



**International Human Rights
Instruments**

Distr.: General
3 July 2019
English
Original: Arabic

**Common core document forming part of the
reports of States parties**

Oman^{*, **}

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.
** The annex may be consulted in the files of the secretariat and on its website.



Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. General information about the Sultanate of Oman	3
A. Demographic, economic, social and cultural characteristics	3
B. Constitutional, political and legal structure of the State	5
II. General framework for the protection and promotion of human rights	12
A. Acceptance of international human rights norms.....	12
B. Legal framework for the protection of human rights at the national level	13
C. Framework for the promotion of human rights at the national level	21
D. National reporting process	25
E. Other related human rights information.....	26
III. Information on non-discrimination and equality and effective remedies	27
A. Non-discrimination and equality.....	27
B. Effective remedies	28

1. The Sultanate of Oman is submitting the second version of this report as an update to the common core document deposited with the United Nations Secretariat on 11 April 2013. The report reflects new developments in the Sultanate at various levels, including human rights developments. It is an extension of the initial core document and the series of periodic reports submitted to the human rights treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council and it provides an update to the previous common core document. It shall be deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I. General information about the Sultanate of Oman

2. Throughout history, Oman has been an active centre of civilization, engaging with all other centres of civilization in the ancient world. It has made important cultural contributions at various stages of history, as well as being an influential political and naval power during several periods. As with many civilized peoples and nations whose historical role has changed over time, the history of Oman comprises a number of different periods.

3. Opinions differ as to the origin of the country's name. While some claim that it is derived from the name of the Qahtaniyah tribe of Oman, others maintain that it means "settlement" or "dwelling". The first historical figure to call Oman by its current name was Pliny, who lived in the first century A.D. Ptolemy, who lived in the second century A.D., also used this name. Oman was also known by other names at various points in history, such as "Majan" and "Mazoun".

4. The Sultanate of Oman is an independent and fully sovereign Islamic Arab State. Its capital is Muscat. The State religion is Islam. Although the Islamic sharia forms the basis of legislation, as the majority of the population are followers of Islam, members of other faiths are able to practise their religion freely. The official language is Arabic, although English is widely used in commerce and education.

A. Demographic, economic, social and cultural characteristics

Geographical location and population

5. The Sultanate of Oman lies in the far south-east of the Arabian Peninsula, between 16° 40' N and 26° 20' N and 51° 50' E and 59° 50' E. Its coastline is 3,165 km long, starting in the far south-east of the country on the Arabian Sea and the entrance to the Indian Ocean, continuing up to the Gulf of Oman, and ending in Musandam Governorate. Its coastline also includes the strategic Strait of Hormuz at the entrance to the Arabian Gulf. The Sultanate of Oman borders the Republic of Yemen in the south-west, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the west and the United Arab Emirates in the north. It also includes a number of small islands in the Gulf of Oman and the Hormuz Strait, such as the As Salamah archipelago, and in the Arabian Sea, such as Masirah Island and Al Hallaniyah islands.

6. The total surface area of the Sultanate is approximately 309,500 km² and includes various types of land and terrain.

7. As of mid-2017, the population of Oman was 4,559,963, of whom 34.6 per cent were female and 65.4 per cent male. The population growth rate is around 6.1 per cent. The difference in the proportion of males and females is due to the arrival of migrant workers, the majority of whom are male. Among the Omani population, which totals 2.4 million, 49.6 per cent are female. Among Omani citizens, the crude birth rate is 33.5 per 1,000 and the crude death rate is 2.9 per 1,000. Life expectancy at birth is 76.9 years: 74.8 for men and 79.2 for women. As of mid-2017, there were 2,054,594 immigrants in the Sultanate, accounting for 45 per cent of the total population. Table 1 in annex 1 sets out demographic indicators of population growth and density between 2013 and 2017.

8. Population age distribution: As of mid-2017, children represented a significant proportion of the total population and of the Omani population. Children under the age of 18 years account for 25 per cent of the total population and 42 per cent of the Omani population. Some 27 per cent of the total population and some 23 per cent of the Omani population fall within the 18–29 age bracket, while 4 per cent of the overall population and 6 per cent of the Omani population are over the age of 60. These proportions differ between

the total population and the Omani population because the majority of immigrants fall within the 15–64 age bracket. Although the overall dependency ratio of the population is 33 per cent, it varies between the Omani population and the immigrant population, with 70 per cent in the former and 5 per cent in the latter. The high dependency ratio among the Omani population is due to the large proportion of women and children, whereas the majority of immigrants are unaccompanied. Table 2 in annex 1 sets out demographic indicators of age structure and dependency ratios for the Omani and immigrant populations between 2013 and 2017.

9. The Sultanate has achieved a high level of general development, and the achievements and fruits of the modern Omani renaissance are extensive. The Sultanate has made great progress in the areas of education, health, road infrastructure, power generation, water and communications, among others, across all governorates without exception, all of which serves its aim of creating well-being in society. The progress of development in recent years has been just and fair, and the Sultanate is classified as a State with a high level of human development, ranking fifty-second on the Human Development Index (HDI), with an HDI value for 2015 of 0.796. It has also received commendations in United Nations reports on human development for the progress made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals up to 2015. The following table sets out the human development indicators in Oman as of 2015.

