studies and research and provides education for members of the family and marriage applicants about the social and psychological aspects of family life, family planning and reproductive health issues.

#### **Article 24** **Education**

155. The Saudi Government guarantees the right to education for all citizens. Pursuant to article 30 of the Basic Law of Governance, the State must provide public education and undertake to combat illiteracy. Accordingly, the Government guarantees an inclusive education system at all levels, thereby providing equal opportunities for persons with disabilities and realizing their right to receive education without discrimination.

156. Education policy in Saudi Arabia is founded on a number of firmly established principles. For example, one of the goals of education should be to recognize the individual differences between students in order to provide suitable guidance and encourage students to accept natural human diversity, such as other students who have disabilities. Saudi education policy therefore guarantees students with disabilities of all kinds the right to education and to access special programmes designed to accommodate their needs and abilities. Children with disabilities receive free primary, intermediate and secondary education in accordance with the policy, which underscores the right of all persons to

education and the obligation of the State to provide and facilitate access to all levels of education.

157. As regards the legal framework for the education of persons with disabilities in Saudi Arabia, the Disability Care Act stipulates that the State must guarantee the right of persons with disabilities to various services, including educational services at all levels, that accommodate the needs and abilities of persons with disabilities. It must also facilitate access to education for persons with disabilities and continually assess the curricula applied and the services provided in that context.

158. The Ministry of Education issued Ministerial Decision No. 1647/27 of 27 June 2001 promulgating a set of regulations for governmental and non-governmental private educational programmes and institutions. These regulations reflect the Ministry's obligations towards children with disabilities; they set out a number of goals focusing on the education and habilitation of children with disabilities of any kind, such as providing them with appropriate skills consistent with their abilities and capacities through programmes and curricula designed to help them to achieve the highest possible standard and preparing them for public life and integration in society. The regulations also stipulate that scientific research should be used to help to develop the programmes and methodologies used in special education.

159. In addition to including persons with disabilities in the general education system, use is also made of special educational methods tailored to various kinds of disabilities. Numerous ministries and government agencies, such as the Ministry of Education and the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation, are involved in providing education for persons with disabilities and in implementing the objectives of the national education policy.

160. As regards specialized education for persons with disabilities, numerous governmental institutions for various forms of disability have been established at various levels of education, from kindergarten to secondary, such as the Prince Sultan Centre for Special Education Support Services in Riyadh, intellectual education institutes, the *Noor* institutes for the Blind and the *Amal* institutes for the deaf. These institutions are equipped with audio aids and tools and training devices to facilitate teaching. A number of regulatory decrees have been issued to ensure that all students with disabilities who are able to learn are accepted at all basic levels of education, regardless of the type of disability that they have. Educational and habilitation services are now being provided to categories of persons with various types of disabilities who were previously not covered by the education system, such as persons with learning difficulties, autism, multiple disabilities, speech and language disorders, physical disabilities and long-term health problems and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. The categories previously covered were persons with vision loss, hearing loss and intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities. According to the Ministry's most recent statistics, Saudi Arabia has around 500,000 children with disabilities, of whom 38,300 benefit from educational services provided by the Ministry of Education.

161. In 1990, students with disabilities began to be integrated in mainstream education. Some students are included in special classes attached to mainstream schools and others are fully integrated in general education classes in which they study side-by-side with their peers in mainstream education. Educational and habilitation support services are also being provided as part of this change to ensure that students with disabilities are able to keep pace with their peers at all levels of education.

162. The Ministry of Education has adopted various legislative measures and provides numerous support services in order to improve the education process for persons with disabilities by:

- Adapting schools to meet the basic needs of persons with disabilities, including by making any necessary environmental modifications and removing any physical obstacles that limit the mobility of such persons in order to enable them to benefit from all the facilities and services available, in addition to providing assistive devices free of charge, such as personal hearing aids for persons who are hard of hearing, all forms of visual aids for persons who are partially sighted, white canes for blind persons and wheelchairs for persons with motor disabilities;

- Printing textbooks in Braille, producing audio versions of textbooks, providing any educational supplies required by blind persons such as Braille maths slates and cube kits, adapting textbooks used in general education to meet the needs and abilities of deaf students and promoting the use of sign language;
- Recruiting specialist teachers with university qualifications in special education that takes into account the different learning pathways required by each type of disability and teachers who have studied for a post-graduate diploma in special education for at least one and a half years. Such teachers are given additional financial incentives to encourage them to work in this field. The Ministry also holds regular on-the-job training courses designed to improve the performance of teachers and their ability to handle students with disabilities;
- Allocating school boarding facilities to all students at any level of special education who either do not have access to special educational programmes near to their family home or cannot be integrated in mainstream public schools. All students in such facilities are provided with a monthly food, clothing and living allowance, in addition to health and hygiene services;
- Paying SRI 5,000 to every school with at least one student who has a disability in order to cover the cost of any educational requisites;
- Paying a monthly allowance throughout the year — including the summer holidays — to each student who regularly attends a special educational institute or programme, the amount of which varies according to the student's current level of education and place of residence; students who live with their families receive SRI 300-450, while boarding students receive SRI 90-180;
- Providing support services — such as medical and psychological diagnoses, speech and language therapies, physiotherapy and occupational therapy — to persons with disabilities between the ages of 1 and 18 years at 36 centres, the most modern of which is the Prince Sultan Centre for Special Education Support Services in Riyadh;
- Awarding scholarships to persons with disabilities from Arab countries, and particularly member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council;
- Offering free study within special educational institutes and programmes, including the provision of boarding accommodation and all other requirements free of charge, for all foreign residents.

163. The Ministry of Education is also introducing a number of programmes for persons with disabilities, such as:

(a) Programmes for persons with intellectual disability associated with other disabilities, such as motor disorders and autism. According to the latest statistics, 34 programmes are currently being implemented by the intellectual education institutes. These programmes provide personalized educational and habilitation services based on the personal education plans drawn up for each child according to his or her abilities;

(b) Supplementary programmes for persons with multiple disabilities (deaf + blind), which are applied at institutes for deaf or blind persons. According to the latest statistics, 22 such programmes are currently being applied;

(c) Programmes for persons who are deaf and have a mild intellectual disability, which are available through programmes for deaf persons. There are 12 such programmes.

164. Educational services are provided for persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities at 28 special institutions and through 1,015 programmes run by mainstream public schools for boys and girls with such disabilities who are able to learn. The Ministry of Education has designed educational curricula for deaf students by drawing on mainstream curricula and modifying them to accommodate blind students' needs and potential by, inter alia, including sign language and illustrations and making minor modifications to the educational content without altering the main body of the curriculum.

165. The following table illustrates the expansion in the number of special education institutes and programmes between 1990 and 2014:

<i>Year</i>	<i>1990</i>		<i>2014</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Special education institutes and programmes	31	16	3 153	1 540
Number of students	3 649	2 081	41 482	17 514

166. The Government provides the requisite tools and equipment for persons with disabilities and ensures that about 75 per cent of the special resource rooms used by programmes for persons with learning difficulties are equipped with the necessary educational aids, such as smart blackboards, computers and modified desks. It also provides assistive devices for persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities and audiovisual aids, such as various types of speakers and large-screen televisions, in both mainstream and special education programmes for persons who are partially sighted. In addition, it offers personal hearing aids to all students in special or mainstream education who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Government has a mobile unit for assessing hearing and making moulds and is endeavouring to establish additional units. It also provides guidelines on teaching persons with learning difficulties and designs digital programmes to assist teachers, such as the Teachers' Guide to Learning Difficulties and the Digital Learning Difficulties Programme.

167. Instructions have been issued to higher educational institutions to accept all eligible persons with disabilities, including those who formerly were not admitted such as persons with hearing loss, autism and learning difficulties, and to introduce preparatory and follow-up programmes to ensure that such students succeed. The Ministry of Education has taken a number of measures in that regard, such as:

- Adopting a plan to develop university syllabuses in the field of special education within a specific period of time in order to keep in step with global developments;
- Adopting a foreign scholarship programme in the fields of special education and habilitation through which it will provide at least 1,000 scholarships over a five-year period, and increasing the number of places for persons with disabilities who are outstanding achievers;
- Adding special education to the list of scientific disciplines available to students who are studying for a baccalaureate or higher diploma qualification;
- Increasing the financial resources available for scientific research and studies and for the writing and translation of books in the fields of special education and habilitation;
- Encouraging Saudi universities to develop special education departments and specialized programmes and courses in the fields of special education and medical habilitation for persons with disabilities with a view to providing relevant government ministries and private-sector companies with specialist skills in the fields of special education and medical habilitation for both sexes.