<i>Non-income HDI</i>	<i>National income per capita rank minus HDI rank</i>	<i>Gross national income per capital in dollars (2017)</i>	<i>Average expected number of years of schooling</i>	<i>Average number of years of schooling</i>	<i>Life expectancy at birth in years</i>	<i>HDI</i>
0.796	-21	34 402	8.1	13.7	77.0	0.796

*Source: Supreme Council for Planning

10. The Sultanate has made efforts to achieve numerous human rights-related goals, which is reflected in the high standard of living enjoyed by the population. The gross national income per capita reached 61,659 at the start of 2017. The average life expectancy is 77.9 years, the infant mortality rate is 9.4 per 1,000 and the under-5 mortality rate is 11.4 per 1,000. In 2015–2016, the average net enrolment rate in primary education among children between the ages of 6 and 11 years was 98.3 per cent, while the average net enrolment rate in education among children between the ages of 12 and 14 years was 95.6 per cent. According to a report by the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the illiteracy rate among the overall population between the ages of 15 and 79 stood at 6.25 per cent in 2017, compared with 10.19 per cent in 2012. This progress is also reflected in all other demographic, social, economic and cultural indicators, which are included in Appendix 3 in accordance with the reporting guidelines (annexes 1 and 2).

11. The Sultanate has worked to ensure that all citizens and residents have access to advanced health care on a fair and equal basis. It is also committed to providing free health care in all governorates. Government spending on health in 2017–2018 was 6.25 per cent of total government expenditure, which is reflected in the quality of the health services provided. As of 2017, there were 1,583 public and private hospitals and health centres in the Sultanate.

12. The Sultanate places great value on children's right to education. Primary education is compulsory, and education is free in government schools up to the post-primary level. In 2016/17, government spending on education was 10.4 per cent of total government expenditure. There were 1,100 State schools, which were attended by 564,356 students. There were also 103,358 students in private schools.

13. The Sultanate recognizes that human rights and peace are intrinsically linked, and it has therefore endeavoured to build bridges of friendship with the world, establish positive and balanced relationships with peace-loving States, adhere to international conventions and the principles of the United Nations and pursue peaceful methods of conflict resolution, in the interests of security and global stability. The pursuit of peace is at the heart of the foreign policy of the Sultanate in the Gulf, in the wider region and internationally. The Sultanate has led and continues to lead efforts to promote peace. It continues to support peace initiatives to resolve numerous issues in the region and to reconcile the parties

concerned, on the basis of the belief that the application of the principles of participation, justice and equality to the preservation of States and the interests of their peoples leads to greater opportunities for peace and development.

14. The Sultanate has made efforts to contribute to the activities of various regional and international organizations in the areas of peace, respect for human rights and counter-terrorism. The Sultanate assumes its responsibilities within the framework of those organizations with the aim of developing a climate that favours peace, development and regional and international security.

B. Constitutional, political and legal structure of the State

15. The Sultanate is a hereditary monarchy, based on the principles of justice, consultation (*shura*) and equality. Citizens have the right to participate in public affairs, in accordance with the Basic Law of the State and with the conditions set forth in the law.

16. The Basic Law of the State (the Constitution), which was promulgated by Royal Decree No. 101/96 and amended by Royal Decree No. 99/2011, addresses all aspects of modern nation-building. It sets out the reference framework for the relationships between institutions, as well as the responsibilities and duties of the legislative, executive and judicial authorities. The Basic Law also ensures that each of these branches performs its role in a manner that respects the interests of the country, and it guarantees the rights and freedoms of citizens under the law.

17. The organizational structure of the State comprises the Head of State and the executive, legislative and judicial branches, as described below:

Head of State

18. The Sultan is the Head of State and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. His person is inviolable. He must be respected, and his order obeyed. He is the symbol of national unity, and he nurtures and protects the country. His duties are set forth in article 42 of the Basic Law of the State.

Executive branch

19. The Council of Ministers oversees the executive branch of the Sultanate. It is presided over and governed by the Sultan. The Council of Ministers assists the Sultan in drawing up and implementing national public policy. Specifically, the Council makes recommendations to the Sultan on economic, political, social, executive and administrative matters that are of interest to the Government. It presents proposals for laws and decrees and makes recommendations in order to safeguard the interests of citizens, ensure the provision of essential services, improve economic, social, health-care and cultural conditions for citizens and establish goals and public policies related to economic, social and administrative development. It also makes proposals on the means and methods required to implement such policies, including optimizing the use of financial, economic and human resources, and it discusses development plans prepared by the competent authorities, which it transmits to the Sultan for adoption and implementation. It also examines ministerial proposals related to each ministry's area of jurisdiction and it makes suitable recommendations and decisions. The Council oversees the functioning of the administrative machinery of the State and ensures that it is fulfilling its duties and that its various components are coordinating. It also oversees the general implementation of laws, decrees, regulations, decisions, treaties, conventions and court decisions in order to ensure compliance. Furthermore, the Council has jurisdiction over any other area specified by the Sultan or the law. It has a secretariat to assist it in its work.

Specialized councils

20. Article 56 of the Basic Law of the State provides for the establishment of specialized councils under the aegis of the Council of Ministers and sets out their terms of reference. Members are appointed by royal decree, unless established otherwise in a decree. These councils include:

Defence Council

21. The Defence Council, which is chaired by the Sultan, was established by Royal Decree No. 105/96 of 28 December 1996. It comprises eight members, who are appointed on the basis of their qualifications. The Council meets at the invitation of the Chair and considers issues relating to the integrity and defence of the Sultanate.