168. One example of the services provided to persons with disabilities at university level is the establishment by King Saud University, on 31 July 1985, of a special club for blind students at the university, called the Ibn Umm Maktum Club for Blind Students. In 1990, the club was developed into a centre, under the name of the Ibn Umm Maktum Centre for Persons with Disabilities, for all persons with disabilities in order to serve all employees and students with disabilities. On 1 December 1993, Administrative Decision No. 9583/29 was issued establishing the Special Needs Centre for persons with disabilities with a view to monitoring the situation of persons with disabilities and providing services and facilities for them.

169. A number of Saudi universities have launched programmes to adapt the university environment to meet the requirements of persons with special needs by, inter alia: revising and developing Arabic language preparatory-year study plans and curricula for students who are deaf or hard of hearing; developing an Arabic language examination for students who are deaf or hard of hearing; documenting Saudi sign language and studying its rules; producing an academic, scientific dictionary of Saudi sign language; providing portable

devices to help blind students to move around using Global Positioning System technology; establishing the Friends of Students with Special Needs Commission to support students and teach them how to cope with the university environment from the time that they enrol until they graduate; developing special safety, security and evacuation plans for students with special needs in the event of an emergency; teaching blind students to read and write using Arabic and English Braille, with abbreviations; developing a navigation system to evaluate the accessibility of, and improve access to, services for persons with limited mobility; teaching leadership skills to persons with special needs; developing practical techniques to teach English to persons who are partially sighted or hard of hearing; running induction programmes to train members of the teaching staff in methods of dealing with persons with special needs; developing sports activities for persons with special needs; running programmes to improve academic achievement among students with special needs; formulating a curriculum to teach brain exercises; facilitating and increasing the participation of persons with special needs in student activities; establishing a technical assistance research centre for persons with special needs; adapting the on-campus digital learning environment for persons with special hearing needs; running the “You Belong Among the Sighted” initiative; confronting challenges posed by disability and university learning in light of modern educational trends; developing a supportive educational environment for slow learners; establishing a special needs laboratory; running a management initiative to create a virtual learning environment for persons with special needs; running a collaborative initiative to use information and communications technology to create a supportive learning environment for students who struggle academically; adapting engineering and scientific laboratories and providing technology to support persons with special needs; implementing the “University Environment for Everyone” initiative; establishing the Integrated Services Centre for Persons with Special Needs; setting up a research and training centre for persons with special needs; and adapting university libraries for students who are partially sighted.

170. The Ministry of Education provides domestic and international scholarship opportunities for persons with disabilities on an equal footing with non-disabled persons through dedicated programmes at university level and above. It also provides financial allowances for students with disabilities who are on scholarships; pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 124 of 28 December 1977, students with physical, intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities who are on international scholarships below university level are entitled to the same benefits and allowances as students on university scholarships.

171. In accordance with Council of Ministers Decision No. 20 of 9 November 1983, all blind students enrolled at a university in or outside the Kingdom are entitled to a financial stipend (“reading allowance”), equivalent to a grade V salary and other assistance, in addition to the allowances paid to non-blind students. Pursuant to Ministerial Circular No. 3/2/9/198 of 29 August 1985, students with disabilities receive a number of benefits. For example:

- The State covers the accommodation, living, study and training fees charged by Saudi schools or boarding facilities in which students with disabilities live.
- Students with disabilities who live in boarding facilities (15 per cent) receive a monthly personal allowance.
- Students with disabilities are entitled to annual allowances for clothes, books and other requisites. They are not entitled to the annual medical treatment allowance if they live in boarding facilities which have a physician capable of treating normal cases that do not require hospitalization.
- The State covers the costs of treatment for students with disabilities who require hospitalization for procedures, such as surgery, that cannot be performed by the resident physician in the boarding facility.
- Students with disabilities who are studying at a school or institute outside Saudi Arabia which does not have boarding facilities are entitled to receive the full monthly stipend and the annual book, clothing and medical treatment allowances.

172. The Technical and Vocational Training Corporation provides training opportunities for persons with disabilities. In 2004, it opened its first technical department for secondary school graduates who are hard of hearing in Riyadh, which was the first of its kind to develop desktop applications in the Middle East. Immediately thereafter, it opened two further departments for deaf students: one, in Buraydah, to develop desktop applications and the other, in Ha'il, that specializes in desktop applications and networks. In 2006, a subdepartment for persons who are partially sighted was opened within the technical department of Riyadh College, at which the Corporation now offers a training programme for persons with other types of disabilities, such as physical, intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities. The Corporation has taken numerous steps to provide training for persons with disabilities in keeping with the needs of the job market by:

- Expanding existing programmes and introducing new programmes and specializations for the benefit of persons of both sexes with disabilities of any kind who are capable of undergoing training;
- Using national professional standards to identify suitable occupations for persons with various types of disability and determine the requisite skills for each occupation;
- Providing vocational training for persons with disabilities in new, creative occupations that accommodate their abilities, circumstances and concerns and meet the requirements of the job market;
- Incorporating new training methods, such as remote, at-home training for persons with limited mobility, such as men with severe motor disorders and women with medium to severe disabilities;
- Coordinating with employers, prior to the training of persons with disabilities, in order to ensure that the job and the recruitment are appropriate;
- Coordinating with the bodies concerned in order to ensure that transport services and sheltered accommodation are provided for persons with disabilities and their legal guardians throughout the training period, either through agreement with the accommodation providers or by paying such persons a lump sum to cover the cost of accommodation.

To that end, the Corporation conducted a specialist study in collaboration with an international advisory body to identify ways to develop the training available to persons with disabilities by, inter alia:

1. Drawing up suitable training programmes for all forms of disability;
2. Developing suitable training plans and curricula for persons with disabilities;
3. Creating an appropriate and friendly training environment for persons with disabilities;
4. Identifying the support services required in order to provide training for persons with disabilities;
5. Providing training for teaching and administrative staff on ways to handle persons with disabilities;
6. Introducing innovative training methods tailored to the abilities of persons with disabilities;
7. Developing a fair system of performance evaluation for persons with disabilities that takes into account their circumstances and needs.

## **Article 25**

### **Health**

173. Saudi Arabia provides health care for all its citizens without discrimination, in accordance with article 31 of the Basic Law of Governance. Pursuant to article 27 thereof, it also guarantees the rights of citizens and their families in the event of, inter alia, emergency, sickness, incapacity and old age. The Government recognizes that persons with disabilities have the same right as non-disabled persons to enjoy high standards of health

care without discrimination on the grounds of disability, to which end it has taken appropriate legislative and other measures.

174. As regards the legal framework that protects the right of persons with disabilities to health care, article 2 of the Disability Care Act stipulates that the State must guarantee the right of persons with disabilities to protection, care and habilitation services, encourage individuals and institutions to participate in charitable work in the field of disabilities and provide health-care services to persons with disabilities through a variety of specialist bodies.

175. The Ministry of Health provides persons with disabilities with inclusive care services, through health-care programmes, of the same scope, quality and standard as those provided for non-disabled persons, in accordance with the Health Act, article 4, paragraph 3, of which requires the State to provide health-care services for persons with disabilities and elderly persons. Pursuant to article 1, paragraph 2, of the Patient's Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, patients have the right to receive appropriate treatment at an appropriate time without discrimination on grounds of race, religion, beliefs, creed, language, sex, age or disability in accordance with the policies and procedures on eligibility for treatment. Accordingly, no person can be denied treatment, health-care services, food or medication on grounds of his or her disability.

176. The Ministry of Health is endeavouring to ensure that persons with disabilities can access health-care services at the nearest possible facility to their place of residence, even in rural areas. To that end, it provides a range of health-care and medical rehabilitation services at all Ministry-run hospitals in Saudi Arabia, particularly through medical treatment, physiotherapy occupational therapy, the manufacture of artificial limbs and assistive devices and treatment for speech disorders and hearing loss. These services are provided in a variety of ways:

- The Ministry currently has two specialist medical rehabilitation hospitals:
  1. The medical rehabilitation hospital in King Fahd Medical City, Riyadh;
  2. The medical rehabilitation hospital in Al-Madinah.
- The Ministry also has two rehabilitation centres that provide integrated rehabilitation services, namely the rehabilitation centre at King Abulaziz Hospital in Jeddah and the rehabilitation centre at King Abdullah Hospital in Bishah.
- There are a further seven medical rehabilitation centres that provide physiotherapy, occupational therapy, artificial limbs and assistive devices and speech and language therapy:
  1. The medical rehabilitation centre at King Khalid Hospital in Ha'il;
  2. The medical rehabilitation centre at Qunfudhah General Hospital;
  3. The medical rehabilitation centre at King Faisal Hospital in Ta'if;
  4. The medical rehabilitation centre at King Fahd Hospital in Hofuf;
  5. The medical rehabilitation centre at Qurayyat General Hospital;
  6. The medical rehabilitation centre at King Saud Medical City;
  7. The medical rehabilitation centre at King Khalid General Hospital in Hafr al-Batin.
- Specialist departments have been opened at rehabilitation centres in hospitals in order to expand the services provided. The current number of departments is as follows:
  1. Physiotherapy: 194;
  2. Occupational therapy: 33;
  3. Speech and language therapy: 9;
  4. Artificial limbs: 21.