National Security Council

22. The National Security Council examines all matters related to national security. While its meetings are chaired by the Sultan, the Minister of the Royal Office is the head of the Council. The Inspector-General of Police and Customs, the Head of the Internal Security Agency, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and the Head of Communications and Coordination sit on the Council, which may also request the attendance of any non-member. The Council has a secretariat staffed by employees of the Royal Office.

Council of Financial Affairs and Energy Resources

23. The Council of Financial Affairs and Energy Resources prepares the financial policy of the State, oversees the financial and monetary system and prepares the annual State budget. It examines financial credits for development projects and studies foreign and domestic investment projects and their funding requirements, as well as all other matters related to savings, investments and other financial questions. The Council also oversees the development of energy resources, their contribution to the national economy and improvements in their use. The meetings of the Council are chaired by the Sultan or the Vice-President of the Council. The Council was restructured under the leadership of the Sultan pursuant to Royal Decree No. 60/2011 of 9 May 2011.

Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman

24. The Board draws up appropriate monetary policies for the Sultanate. It has the authority to take any action required to ensure the sound administration of the Central Bank of Oman. It issues currency, oversees banking institutions and supervises banking activities in the Sultanate. The six members of the Board are appointed by the Sultan, who also chairs the Board. The Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman was established, under the leadership of the Sultan, on 5 September 2017, pursuant to Royal Decree No. 42/2017.

Supreme Council for Planning

25. The Supreme Council for Planning was established pursuant to Royal Decree No. 30/2012 of 26 May 2012. The role of the Council is to develop strategies and policies for sustainable development in the Sultanate and create mechanisms for their implementation. It is also responsible for achieving economic diversification and ensuring optimum self-sufficiency in terms of natural and human resources.

Public entities, councils and committees

26. The administrative machinery of the State includes a number of high-level committees, specialized subsidiary councils and public entities, each of which is responsible for carrying out or overseeing the work of a particular sector. They work with an integrated vision and in coordination with other relevant parties, including ministries, for the benefit of the public, so as to ensure the flow and coordination of work among the bodies operating in each sector. Ministers and public figures participate in the relevant committees, councils and entities depending on the nature and scope of their work and their terms of reference. The following high-level committees have been established:

- State Financial and Administrative Audit Institution
- Tenders Board
- Education Council
- Scientific Research Council
- Oman Charitable Organization
- Information Technology Authority

- Public Authority for Social Insurance
- Public Authority for Consumer Protection
- Public Authority of the Workforce Register
- Public Authority for the Development of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
- Public Authority for Civil Defence and Rescue
- Public Authority for Development Partnerships
- Oman National Committee for Education, Culture and Science
- National Youth Commission
- National Crisis Management Committee
- National Committee for Family Affairs
- National Committee for the Care of Persons with Disabilities
- National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking

Legislative branch

27. Consultative processes in Oman have been developing over recent years and, at the institutional level, they now take place across two chambers, namely the State Council and the Shura Council. Royal Decree No. 99/2011 amended the Basic Law of the State to grant the Council of Oman various legislative and oversight functions to ensure that it was able to exercise its role to the fullest.

Council of Oman

28. The Council of Oman comprises the State Council, members of which are appointed by the Sultan, and the Shura Council, members of which are elected by Omani citizens as their representatives. The Council of Oman meets at the invitation of the Sultan in order to discuss the issues at hand. All decisions are decided by majority rule.

29. The State Council and the Shura Council exercise their legislative functions in accordance with the Basic Law of the State. Draft legislation prepared by the Government must be presented to the Council of Oman for approval or amendment, following which it is transmitted directly to the Sultan for promulgation. The Council of Oman may also propose legislation and present bills to the Government for examination, after which they are returned to the Council. According to the Basic Law of the State, the Council of Ministers must submit its annual development plans and budget proposals to the Shura Council for discussion. The Shura Council may make recommendations on the proposals, after which they are transmitted to the State Council for examination, which may also make recommendations. The Chair of the State Council must then return the proposal to the Council of Ministers, together with the recommendations of both Councils. The head of the Council of Ministers must inform the Shura Council and the State Council if any of their recommendations are disregarded, as well as the reasons for doing so.

State Council

30. The State Council plays a vital role in overall national development and in the evolution of Omani society. It is a proactive legislative and regulatory institution. The State Council has legal personality and is financially and administratively independent. Its members are experts and specialists in their fields, which enables the Council to perform its functions efficiently and effectively in accordance with its terms of reference and mandate, as an actor within the national system of the rule of law and institutions.

31. The State Council is made up of a Chair and members, and their numbers may not exceed those of members on the Shura Council. The members are appointed by royal decree. For the 2015–2019 period, the State Council has 84 members, plus the Chair; 61 are new members and 23 served as members during the Fifth Period. Women hold 14 seats, accounting for 17 per cent of all members.

Shura Council

32. The Shura Council has legal personality and is financially and administratively independent. Its headquarters are in Muscat Governorate. The Shura Council has entered into a new phase of its national activities as a result of the new core legislative powers granted to the Council of Oman. The new powers bolster the role played by parliament, thereby strengthening democracy and transparency, in line with overall development efforts and the future need to increase citizen participation in decision-making.