177. Projects have been launched to establish eight physiotherapy departments at medical rehabilitation centres in Riyadh, Jeddah, Ta'if and Qunfudhah, three medical rehabilitation centres in Hafr al-Batn, 'Asir and Al-Qasim and two prosthetic limb departments in Riyadh and Al-Ahsa'.

178. Construction has begun on 19 physiotherapy departments in Riyadh, Makkah, the Eastern Province, Jeddah, Al-Bahah, Jizan, Ha'il, Al-Qasim, Ta'if and 'Ar'ar, three medical rehabilitation centres in Hafr al-Batin and Al-Jawf, four prosthetic limb departments in Al-Jawf, Al-Bahah, Ta'if and 'Ar'ar, one speech and language therapy centre in Al-Bahah and one hearing centre in Tabuk. Physiotherapy departments have been expanded in King Saud Medical City, Makkah, Al-Qasim and Qunfudhah and the prosthetic limb department in King Saud Medical City has also been expanded.

179. In order to provide treatment and rehabilitation services for persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, the Ministry of Health has established 20 psychiatric hospitals, four psychiatric wards within general hospitals, 94 psychiatric clinics for adults and 23 psychiatric clinics for children and adolescents throughout the Kingdom. It has also built state-of-the-art new facilities for psychiatric hospitals and renovated old buildings to bring them up to the same standard in order to ensure the comfort and privacy of inpatients and outpatients alike. These specialist facilities currently provide 4,528 beds. Teams of specialist medical staff have been recruited to work at these hospitals, including 627 psychiatrists, 406 psychiatric specialists and 3,008 nurses. The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs, has established convalescence facilities for persons with psychiatric problems — including persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities — who need to remain in care for an extended period and it sends a team of specialist physicians to visit social-care homes with a view to identifying, as soon as possible, and treating persons in such homes who have intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities.

181. The Ministry of Health attaches great importance to child health with a view to preventing disability. It provides comprehensive, integrated health services covering the prenatal and postnatal periods and all stages of childhood, which it delivers through a number of programmes, such as:

- The Healthy Marriage Programme (prenuptial medical examinations): Prospective spouses undergo medical examinations to verify whether either person is a carrier of certain genetic blood diseases (sickle cell anaemia and thalassemia) or infectious diseases (hepatitis B and C and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS)). Medical advice is given, based on the test results, concerning the possibility of transmitting the disease to the other person or to future children, and the couple are provided with options and alternatives to assist them in planning a healthy family.
- The National Child Immunization Programme: This programme is designed to protect children against the diseases targeted by the programme, as disease is one of the main causes of disability in Saudi Arabia.
- The Maternal and Child Health Passport Programme: The aim of this programme is to provide a "passport" for mothers and children that will serve as a first point of reference in health centres for checking the patient's medical history, monitoring any changes in the patient's health and ensuring that the necessary tests and analyses have been performed.
- The National Neonatal Early Detection Programme to Prevent Disability: The main aims of this programme are to:
  - Lower the incidence rates of disease, disability and mortality as a result of certain genetic metabolic and endocrine disorders selected by experts working in this field in Saudi Arabia;
  - Detect certain genetic metabolic and endocrine disorders as soon as possible, as early detection and treatment of these diseases could, God willing, help to reduce the resulting rate of disability.

The schedule for implementing this programme is as follows:

- Stage I: This covers the first five years of the programme and includes most maternity and children's hospitals run by the Ministry throughout the Kingdom;
- Stage II: All Ministry hospitals capable of implementing the programme will be included. There are around 200 hospitals in this category, of which 151 are currently implementing the programme.

The programme targets 265,000 newborns every year in the maternity and paediatric departments and wards of 215 hospitals run by the Ministry. By AH 1435 (2014), 1,016,336 newborns had been tested.

- The National Programme to Prevent and Combat Hearing Loss (hearing tests for newborns): Specialist centres have been established at a number of principal hospitals to implement this programme, the most important being the National Centre for Developing and Fitting Cochlear Implants at the rehabilitation hospital in King Fahd Medical City which treats children and adults who have hearing loss.
- The National Programme for Child Developmental and Behavioural Disorders: This programme covers the following conditions:

Autism:

- Specialists working in child psychiatric clinics at maternity and children's hospitals and at psychiatric hospitals are trained to diagnose and clinically assess developmental disorders, such as autism and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.
- The programme plays a role in the annual national campaign to raise awareness of autism.
- The programme helps to conduct the national survey of developmental disorders (autism).
- The programme implements a model programme for developmental and behavioural disorders at King Fahd Medical City.

Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder:

- Specialist hospitals are encouraged to start implementing the steps set out by the Ministry of Health in the National Programme for the Treatment of Children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.
- Twenty-three specialist psychiatric clinics for children and adolescents have been opened in various hospitals.
- A model programme has been launched at King Fahd Medical City to follow up on cases referred from various other provinces.
- A reference guide for families is being prepared that will contain the telephone numbers of diagnostic clinics for autism and of schools and rehabilitation centres for children with autism in all parts of the country.
- Open days are held for children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and their families with a view to educating families and raising their awareness of the condition.

## **Article 26**

### **Habilitation and rehabilitation**

182. In addition to its efforts to provide health care, social and educational services for persons with disabilities, the Saudi Government also delivers habilitation and rehabilitation services through comprehensive habilitation programmes in the areas of employment, education and social services. To that end, the Government has taken a number of legislative and procedural measures, in keeping with its obligations under article 2 of the Disability Care Act to guarantee the right of persons with disabilities to protection, care and habilitation services and encourage institutions and individuals to participate in charitable

work in the field of disabilities. These services, which are rendered through specialist bodies in a number of fields, including training and habilitation, take into account the type and severity of each person's disabilities and the needs of the job market by, inter alia, providing social and vocational habilitation centres and ensuring that appropriate training methods are used.

183. "Habilitation" is defined in the Disability Care Act as a coordinated process that makes use of medical, social, psychological, educational and vocational services in order to help persons with disabilities to attain the highest possible level of functional efficiency, with a view to enabling them to cope with the demands of their natural and social environment, developing their self-reliance and helping them to become, as far as possible, productive members of society.

184. Council of Ministers Decision No. 34 was promulgated on 28 January 1980 to approve regulations on social habilitation programmes for persons with disabilities. Further to the legislation and regulations on the care and habilitation of persons with disabilities, Council of Ministers Decision No. 291 of 23 July 2012 was issued to approve the implementing regulations for non-governmental habilitation centres for persons with disabilities with a view to encouraging the non-governmental sector to contribute to the provision of care and habilitation services for persons with disabilities by developing programmes and services in the areas of vocational training, social services, psychiatric care, education, health care, leisure and habilitation managed by vocational and social habilitation and day-care centres.

185. The Ministry of Social Affairs has established, within its organizational structure, a Directorate General for the Care and Habilitation of Persons with Disabilities. The Directorate, which reports directly to the Assistant Deputy Minister for Social Care, is responsible for planning, supervising and monitoring all services provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs for persons with disabilities. It offers care and habilitation services to persons with disabilities of all kinds — whether intellectual, psychosocial, sensory or physical in type, or of mild, moderate or high severity — through integrated habilitation and social programmes. These services include day care, rehabilitative treatment and vocational training and make use of the latest methods. An annual allowance based on the severity of the disability is also allocated to all persons with disabilities who are not or cannot be placed in sheltered accommodation or whose family wishes to care for them. The objectives of the Directorate are to:

- Work with relevant departments to design plans, programmes and activities for care and habilitation centres for persons with disabilities;
- Ensure that the services required for persons with disabilities are provided and assessed;
- Set out rules, principles and procedures to be followed when providing habilitation services for persons with disabilities;
- Promote cooperation between the families of persons with disabilities and the habilitation centres;
- Review and approve the allowances to be paid to the families of persons with disabilities in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations;
- Draw up service plans, programmes and operating procedures for habilitation centres;
- Coordinate the endeavours of the governmental health authorities to ensure that full health care is provided for persons with disabilities in accordance with their needs;
- Coordinate with the Ministry of the Civil Service and with the labour and private recruitment offices with a view to finding employment opportunities for persons with disabilities who are capable of working;
- Receive reports from the offices of social affairs, the oversight offices and the habilitation centres for persons with disabilities and take action to implement the proposals contained therein;

- Make recommendations on developing services and habilitation programmes for persons with disabilities;
- Draw up an annual plan of activities and programmes for the Directorate General and its branches;
- Identify and meet the manpower needs of the Directorate General and its branches;
- Oversee the departments, sections and centres under its purview and promote coordination among them in order to achieve their objectives;
- Prepare periodic reports on the achievements made, any obstacles encountered and ways to overcome them, for submission to the competent authority.