33. The members of the Shura Council are elected representatives of all the provinces of the Sultanate. Each province that has 30,000 residents or fewer on the day on which nominations open is represented by one member, and each province with more than 30,000 residents on that date is represented by two members. For the 2015–2019 period, the Shura Council has 84 members, including a single woman who accounts for 1.2 per cent of the total membership.

34. The Shura Council has the authority to question any minister on matters relating to unlawful violations of ministerial authority and to discuss such matters. All findings are submitted to the Sultan. The Council can oblige ministers to provide an annual progress report on the implementation of projects within their ministries. It may also discuss the internal affairs of ministries and may call on any minister to provide a statement on such matters.

35. The State Financial and Administrative Audit Institution sends copies of its annual report to both the Shura Council and the State Council. The Shura Council examines legislative bills, development plans and drafts of social and economic conventions that the Government wishes to issue, accede to or ratify. The Council expresses its views on such documents and transmits its findings to the Council of Ministers.

Judicial branch

36. Since the dawn of the modern Omani renaissance, the Sultanate has steadfastly pursued a plan to achieve development and progress and to build the State and its institutions at every level. Some of the main priorities of the State have been to extend judicial oversight, enforce the rule of law and bring judicial institutions closer to people seeking legal redress, so that justice and equality can be enjoyed by both citizens and residents of Oman alike. In fact, the judiciary plays a vitally important role in civilization and the advancement of a people and in promoting security and stability.

37. Article 59 of the Basic Law of the State provides that: “The rule of law is the basis of governance in the State. Rights and freedoms are guaranteed by the integrity of the judiciary and by the integrity and impartiality of the judges.” It also provides that: “Judicial authority is independent. It is exercised by the courts of all types and at all levels, which issue rulings in accordance with the law.” In addition, it stipulates that: “There is no authority over the judges in their decision-making other than the law. Judges may be dismissed only where provided for by the law. No party has the right to interfere in legal cases or in the administration of justice. Such interference is considered a crime punishable by law. The law sets out the conditions that must be met by the judiciary, the conditions and procedures for the appointment, transfer and promotion of judges, the guarantees granted to judges, the conditions preventing their dismissal and other relevant provisions.”

38. Article 62 of the Basic Law of the State provides that: “The law regulates different types and levels of courts and determines their functions and jurisdictions.”

Supreme Judicial Council

39. The Sultan chairs the Supreme Judicial Council and the head of the Supreme Court is the vice-chair. The composition of the Council’s membership is defined in Royal Decree No. 9/2012. All members of the Council are members of the judiciary and there is no interference from the executive branch. According to the Decree, the Council is tasked with ensuring the independence of the judiciary, instituting the values, ideals and ethics of the justice system, overseeing the judicial process and supervising all judicial affairs.

Council of Administrative Affairs of the Judiciary

40. Royal Decrees No. 9/2012 and No. 10/2012 promulgated on 29 February 2012 concerning the Supreme Judicial Council and the administration of judicial affairs enshrined the principle of the rule of law. Decree No. 10/2012 transferred authority for court administration and judicial inspections from the Ministry of Justice to the Council of Administrative Affairs, in accordance with the Judiciary Act. Accordingly, the judiciary was granted full independence from the executive and permitted to administer all of its affairs and personnel matters with no hint of interference from any ministry or other government entity. Royal Decree No. 54/2012 established the General Secretariat of the Administrative Affairs Council of the Judiciary. Since achieving independence from the Ministry of Justice, the Council has endeavoured to press ahead with the Sultanate's ambition to establish an advanced judicial system in terms of infrastructure and human resources.

41. The inauguration of the Supreme Court on 25 May 2016 constituted an important institutional development for the Omani judiciary, contributing to the establishment of an appropriate legal environment for judicial proceedings in the Sultanate, creating the facilities and services required by judicial personnel, and promoting the people's unmitigated right of access to justice. In parallel, court complexes have been established in a number of the Sultanate's governorates, such as the Muscat Governorate Court Complex established by Decision No. 107/2015 and the Buraymi Governorate Court Complex established by Decision No. 41/2016. Complexes are to be established in all governorates in order to create a sophisticated infrastructure that is complementary to the legal system. Court complexes serve as a model for implementation of the Sultanate's policies aimed at moving towards an e-government system in order to facilitate access to details of legal proceedings and judgments for users of judicial facilities, be they judges, lawyers or litigants.

42. The Sultanate's judicial system is composed of the following two types of judiciary:

(a) The ordinary judiciary: This comprises the ordinary courts at the various levels, which are divided into courts of first instance and appeal and the Supreme Court. This type of judicial authority is governed by the provisions of the Judiciary Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 90/99, the Code of Civil and Commercial Procedure promulgated by Royal Decree No. 29/2002, and the Code of Criminal Procedure promulgated by Royal Decree No. 97/99. These courts are competent to hear various kinds of cases, including civil, commercial, criminal, labour and personal status cases, the exception being administrative cases falling within the jurisdiction of the Administrative Court. It should be noted in this connection that the State Security Court was abolished pursuant to Royal Decree No. 102/2010, the upshot of which is that cases previously within its jurisdiction are now referred to the competent ordinary court.