186. The Directorate General for the Care and Habilitation of Persons with Disabilities contains a number of departments that are responsible for social and vocational habilitation services for persons with disabilities. These departments are described in detail in the following paragraphs.

187. The Social Habilitation Department is responsible for all administrative and technical procedures concerning use of the residential services provided by habilitation centres and institutions, as well as applications submitted by persons with disabilities wishing to access social-care services or programmes or financial support. Its goal is to provide social habilitation services, through specialist centres, for persons of either sex who have severe disabilities and who need to be cared for at such centres owing to the severity or multi-faceted nature of their disabilities or to the fact that their family is not capable of providing such care. The Department manages a number of social habilitation centres for persons with severe disabilities who cannot undergo vocational habilitation owing to the severity or multi-faceted nature of their disabilities.

188. There are three social habilitation centres in Saudi Arabia which provide care for categories such as:

- Persons with severe physical disabilities, including extreme double amputation, quadriplegia, cerebral palsy and muscle atrophy;
- Persons with multiple disabilities, such as intellectual disability in combination with blindness, deafness or dumbness or paralysis in combination with blindness or other disabilities;
- Persons with moderate or severe intellectual disability;
- Persons with any other condition that prevents them from participating in special education or vocational habilitation.

189. The social habilitation centres provide various services, such as:

- Full care, including accommodation, meals and clothing;
- Full and integrated therapeutic and preventive health care, including physiotherapy: the centres work with specialist hospitals to carry out accurate, comprehensive assessments and perform any necessary surgical procedures;
- Psychological care;
- Recreational and pleasure activities;
- Physiotherapy;
- Occupational therapy;
- Any other special care services required by persons with disabilities.

190. The Directorate General for the Care and Habilitation of Persons with Disabilities also comprises a Vocational Habilitation Department which oversees activities relating to the provision of educational services for persons with paralysis, as well as habilitation services for persons with physical, sensory, intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, in order to prepare them for employment consistent with their residual abilities. In this way, it seeks to meet its social, economic and humanitarian goals and to teach persons with

disabilities how to become productive members of society who are capable of adapting to, and interacting with, society in a manner that enables them to integrate into their family and social environments and gain self-confidence. The Department follows up on such training both within and outside its habilitation centres. The goal of the Department is to provide habilitation services for persons with physical, sensory, intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities in order to develop their special aptitudes. Training in suitable occupations is provided with the aim of helping persons with disabilities to adapt psychologically, socially and professionally and enabling them to work and earn a decent living. The Department supervises a number of vocational habilitation centres in Saudi Arabia, which specialize in providing habilitation services and training to persons with physical, sensory, intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities in occupations that are suited to their abilities. They also help to tap the unused human potential of persons with disabilities in order to help them to become productive members of society who are capable of interacting with the rest of society, which is achieved by training them in suitable occupations. Training also takes place in the wider community, outside the centres and under joint training programmes and plans implemented in collaboration with external training centres and institutions, for occupations that the centres themselves cannot cover. The Department is also responsible for approving payment requests, concerning remuneration owed to trainees and to the institutions that supervise the training, and ensuring that its requirements are met. There are three vocational training centres in Saudi Arabia. The centres for men and the centres for women all include a number of departments and units that provide suitable vocational training for persons with disabilities in fields such as: electrical engineering, bookbinding, carpentry, office work, typing and computing, secretarial work, painting and sculpture, decorating, landscaping, sewing, tailoring, housekeeping and switchboard operation. Separate departments for men and women provide training in these areas in accordance with each person's abilities and preferences.

191. The vocational habilitation centres cater for categories such as:

- Persons with physical disabilities, including amputation of the upper or lower limbs, paralysis and heart conditions;
- Persons who are deaf, dumb or hard of hearing;
- Persons who are blind or partially sighted;
- Persons with certain intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, such as mild intellectual disability, and persons who have recovered to a certain extent from such disabilities.

192. The vocational habilitation centres provide a number of services. For example:

- They provide vocational training within the centre in various occupational fields.
- They provide vocational training outside the centre in occupational fields not covered by the centre.
- They pay a monthly allowance to trainees.
- They provide on-site accommodation — including catering, clothing and health-care and social services — for persons who do not live at the location in which the centre is situated.
- They run sports and leisure programmes at the centre.
- They work with the Directorate General and with relevant recruitment departments to find employment for persons who have completed their training.
- They provide financial support to enable trainees to launch individual projects in fields in which they are competent to engage.

193. Comprehensive habilitation centres comprising vocational and social habilitation departments are a new form of the aforementioned care and habilitation centres for persons with disabilities. They were introduced to ensure that all habilitation services for persons with disabilities of any kind could be provided by one single unit for each of the sexes, which would come under the oversight of one single department. They offer all the services

and benefits that the separate social and vocational habilitation centres provide and they have the same admission requirements.

194. There are 37 comprehensive habilitation centres distributed throughout the country.

195. In 2012, governmental and non-governmental day-care centres in Saudi Arabia provided services for 5,700 beneficiaries and more than SRI 2.5 billion in allowances was paid to the families of 250,000 persons with disabilities, according to statistics issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The number of government-run comprehensive vocational habilitation centres, which served 356 beneficiaries in 2011, rose to 12. In 2010-2012, the total number of beneficiaries in residential comprehensive habilitation care centres amounted to around 8,000.

## **Article 27**

### **Work and employment**

196. The Saudi Government guarantees to protect the right to work and facilitate access thereto by all citizens without discrimination on any grounds in regard to the holding of public office, in accordance with article 28 of the Basic Law of Governance: “The State shall endeavour to ensure that job opportunities are available to every able person and shall enact laws to protect workers and employers.”

197. The civil service legislation in Saudi Arabia is general in scope; no provision thereof denies persons with disabilities the right to hold public office and receive the same salary as non-disabled persons or the right to enjoy the same training and habilitation opportunities as non-disabled persons. Persons with disabilities are mentioned in the legislation only where it sets out provisions to protect access to employment for persons with disabilities, encourage them to enter into employment and support them during the process. A number of enactments and measures have been adopted to provide a legal framework for those objectives.

198. Article 2 of the Disability Care Act issued by Royal Decree No. M/37 of 19 December 2000 refers to the State’s obligation to guarantee the right of persons with disabilities to various services that are provided for them through specialized institutions in a number of fields, including employment. Such services involve finding employment suited to the abilities and qualifications of each person with disabilities, providing opportunities for persons with disabilities to discover their personal talents and earn a salary in the same way as all other members of society and providing training to improve their occupational performance.

199. The Ministry of Labour takes all possible steps to ensure that persons with disabilities can access employment in the private sector. Pursuant to article 28 of the Labour Law: “Whenever the nature of their business allows for the recruitment of persons with disabilities who have received professional training, all employers who employ 25 or more workers must ensure that at least 4 per cent of their total workforce is comprised of professionally qualified persons with disabilities. Such persons may be hired either at the recommendation of employment offices or through other channels. Employers must submit a list to the competent labour office detailing the jobs and posts occupied by such persons and the wages paid to them.” On 11 March 2008, the Ministry of Labour issued Ministerial Decision No. 4072/4/5 in which it stated that one person with disabilities would be considered as equivalent to four non-disabled person when determining whether any given non-governmental institution was employing the requisite minimum ratio of Saudi nationals in accordance with the Saudization Programme, with a view to encouraging private sector institutions to provide employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in a manner consistent with their abilities. In that connection, the Ministry also issued Decision No. 1/1/4624/P of 8 September 2012 in which it set out rules for calculating monthly salaries and specified which categories of persons were subject to special conditions under the Saudization Programme. One such category consists of persons with disabilities who are capable of working; paragraphs 12, 13, 14 and 18 of the Decision specified the methodology for adjusting the calculated ratios to take such persons into account.

200. In order to protect the right of persons with disabilities to work, inspectors from the Ministry of Labour monitor companies in the private sector to verify that the workplace has

been adapted appropriately to provide suitable means of transport for use by persons with disabilities. They also monitor persons with disabilities in the workplace to ensure that they enjoy good working conditions in an accommodating environment with accessible entrances, exits and parking spaces and manual and electric wheelchairs suited to the needs of persons with disabilities to enable them to move around with ease. Employers in the private sector are also encouraged to provide electric lifts and bathrooms for use by persons with disabilities, in addition to sign-language interpreters. These measures are provided for under articles 26, 28, 120 and 243 of the Labour Law, which set out the rights of all persons — including persons with disabilities — in respect of employment and recruitment.

201. As regards enabling persons with disabilities to effectively access public technical and vocational habilitation programmes, the Ministry of Labour has worked with the National System for Joint Training and the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation to design vocational habilitation programmes, tailored to the need of the job market, for persons with mild to moderate disabilities in order to help them to access employment.

202. The Ministry of Labour also works with the Ministry of the Civil Service and the Ministry of Social Affairs to ensure that persons with disabilities who graduate from vocational habilitation centres are given employment opportunities and monitored in this regard.

203. The Ministry of Labour encourages private sector institutions to employ persons with disabilities by, inter alia, providing them with incentives to recruit such persons. In 2012, it established the Department of Labour Policies for Persons with Disabilities, which is attached to the Office of the Deputy Minister for Labour Policies. The head of the department, who is hard of hearing himself, has established a section, within the department, for the employment of persons with disabilities.

204. In order to increase and develop employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and formulate cutting-edge plans and policies in that regard, the Ministry of Labour signed an agreement in April 2011 with a British consulting firm to design a project for the development of a national strategy for the recruitment and employment of persons with disabilities. Work began on the first of the two phases of the project in October 2011. The goals of the project were to:

- Conduct a survey on the current situation of persons with disabilities in regard to work and employment;
- Collate statistics and conduct censuses on persons with disabilities;
- Assess the current status of the legislation, regulations and practices adopted and applied in regard to the employment of persons with disabilities;
- Identify the main bodies that must be involved to ensure the success of the project;
- Identify areas for improvement in employment practices and mechanisms in light of the progress made in developed States;
- Provide results-based services within the framework of partnership between the public and private sectors;
- Identify obstacles that limit work and employment opportunities, and support efforts to find solutions to employment issues affecting persons with disabilities;
- Find and apply quick solutions to implement recommendations designed to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

205. As a result of the survey, obstacles were identified in 14 main areas that had a direct adverse effect on the availability of work and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, namely: transport, ease of access, behavioural and cultural barriers, social security and benefits, the role of employers, labour legislation and regulations, the Saudization Programme, the collection and management of data and statistics, the overall low levels of school education among persons with disabilities, the limited availability of opportunities to undergo training and acquire practical skills, the health system and the lack coordination between the responsible authorities and oversight bodies.

206. In early 2012, the Ministry of Labour introduced its “Compatibility” Programme to increase employment levels among persons with disabilities as a strategy designed to harmonize national policies in order to provide the same level of support for persons with and without disabilities and to encourage the private sector to employ persons with disabilities who are capable of working in order to help them to gain a footing in the job market. The Ministry is currently running a number of projects as part of the programme:

- The Department of Labour Policies is drawing up regulations for the implementation of article 28 of section II in chapter two of the Labour Act on the employment of persons with disabilities. The regulations are expected to be published in the first quarter of 2015.
- It is working through the Definition of Disability and Work project to develop an implementing mechanism for Circular No. 7/E/1402 of 19 November 1981, which reminds all government agencies of the importance of ensuring that persons with disabilities are able to easily access services, including work-related services. A ministerial decision defining disabilities and work was expected to be issued before the end of 2014.
- The Ministry is working on a project to draft a bill on the licensing of institutions in order to verify that their respective workplaces have been adapted for employees with disabilities. The Qaderoon Business Disability Network, the Department for the Inspection and Development of Workplace Environments and the Department of Labour Policies are also involved in this project with a view to ensuring that the bill is non-discriminatory and provides suitable job opportunities for persons with disabilities. A pilot project was launched in 2014/15.
- Definitions are being prepared for the concepts of disability and work.
- The Ministry is drafting the ministerial decision defining disability and work and the facilitative services to be provided.
- A reference schedule of facilitative services is being prepared to support persons with disabilities who are in employment.
- Guidelines are being prepared for employers on the jobs and occupations that are most suited to persons with disabilities of various kinds.
- Guidelines are being prepared on the provisions set out in the Labour Law and its Implementing Regulations in order to, inter alia, clarify the rights and obligations of employees with disabilities as set out in the Law and provide reference materials for employers on their rights and obligations when employing and dealing with employees with disabilities. These guidelines were scheduled to be published by the end of 2014.

207. Twenty projects were scheduled to be completed during the 2012-2016 period as part of the Compatibility Programme. Work has begun on several of these projects:

- A tool for assessing each person’s ability to work is under development.
- The Ministry of Labour is working with the International Labour Organization to review the Labour Law in order to make changes as required to promote the employment, and define the rights and obligations, of persons with disabilities.
- Subsidized training and employment programmes are being developed to prepare persons with disabilities for employment.
- The Qaderoon Business Disability Network was licensed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Commercial Registration No. 4030264450) on 4 February 2014. The Network is a limited liability company that provides support and assistance for persons with disabilities in regard to employment issues in the public and private sectors.
- The Ministry has introduced an incentive scheme in the Human Resources Development Fund to increase the employment of persons with disabilities and

encourage the collection of accurate data on all persons who are registered under the programme.

- It is working with employment channels at the Human Resources Development Fund to create employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and a model work environment that is adapted to the needs of employees with disabilities.
- The Ministry is endeavouring to turn its internal working environment into a model environment adapted to the needs of employees and visitors with disabilities of various kinds. To this end, it holds awareness-raising courses for employees and managers on the needs of persons with disabilities in the workplace, in addition to sign-language courses to help staff members to communicate with deaf colleagues and visitors.
- The Ministry's website is being overhauled to make it more accessible to deaf and blind persons.
- Buildings and facilities used by the Ministry are being renovated to make them accessible to all persons with disabilities. Guidelines are also being produced on working with and employing persons with disabilities in the Ministry.

208. The Ministry of Labour has started working with various other ministries to increase employment levels among persons with disabilities through the Compatibility Programme. In particular, it is developing a mechanism in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs to ensure that persons with disabilities are promptly reinstated in the social security system in the event that they lose their job.

209. On 16 November 2008, the Ministry of Labour issued Ministerial Decision No. 4093/1, concerning fraudulent Saudization, with a view to preventing non-governmental institutions from employing persons with disabilities in sham roles in order to meet Saudization targets and, in that connection, protecting the employment rights of persons with disabilities. The Decision stipulates as follows:

“1. All of the following acts shall be deemed to constitute fraudulent Saudization:

- (a) Registering as employees persons with disabilities who have not received vocational habilitation training;
- (b) Registering persons with disabilities as employees without assigning any actual work to them that is suited to their qualifications and level of disability;
- (c) Registering persons with disabilities as employees performing tasks that are unrelated to the institution's activities;
- (d) Registering persons with severe disabilities as employees even though, owing to the severity of their disability, they are unable to perform any functions relating to the institution's activities.

2. Any persons found to have violated the above provisions shall be liable to the penalties prescribed in Decision No. 1838 of 18 February 2004.”

210. With regard to the promotion of entrepreneurship among persons with disabilities, article 5 of the Disability Care Act stipulates that the State must provide soft interest-free loans to persons with disabilities to enable them to engage, independently or in association with others, in professional or commercial activities consistent with their abilities. This falls within the remit of the Ministry of Social Affairs which, as already mentioned, provides loans to support small businesses run by persons with disabilities. Loans are also provided by a number of other bodies, such as the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Centennial Fund and the Saudi Credit and Savings Bank, to finance small enterprises.

211. It is noteworthy that 379,544 jobseekers with disabilities were registered under the incentive scheme at the end of 2013 according to data collected during the pilot phase of the Compatibility Programme implemented by the Human Resources Development Fund. According to data collected by the General Organization for Social Insurance, the number of Saudi employees with disabilities who were registered in the private sector at the end of 2012 amounted to 30,809. This figure rose to 41,660 in 2013, according to the 2013 Annual

Achievements Report of the Ministry of Labour, and in the first half of 2014 it reached 44,970 according to statistics collected by the General Organization for Social Insurance.