(b) The administrative judiciary: Article 67 of the Basic Law of the State stipulates that: "The law shall regulate adjudication in administrative disputes through a special department or court whose organization and procedures for administrative jurisdiction shall be prescribed by law." Accordingly, the Administrative Court, which was established pursuant to Royal Decree No. 91/99, is competent to hear administrative disputes involving complaints by the parties concerned about decisions and actions taken by units of the State's administrative apparatus. The Administrative Court Act was amended pursuant to the provisions of Royal Decree No. 3/2009 in order to extend the Court's jurisdiction for oversight of the administrative activities undertaken by the units of the State's administrative apparatus.

43. The Public Prosecution Service is recognized as one of the State's judicial authorities and is mandated to conduct criminal proceedings on behalf of society. It oversees criminal investigations, the implementation of criminal law, the prosecution of offenders and the enforcement of judgments, in accordance with article 64 of the Basic Law of the State.

44. The Public Prosecution Service proceeded through several flexible and positive transitional phases towards full independence, which it achieved on 28 February 2011 pursuant to Royal Decree No. 25/2011. Article 1 of the Decree stipulates that: "The Public Prosecution Service shall be both administratively and financially independent." The

organizational structure of the Public Prosecution Service was approved by Royal Decree No. 50/2012.

45. With a view to guaranteeing access to litigation for society as a whole, the geographical locations of the Public Prosecution Service in the Sultanate's governorates and provinces were expanded. By mid-2018 there were 12 general directorates, 45 general departments and 14 specialized departments. The Public Prosecution Service has also launched an electronic system that links it to other competent authorities, such as police stations and the judiciary, and enables individuals to submit communications electronically without any need to travel.

46. The jurisdiction of military courts is confined, save in cases where martial law is imposed, to military offences committed by members of the armed and security forces, as stipulated in article 62 of the Basic Law of the State. The Military Code of Justice was promulgated by Royal Decree No. 110/2011 and some of its provisions were amended by Royal Decree No. 16/2018. It covers war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity, and offences against prisoners of war or wounded persons, and stipulates that such offences shall not be subject to a statute of limitations. These provisions are consistent with relevant international humanitarian law instruments.

47. In accordance with article 28 of the Basic Law of the State, none of the Sultanate's religious laws discriminate against non-Muslims. Article 269 of the Criminal Code promulgated by Royal Decree No. 7/2018 criminalizes offences committed against any of the revealed religions.

The electoral system

48. The principle of consultation (*shura*) is enshrined in article 9 of the Basic Law of the State, which stipulates that: "Governance in the Sultanate shall be based on justice, consultation and equality. Citizens shall have the right to participate in public affairs." Article 10 enshrines the basic principles underlying the Sultanate's policies, which include the establishment of appropriate foundations for consolidating the pillars of genuine consultation (*shura*) emanating from the nation's heritage and values and the Islamic sharia. Accordingly, the Shura Council was established on 12 November 1991 pursuant to Royal Decree No. 94/91. It is vested with a legal personality and enjoys financial and administrative independence. Its headquarters is based in Muscat Governorate. The Shura Council entered a new phase of national action when the Council of Oman, which is composed of the State Council and the Shura Council, was entrusted with additional key legislative powers pursuant to Royal Decree No. 99/2011.

49. The Shura Council Elections Act recognizes the right of every Omani to stand for election to the Shura Council and to participate in the election of its members, in accordance with the approved conditions. The Shura Council Elections Act was promulgated pursuant to Royal Decree No. 58/2013, and article 2 stipulates that: "Election is a personal right of each voter, which cannot be delegated. Each voter shall cast his or her vote once in each election in the province registered in the final list of voters." Article 23 stipulates that: "All citizens may apply for enrolment in the electoral register if they meet the following conditions:

1. They are at least 21 years old on 1 January of the year in which the elections take place, according to the information on their identity card;
2. They come from the province concerned or are resident therein;
3. They are not members of the security or military forces."

50. Article 5 of the Act provides for the establishment of the High Electoral Commission, which is chaired by a Vice-President of the Supreme Court. The Commission is composed of a Supreme Court judge, who replaces the Chair in his absence, an appeal court judge, an adviser to the Administrative Court of Justice, an Assistant Attorney General, and two staff members of the Ministry of the Interior. According to article 6 of the Act, the Commission is entrusted with the following mandate: supervision of the election of members of the Council; issuance of rulings on electoral appeals; monitoring of compliance with the decisions or circulars issued by the Main Electoral Committee concerning the organization of the electoral process; monitoring of the work of the electoral committees; notification of the Main Electoral Committee; and adoption of the final results of the vote.

The Main Electoral Committee is chaired by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of the Interior and is composed of representatives of competent authorities. The Minister of the Interior issues a decision nominating its members and rapporteur and specifying its rules of procedure, in accordance with article 12 of the Act.

51. Article 31 of the Act stipulates that any interested party shall be entitled to raise an objection to the names on the preliminary list of voters by submitting a request to the electoral committee within five days of the publication of the lists. The request must state the grounds for the objection and be accompanied by supporting documents. The committee must issue a decision on the objection within 10 days of the date following the expiry of the prescribed period.

52. Article 34 of the Act lays down the following conditions governing candidacy for membership of the Shura Council: candidates must be of Omani origin; they must be at least 30 years of age; they must have attained a level of education equivalent to the General Education Diploma; they must not have been convicted of a criminal offence or of an offence involving a breach of honour or trust, even if they have been rehabilitated; they must be enrolled in the electoral register; they should not have been declared legally incompetent by a judicial ruling; they should not be mentally ill; and they should not be associated with any military or security authority. Pursuant to article 64 of the Act, candidates are entitled to challenge the final results of elections by submitting a request to the High Electoral Commission.