212. The Ministry of Labour runs a number of programmes and projects through which it provides employment-related services for persons with disabilities as part of the wider range of services that it provides for all persons, such as:

- Job-placement centres: These centres provide training and guidance for job seekers who are referred to the centres from the incentive scheme database to receive basic training that will improve their chances of finding employment. The centres also follow up with beneficiaries to ensure that they have found long-term, sustainable employment.
  - The centres have provided services for 523 male and female job seekers with disabilities, of whom 141 are now in employment.
  - Twelve centres have been established to assist job seekers with disabilities.
  - Staff training has been provided for 70 of the centres' employees.
  - 13 first-level (beginner) training packages have been designed and applied.
  - 5 second-level (intermediate) training packages have been designed and applied.
- Career fairs (forums): Job seekers — including persons with disabilities — who attend the fairs are assessed to determine whether they meet the needs of the job market.
- The Saudization (*Nitaqat*) Programme: The programme, which applies to private-sector companies, is designed to promote the employment of Saudi workers.
  - First version: Ministerial Decision No. 4040 of 11 September 2011 approving a programme to encourage companies to Saudize jobs in accordance with “*nitaqat*” (bands); Royal Fax Message No. 38100 of 5 July 2012 approving the Saudization Programme; Ministerial Decision No. 1/1/4624/P of 8 September 2012, regulating monthly salary calculations and special categories under the Saudization Programme, paragraph 1 (xxii) of which includes persons with disabilities who are capable of working in the list of special categories.
  - Second version: This version, which was issued to improve the salaries paid to Saudi workers, came into force on 2 February 2013.
- The Ministry has formulated, adopted and launched numerous programmes in collaboration with the Human Resources Development Fund through which it provides services for all Saudi workers, including persons with disabilities:
  - The Salary Protection Programme: This programme was launched on 26 February 2013 to address problems caused by the late payment of salaries to workers in the private sector. It also ensures that the salaries owed to employees of private-sector companies are paid directly into their bank accounts, thereby combating misreporting and fraudulent employment. Three stages of the programme were implemented in 2013.
  - The Payroll Rebate Programme: Rebates are paid to employers and companies in respect of Saudization measures (<https://www.tegdar.sa>).
  - The Additional Salary Support Programme: Bonuses are paid to employees (<https://online.hrdf.org.sa/businessQ7>).
  - The programme to introduce the Qaderoon Business Disability Network: The Network was set up in 2013 to provide support for persons with disabilities in regard to work and employment in private-sector companies. It offers counselling to employers on the recruitment and treatment of persons with disabilities and the creation of a suitable working environment for such persons.

- In 2013, the Human Resources Development Fund and the Ministry of Labour published the first edition of a guide, as part of the Compatibility programme, on the rules of conduct to be observed when interacting with persons with disabilities.
- In 2013, the Human Resources Development Fund and the Ministry of Labour published the first edition of a set of assessment standards, as part of the Compatibility programme, to ensure that laws and policies safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities.

## Article 28

### Adequate standard of living and social protection

213. The State guarantees to all its citizens throughout the social spectrum — including persons with disabilities — the right to earn a livelihood and to live a dignified life on an equal footing with all other persons and without discrimination on any grounds, as noted earlier in this report. To this end, the Government provides free and comprehensive medical, habilitation and social-care services, supplies assistive medical devices, pays a monthly allowance to persons in need and offers home-care services. It also provides financial support for private projects run by persons with disabilities.

214. The benefits paid by the Ministry of Social Affairs are an important part of the social-care services required by certain groups of individuals and families, such as persons with disabilities, orphans and all other persons who are placed in Ministry's care. The Ministry pays financial benefits to families in which one or more members have disabilities. These are paid by the Benefits Department to persons whose cases it has assessed. Numerous decisions have been promulgated concerning the payment of benefits to persons with various types of disabilities. For example:

- The families of persons with disabilities receive benefits in accordance with articles 23 and 24 of the Basic Regulations for Habilitation Programmes for Persons with Disabilities, issued by Council of Ministers Decision No. 34 of 28 January 1980, under the terms of which, subject to certain conditions and the presentation of medical reports, a yearly allowance is payable to the guardians of persons with disabilities who cannot be admitted to a habilitation centre or whose guardians wish to care for them.
- Pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 88 of 17 May 2005, non-governmental care centres that provide part-time care for persons with disabilities are entitled to a yearly allowance, up to a maximum of half the amount of the above-mentioned allowance payable to the guardians of persons with disabilities, for each person whom they receive.
- Wheelchair and vehicle modification allowance for persons with disabilities: Pursuant to Prime Ministerial Decree No. 7/1285/M of 31 January 1989 and Prime Ministerial Decree No. 7852/1 of 19 May 2005, the Ministry of Social Affairs is required to offer to modify vehicles owned by persons with disabilities to enable them to drive with their hands rather than their feet and is also required to supply wheelchairs to persons with disabilities in need thereof. Applications for such allowances are processed by the various branches of the department concerned.

215. The cash and in-kind allowances granted to persons with disabilities to help to ensure that they enjoy an adequate standard of living can be grouped as follows:

1. Financial benefits: On 27 December 2007, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques issued a decree increasing financial benefits by 100 per cent, as follows:
  - (a) Benefits are payable to persons with disabilities and the families of such persons who provide at-home care. Each person receives SRI 4,000-20,000 per year, depending on which of the following four categories they fall into:
    - i. Mild disability: SRI 4,000;
    - ii. Moderate disability: SRI 8,000;

- iii. Severe disability: SRI 16,000;
  - iv. Very severe disability: SRI 20,000.
2. Assistive devices for persons with disabilities: Each person with a disability who does not live in a care centre is entitled to receive three to four assistive devices, such as wheelchairs, special beds, crutches and air mattresses.
  3. Residential care centres for persons with severe disabilities: All persons with severe disabilities who cannot be cared for at home by their families are admitted to residential centres which provide accommodation, catering, health-care, social-care, habilitation and other services.
  4. Vocational habilitation services for persons who are capable of receiving training:
    - (a) Under article 14 of the Basic Regulations for Habilitation Programmes for Persons with Disabilities, all persons with disabilities who undergo training are entitled to a monthly allowance of SRI 400, starting from the date on which they enrol and including holiday periods. This allowance is reduced to SRI 200 for live-in students. In either case, all students with families to support receive an additional SRI 200 per month.
    - (b) On 21 October 1980, the Council of Ministers issued Decision No. 157 increasing the training allowance paid to persons with disabilities who undergo training at vocation habilitation centres from SRI 400 to SRI 800 per month. For live-in students, the allowance rose from SRI 200 to SRI 400 per month. The family allowance also increased from SRI 200 to SRI 400.
    - (c) Training is also provided for persons with disabilities who are unable to enter special or mainstream education. These training programmes last between one and two years and offer students the opportunity to gain a vocational diploma in a variety of fields, such as computing, carpentry, packaging and bookbinding, electrical engineering, landscaping and plant nursery management. Graduates can apply for grants of SRI 50,000 to start commercial businesses in their field of study.
  5. Day-care centres for persons with disabilities: Persons with disabilities are eligible to 4-5 hours of daytime care at these centres which run comprehensive habilitative care programmes — including physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, special education programmes and social and leisure programmes — with the aim of improving their skills, enabling them to return to their homes and promoting their social integration.
  6. Home-care habilitation programmes: These programmes serve persons with moderate to severe disabilities who are unable to travel to a habilitation centre or hospital. Such persons and their families are taught how to manage their disabilities with a view to preventing or mitigating complications. Charitable associations in most parts of the country are involved in delivering such programmes. Family counselling programmes are also available, through which physiotherapy, speech and language therapy and certain assistive devices are provided.
216. In order to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to public housing programmes, the Ministry of Social Affairs refers requests for residential land submitted by persons with disabilities to the Royal Court in order to ensure that they are prioritized, in accordance with the provisions set out in Council of Ministers Decision No. 76 of 27 April 2004. Persons with disabilities have the same right as all other citizens to submit applications to the Real Estate Development Fund, which provides soft and interest-free home construction loans for Saudi citizens. In addition, as already mentioned in the section of this report on article 19 (living independently and being included in the community), the Ministry of Housing has included provisions in the Implementing Regulations for Housing Support to ensure that persons with disabilities are granted priority when applying for housing support.
217. Numerous legislative enactments have been promulgated to enable persons with disabilities to benefit from the Saudi retirement and pension schemes on an equal footing

with others, namely: the Civil Retirement Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/41 of 28 August 1973; the Military Retirement Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/24 of 17 April 1975; the Social Insurance Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/33 of 30 November 2000; and the Act concerning the Portability of Benefit Entitlements between the Civil or Military Retirement Schemes and the Social Insurance Scheme, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/53 of 20 September 2003. Under these enactments, civilian and military employees with a disability that prevents them from working have financial rights insofar as all such persons who are forced to retire are entitled to a proportion of their final basic salary in order to guarantee them a decent standard of living.

218. Efforts are made to ensure that applicants with disabilities who visit the Public Pension Agency can easily access buildings and offices and are promptly granted any support that they require. Dedicated personnel are assigned to assist them and special parking spaces and passageways are provided to meet their needs at the Agency's headquarters and also at its branches and offices throughout the country.

219. Among their various roles, civil society organizations in Saudi Arabia also provide care for retired persons, including persons with disabilities. One such organization is the National Retirees Association, which serves all men and women — including persons with disabilities — in Saudi Arabia who retire from civilian or military posts in either the governmental or the non-governmental sector. Its headquarters are located in Riyadh and it has branches in several parts of the country.

220. The National Retirees Association seeks to raise public awareness concerning issues faced by retired persons — including persons with disabilities — as well as their status, their capabilities and the importance of treating them with respect and safeguarding their rights. It also helps retired persons to fulfil their obligations and endeavours to correct the stereotypes surrounding retirement and retired persons. It emphasizes the importance of the past achievements of retired persons and of the ways in which they are expected to contribute now and in the future. In addition, the Association strives to fulfil the aspirations of retired persons, raise their morale and improve their financial, health, social and economic situation. Its goals include:

- Improving the financial, health, mental, leisure, educational, social and economic situation of retired persons to ensure that they are able to live happily and retain their dignity;
- Offering legal advice to needy retired persons and their spouses and minor children and providing all necessary assistance and services for retired persons, and particularly those with disabilities.

221. The Association establishes clubs for retired persons in the main cities and towns at which members can meet other retirees, play sports and engage in social activities.

## **Article 29**

### **Participation in political and public life**

222. Pursuant to article 28 of the Basic Law of Governance, the State is endeavouring to ensure that job opportunities are available to every able person in order to give all citizens, without exception, the opportunity to contribute economically and politically to the country's development and to take part in public life. Persons with disabilities have a guaranteed right to participate in politics and public life on an equal footing with others whenever they have the ability to do so. In that connection, the Civil Service Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/47 of 27 June 1977 defines "merit" as the basis for employment in any field.

223. There are numerous ways in which Saudi citizens can participate in public political life either by voting or standing as a candidate in the elections that are held to choose candidates, based on competency, for many executive posts. Through these elections, citizens can participate in the processes of decision-making and management. The ability of all citizens — including persons with disabilities — to participate in these processes without discrimination is fundamental to Saudi social development. Citizens have the opportunity to participate in public and political life through various elections, such as

elections to municipal councils, chambers of commerce and industry, universities and various bodies, including the Journalists' Association, cooperative associations, sports clubs, workers' committees and cultural institutions. Persons with disabilities are not excluded from participating in any of these elections, which are open to all eligible male and female voters and candidates.

224. By way of example, the Municipal Councils Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/61 of 1 August 2014 contains no provisions that discriminate against persons with disabilities. In accordance with the Act, the eligibility requirements for voters and candidates in municipal council elections are the same for all persons. The conditions laid down in articles 17 and 18 of the Act do not in any way deprive persons with disabilities of their right to vote or stand as candidates in such elections.

225. Persons with disabilities and persons with legal or statutory impediments are not required to go to a polling station in person in order to register as voters. They are entitled to designate a representative to register them and vote on their behalf in accordance with the regulations laid down by the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs.

226. In practice, persons with disabilities are granted the same opportunities as non-disabled persons to participate in public and political life by standing for election. Candidates are always chosen on the basis of merit and ability, regardless of their appearance or physical condition. As an example of this, the role of Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia — which remains one of the most senior positions in the country — has been held by three persons with vision loss for consecutive periods. Similarly, the Council of Senior Scholars — one of the highest governmental bodies — has more than one blind member and, during two consecutive sessions from 2009 to 2011, the Shura Council included members with physical and sensory disabilities. There has also been one member with disabilities on the Human Rights Commission since its second session in 2011. Moreover, persons with disabilities have stood as candidates in municipal council elections in several parts of the country; in 2011, for example, one of the candidates who stood for election in Riyadh district constituency No. 9 had a disability.

### **Article 30**

#### **Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport**

227. The Saudi Government has introduced a number of legislative and practical measures to provide persons with disabilities with the opportunity to participate in cultural life and sport.

228. Under article 2 of the Disability Care Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/37 of 19 December 2000, the State guarantees the right of persons with disabilities to services provided by specialist bodies in a number of fields, such as culture and sport, by ensuring that persons with disabilities are able to make use of cultural and sports facilities that have been adapted to their needs and to participate in indoor and outdoor cultural activities and sports consistent with their abilities and talents.

229. In order to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to benefit from cultural materials and facilities, all events at the King Fahd Cultural Centre, which is run by the Ministry for Culture and Information, are open to all members of the public without exception, including events held for the benefit of persons with disabilities, such as theatrical performances and art exhibitions. In addition, the Office of the Deputy Minister for Cultural Affairs, in collaboration with the Disabled Children's Association, has organized various activities for persons with disabilities. In 2012, these included conferences, seminars, celebrations, visits, cultural weeks, meetings, forums, lectures, evening events, theatrical performances, exhibitions, cultural and artistic activities, festivals and television programmes.

230. Literary and cultural clubs throughout the country have public libraries and hold cultural competitions which are open to persons with disabilities.

231. The Ministry of Education plays a prominent role in providing persons with disabilities with opportunities to participate actively through its media programmes, lectures, seminars and publications. It also provides students with disabilities in primary,

intermediate and secondary schools with opportunities to take part in school sports, radio broadcasts and literary and artistic activities in and outside the Kingdom. The policies adopted by the Ministry encourage mainstream schools to actively include students with disabilities in various classroom and extra-curricular activities, such as morning exercises, cultural programmes, school plays, field trips to markets, gardens and parks and desert excursions. The Ministry also ensures that students with disabilities are always able to access public libraries that contain audiobooks and books in Braille.

232. The General Presidency of Youth Welfare has granted licences to five sports, cultural and social clubs for persons with disabilities, which are located in various parts of the country, in addition to clubs for deaf persons. On 11 May 2013, Prime Ministerial Order No. 24620 approving the licensing of clubs in Riyadh, Makkah, Jeddah, Dammam, Al-Qassim, Najran, Al-Baha, Al-Jouf, Tabuk and Jizan and payment of an annual subsidy of SRI 5,000 to fund the activities and programmes of each club. A Directorate for Persons with Disabilities has also been established which is responsible for all matters of concern to such persons and is endeavouring to dispel their sense of isolation and further their integration in society.

233. The Department of Youth Affairs at the General Presidency of Youth Welfare schedules a wide variety of activities and events designed specifically for persons with disabilities, such as cultural competitions, art events, wall newspapers, scientific hobbies, inventive and creative activities, photography events, scientific interest groups at youth centres, Koran and Hadith memorization competitions, the writing of plays, short stories and poetry, the production of short films and Photoshop workshops, with the option to participate in national competitions. These activities and events are run by the Directorate General of Youth Organizations in collaboration with relevant governmental bodies and with the offices and clubs managed by the Presidency in various parts of the country.

234. The Saudi Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities was set up in 1991 to provide persons with disabilities with opportunities to practise their favourite sports under its sponsorship. The goals of the Federation are to encourage persons with disabilities of various kinds throughout the country to engage in the sports that it oversees, raise the level of competition at home and within the region and provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to practise sport. It also runs training courses to improve the technical skills of coaches and referees. In addition, the Federation organizes numerous local championships at district and provincial level throughout Saudi Arabia and helps to organize several Gulf, Arab and international tournaments. The Federation supervises 15 centres located throughout the country and was responsible for setting up the Saudi Deaf Sports Federation. The Federation runs a variety of activities adapted for persons with various kinds of disabilities, which it groups into five categories: visual impairments (blindness and loss of vision), cerebral palsy, motor disorders, intellectual and psychosocial disorders, and autism.

235. Support is provided for sportsmen with disabilities during international sporting events; in order to ensure that they are able to compete effectively, they and their administrative and technical staff are allowed to take a fully-paid leave of absence from work for the duration of the event, and of any training camps that they need to attend, for six months or more. In that connection, Council of Ministers Decision No. 249 of 28 June 2010 granted “permission for the administrative and technical staff members and the sportsmen who are involved in the INAS World Football Championships for athletes with intellectual disabilities, which will be held in South Africa in 2010, to remain absent from their jobs in the public or private sector for the duration of their participation in the tournament”.