53. According to the data for the eighth term of the Shura Council (2015–2018), 127,955 Omani men and 124,950 Omani women were entitled to cast their votes to elect 85 Shura members. A total of 590 candidates, including 20 women, competed for membership of the Shura Council on National Day in the Sultanate.

54. The Municipal Councils Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 116/2011 regulates the municipal council elections, which were launched in 2012 and are held every four years. Representatives of the provinces of the governorates and representatives of governmental bodies are elected. Each council is tasked with providing opinions and recommendations on the development of municipal systems and services and with performing other specific functions. The Implementing Regulations of the Municipal Councils Act were promulgated by Decree No. 15/2012, which regulates all other council affairs. The elections held in 2016 in the governorates of the Sultanate led to the election of 202 members, including 7 women.

Civil society associations

55. Article 33 of the Basic Law of the State guarantees the freedom to form associations. The Non-Governmental Organizations Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 14/2000 sets out the conditions and circumstances guaranteeing the right of persons to establish and institute non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are likewise guaranteed independence. It also empowers the Ministry of Social Development to supervise these organizations without it affecting their independence. The Act further guarantees the right of individuals to complain to the Administrative Court of Justice against Ministry decisions concerning NGOs and it confers on NGO management boards the right to administer these organizations in line with their statutes.

56. The Government has facilitated the procedures for registering and publicizing NGOs in order to encourage the growth of a civil society that plays an active role in development and human rights programmes. There are 32 professional associations in the Sultanate, as well as 6 branches at the governorate level, and 30 charitable NGOs. The number of Omani women's associations stood at 62 by the end of 2017 (of which 5 are affiliated to a number of associations). There were also 12 social clubs for foreign communities and 9 branches at the governorate level.

Justice and peace

57. The Sultanate has achieved stability in political and security terms and in the daily lives of its population. It has also achieved high levels of development, preserved its stability and achieved a high rank in terms of global safety indicators. According to a report issued by the World Economic Forum in April 2017, the Sultanate ranked fourth among the world's safest countries. The Sultanate also scored "zero" in the Global Terrorism Index,

which indicates the degree of security from terrorist threats. Safety in the Sultanate has been reinforced by many indicators of social safety, low crime rates and lack of terrorist threats. This stability has also been reflected in a number of indicators concerning the political and legal system. Annex 3 contains data concerning crimes and perpetrators in 2017.

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

A. Acceptance of international human rights norms

58. The Sultanate has taken steps to promote and protect human rights by participating in the discussion of certain human rights treaties and protocols at public United Nations meetings, by ratifying or acceding to many international human rights treaties and protocols, and by fulfilling its ensuing international obligations.

59. The Sultanate has taken steps to incorporate these rights into national legislation and to harmonize its legislation with the provisions of the conventions that it has ratified. It has diligently submitted periodic reports on implementation to the international treaty bodies and has taken on board their recommendations.

Accession to human rights treaties

60. By the end of 2017, the Sultanate had ratified or acceded to four of the core international human rights treaties, namely: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It also ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

61. In line with the recommendations concerning accession to a number of international human rights treaties that were accepted by the Sultanate when its national human rights reports were discussed in 2011 and 2015 in the context of the universal periodic review, the Sultanate agreed, pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 24/2015 to institute legal procedures for accession to the following treaties:

- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

62. The following table shows the core treaties and protocols that have been ratified or acceded to by the Sultanate:

<i>Convention</i>	<i>Date of ratification or accession</i>	<i>Sultanate decrees</i>
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965	2 January 2003	Royal Decree No. 87/2002
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979	7 February 2006	Royal Decree No. 42/2005
Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989	Acceded on 9 December 1996	Royal Decrees No. 54/1996 and No. 99/1996
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006	Ratified on 17 March 2008	Royal Decree No. 121/2008

<i>Convention</i>	<i>Date of ratification or accession</i>	<i>Sultanate decrees</i>
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	Acceded on 17 September 2004	Royal Decree No. 41/2004

63. In addition to the core international treaties and protocols, the Sultanate has also ratified or acceded to other United Nations human rights treaties, and international and regional instruments associated with international and regional organizations and agencies. Annex 4 lists these instruments in accordance with Appendix 2 of the Guidelines.

(a) Amendments to treaties

64. With regard to the Sultanate's position on amendments to human rights treaties, the Sultanate ratified the amendment to article 43 (2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 21 December 1995, by Royal Decree No. 82/2002.

65. The amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was ratified by Royal Decree No. 3/2019.

(b) Reservations and declarations

66. The Sultanate entered five reservations to the Convention on the Rights of the Child when it acceded thereto pursuant to Royal Decree No. 54/96. However, it withdrew the reservations and retained just one partial reservation to article 14 of the Convention pursuant to Royal Decree No. 86/2011.

67. The Sultanate entered five reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In accordance with the Sultanate's undertakings during the discussion of its universal periodic review reports in 2011 and 2015, and in line with observation 15 and recommendation 16 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the Sultanate's initial report, and with observation 9 and recommendation 10 on its combined second and third periodic reports, the Sultanate withdrew its reservation to article 15 (4) pursuant to Royal Decree No. 3/2019 of 7 January 2019.