236. The Saudi Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities has made numerous achievements, which reflect the value that the Saudi Government attaches to sports for persons with disabilities. For example:

- The Saudi team won first place at the fourth, fifth and sixth INAS World Football Championships for athletes with intellectual disabilities which were held in Germany in 2006, in South Africa in 2010 and in Brazil in 2014.
- The Federation won a gold medal in the long jump at the 2008 Paralympic Games held in Beijing.

- The Federation also won a silver medal at the 2008 Paralympic Games.
- Saudi Arabia won 35 medals, including 24 gold medals, at the Eighth Special Olympics for the Middle East and North Africa held in 2014.
- The Saudi team won a gold medal at the Second Gulf Autism Championships (Saudi Autistic Society).

237. The Saudi Sports Federation for Persons with Disabilities supports 15 training centres throughout the country by supplying sports and technical equipment and paying the salaries of the officially registered athletes who undergo training at each centre, the coaches and supervisors who work at each centre and staff members of the Federation. The Federation covers all necessary costs incurred during any training camps, sports gatherings and competitions in which these teams participate in or outside Saudi Arabia. This funding is overseen by the General Presidency of Youth Welfare and covers, in particular, accommodation, sports clothing, living costs, transport and travel costs and salaries for attending training camps and sports gatherings. It also pays financial bonuses to athletes who win bronze, silver or gold medals at any official championships for States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, any regional or international competition or the Olympic Games.

238. The General Presidency of Youth Welfare has launched a national project to modernize the facilities at sports stadiums and halls throughout the country in order to improve their accessibility by persons with disabilities. Specially designed and equipped regulatory-approved platforms are being installed in football stadiums to enable persons with disabilities to use spectator stands, and designated toilets and passageways are being built. Volunteers at the stadiums are also receiving training in how to receive and accompany persons with disabilities. The project has been completed at all stadiums in Riyadh and Dammam and is being extended to other parts of the country.

### **Article 31**

#### **Statistics and data collection**

239. The Saudi Government is aware that collecting statistics, data, research and studies is of the utmost importance when drawing up plans, strategies and approaches to respond to disability-related issues and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. A number of national studies have therefore been conducted in recent years. In 1997, for example, a study carried out within the framework of the national project for disability research, habilitation and rehabilitation in Saudi society was the first to show that the incidence of disabilities of various types in the Kingdom amounted to 3.6 per cent. Researchers later conducted another study which showed that the incidence rate was 6.3 per cent. This increase was due to the fact that the studies defined disability in different ways and each focused on specific age groups rather than the population as a whole. A study on the demographics of disability was carried out in 2003 and the Ministry of Social Affairs is currently working to establish a national medical and social register of disabilities.

240. In that context, the 2011 census conducted by the Central Department of Statistics included statistics on the number of persons with disabilities in each household.

241. The Ministry of Education attaches great importance to the use of statistics and field data to determine how many persons — and, in particular, students — in Saudi Arabia have disabilities with the aim of providing educational services for them. In 2008, for example, a national study was conducted to assess how well students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia were integrated in mainstream schools.

242. The Ministry of Social Affairs registers older persons and retirees who have disabilities or age-related health problems through the services that they access at social-care centres for the elderly.

### **Article 32**

#### **International cooperation**

243. Given the importance of international cooperation, the Saudi Government welcomes and promotes all forms of cooperation through which it is able to provide support and broaden and develop its expertise in fields such as its national endeavours to achieve the

goals set out in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Government has built numerous partnerships with regional and international organizations and has adopted various measures to promote participation in such organizations by Saudi citizens with disabilities.

244. With regard to regional cooperation, Saudi Arabia worked with other members of the League of Arab States to launch the Arab Decade of Disabled Persons (2004-2013).

245. Saudi Arabia currently chairs the Arab Corporation for Technology Applications (ACTA) and the Arab Health Services Commission.

246. In 2007, the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs at the League of Arab States launched the Arab Day for Persons with Disabilities based on a proposal submitted by Saudi Arabia.

247. On 2 June 2009, the Government organized a symposium on ways to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. A side event was held which consisted of workshops for urban planning engineers in Arab countries on methods to adapt building specifications to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Saudi Arabia also hosted the first and second World Disability and Rehabilitation Conferences.

248. The Government is working to implement the recommendation that member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council draw up implementing regulations, in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with regard to students with disabilities in higher educational institutions in those States. The regulations are being developed by experts and university professors with an in-depth knowledge of special education, in collaboration with the Human Rights Commission and under the oversight of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

249. A number of qualified Saudi officials with disabilities participate in and sit on regional and international commissions. For example, one deaf female official has been representing deaf persons on the Women's Committee of the Arab Organization of Disabled People since April 2013. She was also a member of the Organizing Committee for the first Regional Arab Conference of Deaf Persons, which was held by the Arab Organization of Disabled People in collaboration with the European Disability Forum and with support from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation.

250. With regard to cooperation with international organizations, which is one of the objectives set out in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Saudi Government has signed a joint programme cooperation agreement with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Many projects and activities have been launched under the terms of this agreement and the Saudi Government recently donated US\$ 1.59 million to UNICEF for use in combating poliomyelitis in Niger.

251. Saudi Arabia is also a member of Rehabilitation International with which, through ACTA, the Ministry of Social Affairs has signed an agreement on improving mobility and accessibility in centres for persons with disabilities in a manner consistent with international standards. It has also provided scholarships to enable a team of staff members to attend seminars and training workshops on ways to implement the agreement.

252. On 9-10 December 2012, the Kingdom hosted the International Conference on Universal Access, which was held in Riyadh under the auspices of the King Salman Centre for Disability Research. Dozens of international and Saudi experts took part in the conference's activities, during which they developed designs for roads and urban environments that would make their facilities more accessible to persons with disabilities.

253. In October 2014, Saudi Arabia hosted the Fourth World Disability and Rehabilitation Conference, at which tribute was paid to a number of outstanding researchers in disability-related fields.

254. In 2011, a Saudi government official was nominated for the presidency of the Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES), which is based in Canada.

255. A female Saudi government official who is hard of hearing has been the official representative, since October 2011, of the World Federation of the Deaf for the national project to make deaf women more aware of the importance of early detection of breast cancer. She also represented the Arab Federation of Organizations Working with the Deaf, which is part of the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI), from 2005 to 2011 and she has been the communications officer for WASLI in the Arab region since 2011.

### **Article 33**

#### **National implementation and monitoring**

256. Given the importance of designating a government agency and establishing a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Convention in Saudi Arabia and to ensure that the Convention and the Saudi Disability Care Act are implemented, Council of Ministers Decision No. 202 of 18 March 2014 stipulated that the name of the Coordinating Committee provided for in the Basic Regulations for Habilitation Programmes for Persons with Disabilities issued pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 34 of 28 January 1980 would be changed to “Committee for the Coordination of Services for Persons with Disabilities”, which would be responsible for coordination among the government agencies involved in order to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities were respected. The Committee, which is chaired by an official from the Ministry of Social Affairs holding grade 15 or above, includes:

- A representative from the Ministry of Education;
- A representative from the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs;
- A representative from the Ministry for the Interior;
- A representative from the Ministry of Health;
- A representative from the General Presidency of Youth Welfare;
- A representative from the Ministry of Labour;
- A representative from the Ministry of the Civil Service;
- A representative from the Ministry of Social Affairs, who also acts as secretary;
- A representative from the Disabled Children’s Association, a representative from the private sector, a representative for charitable associations and institutions and a qualified person with disabilities, all to be nominated by the Committee’s chairman and approved as members by decision of the Minister of Social Affairs.

257. With regard to the establishment of an independent mechanism to promote and monitor implementation of the Convention, the Human Rights Commission established, in 2012, a special unit for the human rights of persons with disabilities which acts as the mechanism for monitoring implementation of the Convention. Its functions include:

- Monitoring the situation of persons with disabilities, as well as the extent to which their rights are respected, and identifying violations of their rights;
- Examining the legislation relating to disability issues and the mechanisms for implementing it, assessing its efficacy and the extent to which it conforms with the Convention and proposing amendments that should be made to the legislation;
- Providing advice and legal and technical support for persons with disabilities in order to help them to enforce their rights, and representing persons with disabilities before the relevant entities;
- Educating the public about the rights of persons with disabilities and raising awareness of the provisions set out in the Convention;
- Working with governmental executive bodies that are responsible for disability issues and undertaking joint initiatives to expedite the implementation of decisions taken concerning the rights of persons with disabilities as set forth in the Convention.

258. The National Society for Human Rights, which is a civil society organization involved in monitoring the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities as set forth in the Convention, plays a complementary role by receiving complaints from persons with disabilities and their families concerning violations of their human rights and working with the competent governmental authorities to resolve them.

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