(c) Exceptions, restrictions or limits

68. The Sultanate has not made any declarations or applied any exceptions, restrictions or limits to the international treaties that it has ratified or to which it has acceded.

B. Legal framework for the protection of human rights at the national level

Legal position on international treaties

69. The Sultanate's legal position on the international treaties that it has ratified is based on articles 72, 76 and 80 of the Basic Law of the State, since they are deemed to form part of the State's legislation that is currently in force and acquire the force of law upon ratification or accession. The Basic Law of the State accords priority to the implementation of treaties and agreements concluded by the Sultanate prior to its promulgation in 1996. Thus, article 72 of the Basic Law of the State stipulates that: "The application of this Basic Law shall not prejudice treaties and agreements concluded by the Sultanate of Oman with other countries, international institutions and organizations." The Omani legislature endorsed this position when it provided for the effective and imperative protection of human rights in the Basic Law of the State, as confirmed by national legislation, each in its own right. It is also enshrined, as appropriate, in national legislation.

Protection of human rights in the Basic Law of the State

70. The Basic Law of the State is the overarching framework for the protection of human rights in the Sultanate and contains regulations governing different categories of rights in the social, economic, educational and other fields. The regulations enshrined in the Basic Law constitute the first and last resort for rights holders and are invariably invoked in judicial rulings concerning the rights in question.

71. The Basic Law of the State contains many articles that guarantee the rights and freedoms of members of Omani society and they are highlighted in a number of chapters and articles. Chapter I specifies the principles guiding the State's policy, and article 10 concerning political principles highlights equality and justice as a general rule governing State policy: "Establishment of a sound administrative system that guarantees justice, tranquillity and equality for citizens, and guarantees respect for public order and preservation of the supreme interests of the nation."

72. Article 12 of the Basic Law of the State concerning social principles recognizes the right to equality and justice as the basis for social interaction, and stipulates that justice, equality, and equality of opportunity among Omanis are pillars of the society and are guaranteed by the State: "Public office is a national service entrusted to those who carry it out, and State employees, in performing their functions, shall pursue the public interest and seek to serve society. Citizens are considered equal in taking up public employment, in accordance with the conditions prescribed by law."

73. The social principles include a number of rights, such as the right to health and a clean environment, and the right to receive support and assistance, as specified in the following provisions: "The State is responsible for public health and means of preventing and treating diseases and epidemics. It shall pursue the delivery of health care to every citizen and promote the establishment of private hospitals, clinics and therapy centres operating under its supervision and in accordance with the rules prescribed by law. The State shall also take action to preserve and protect the environment and to prevent pollution." In addition: "The State shall guarantee aid for citizens and their families in cases of emergency, illness, disability and old age, in accordance with the social security system, and it shall promote social solidarity in bearing the burdens resulting from national disasters and catastrophes."

74. The social principles also guarantee the right to work. Paragraphs 6 and 7 stipulate that: "The State shall enact laws protecting workers and employers and regulating the relationship between them. All citizens have the right to engage in the work of their choice within the limits of the law. No compulsory labour may be imposed on anyone other than pursuant to a law, for the performance of a public service and for fair remuneration." "Citizens are considered equal in taking up public employment, in accordance with the conditions prescribed by law."

75. In view of the key role played by the family in the proper upbringing of children, in guaranteeing respect for women's rights, and in promoting human rights, peace and social solidarity, article 12 stipulates that: "The family is the basis of society and the law shall regulate the means for protecting it, preserving its legal integrity, fostering its ties and values, caring for its individual members and creating appropriate conditions for the development of their aptitudes and abilities."

76. The constitutional legislature attached importance to the right to education, stipulating in article 13 of the Basic Law of the State that: "Education is the cornerstone for the progress of society and is fostered by the State, which strives to disseminate it and make it accessible to all." It also stipulates that: "Education is aimed at raising and developing the overall cultural standard, promoting scientific thought, kindling the spirit of enquiry, meeting the requirements of economic and social plans, and creating a generation strong in body and moral fibre that takes pride in its country and heritage and preserves its achievements." Furthermore: "The State shall provide public education, seek to eradicate illiteracy and encourage the establishment of private schools and institutes operating under its supervision and in accordance with the law."

77. The Basic Law of the State attaches special importance to public rights and duties. Article 17 stipulates that: "All citizens are equal before the law and share the same public

rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination between them on the grounds of gender, origin, colour, language, religion, sect, domicile or social status.”

78. With a view to protecting rights and freedoms, article 18 of the Basic Law of the State stipulates that personal freedom is guaranteed, and that it is prohibited to arrest, search, detain or imprison any person or restrict his or her choice of residence or movement, save in accordance with the law. Article 20 prohibits all forms of physical or psychological torture.

79. Article 25 of the Basic Law of the State guarantees the right of litigation for all. It stipulates that: “The right to litigation is a protected right guaranteed to all persons. The law shall prescribe the procedures and circumstances necessary for the exercise of this right and the State shall guarantee, as far as possible, the proximity of judicial authorities to litigants and the prompt settlement of cases.”

80. The Basic Law affirms this right, providing in article 60 for the independence of the judiciary and the different types and levels of courts, and in article 61 for the independence of judges themselves and for their irremovability. It also prohibits any authority from interfering by any means in affairs of justice and considers such interference to be an offence punishable by law.

81. The Basic Law also prohibits all violations of human dignity and guarantees the effective protection of the right of privacy. Thus, article 27 stipulates that: “Homes shall be inviolable and may not be entered without the permission of the occupants, save as prescribed by law.”

82. Article 29 of the Basic Law of the State provides for freedom of opinion and expression, in spoken, written or other forms, within the limits prescribed by law. Article 30 also protects the freedom of postal correspondence, telegrams, telephone conversations and other means of communication, guarantees their confidentiality and prohibits their censorship, inspection, disclosure, delay or confiscation, save as prescribed by law. Article 31 provides for freedom of the press, printing and publication, which is not restricted unless it leads to public discord, undermines State security, offends people’s dignity or violates their rights.

83. Article 33 of the Basic Law of the State stipulates that: “The freedom to form associations on a national basis for legitimate purposes, by peaceful means, and in a manner that does not conflict with the provisions and objectives of this Basic Law is guaranteed in accordance with the terms and conditions prescribed by law. It is prohibited to form associations whose activities undermine public order or which are secretive or of a military nature. Nobody may be compelled to join any association.” It should be noted that a number of human rights organizations have been involved in preparing national periodic reports concerning international treaties and in the interactive dialogue with international treaty bodies to discuss the reports, for instance the Associations of Omani Women, the Omani Association for Persons with Disabilities, the Child First Association, the Association for the Care of Children with Disabilities, the Omani Society for Writers and Literati, and the Lawyers Association.

84. Article 35 stipulates that: “Every foreigner who is legally present in the Sultanate shall enjoy personal protection and protection of his or her property in accordance with the law.”

Protection of human rights in national legislation

85. With a view to implementing all the constitutional principles and regulations concerning human rights in the above-mentioned Basic Law of the State, the national legislature has enacted many domestic laws to guarantee their protection. The following are the most important laws, regulations and decisions pertaining to a number of rights:

The right to education

86. The State has paid great attention in its legislation to the education system, which is regulated by diverse laws, regulations and ministerial decisions.

87. Article 36 of the Children’s Act, which was promulgated by Royal Decree No. 22/2014, guarantees children’s right to free and compulsory education in government

schools until the completion of post-basic education. The Act also requires guardians to enrol children, to ensure that they attend school and to prevent them from dropping out. Article 38 sets out the goals to be achieved on behalf of children at the various levels of education, in particular full development of children's potential in terms of their personality, talents and mental and physical abilities, bearing in mind the compatibility of educational curricula with the child's dignity and the need to enhance their sense of personal value.

88. With regard to literacy, the Ministry of Education runs adult education centres covering grades 7 to 12 for persons who have completed three years of literacy education or persons who dropped out of formal schooling and are literate. With a view to encouraging detainees to continue their education, article 22 of the Prisons Act, which was promulgated by Royal Decree No. 48/98, stipulates that education shall be compulsory for detainees. Article 26 of the Act stipulates that detainees shall be granted a reward, as an incentive, if they obtain a general, university or high-level certificate.

89. With a view to integrating juvenile delinquents into society, article 26 of the Juvenile Accountability Act, which was promulgated by Royal Decree No. 30/2008, stipulates that the Department of Juvenile Affairs shall take the requisite action to assist juveniles who have served their sentence in reintegrating into society and surmounting the difficulties they may face in adjusting to their new circumstances. The measures to prevent juveniles from reoffending include assistance to juveniles in utilizing appropriate opportunities to complete their training and education and in generating an income.

90. In addition to educational laws and policies, a number of ministerial regulations and decisions governing education have been adopted. They include the following:

- A booklet on the philosophy of education in the Sultanate, which was issued in May 2017 and identifies the main sources, principles and general objectives of education in the Sultanate. It serves as a reference document for the development of educational policies and a stimulus for the continuous improvement of all kinds and levels of education;
- Regulations governing student affairs in government schools, which were issued by Ministerial Decision No. 234/2017 of the Ministry of Education, and which include a number of measures aimed at guaranteeing students' rights, including protection against corporal punishment;
- Regulations governing the recognition of non-Omani higher education institutions and procedures for aligning the academic qualifications that they grant, which were issued by Ministerial Decision No. 21/2015 of the Ministry of Higher Education. The Decree provided for the establishment of a committee tasked with recognizing and abolishing higher education institutions in accordance with the Regulations, aligning the academic qualifications granted and performing other functions. The Regulations specify the principles for recognition and alignment of the academic qualifications granted by the institutions, thereby providing educational opportunities for a wide range of students;
- Regulations governing private schools, which were issued by Ministerial Decision No. 287/2017 and which include a set of student rights aimed at guaranteeing their safety, security and health.

The right to health

91. Royal Decree No. 36/2014 specifies the fields of competence of the Ministry of Health and its organizational structure. In addition, the following ministerial decisions were adopted:

- Ministerial Decision No. 142/2014 amending the Regulations governing the Compensation Fund for Medical Errors;
- Ministerial Decision No. 120/2015 issued by the Ministry of Health on the regulations governing private health institutions for the treatment and rehabilitation of patients addicted to drugs and psychotropic substances;

- Ministerial Decision No. 135/2015 on regulations governing treatment abroad, which lists a number of rights aimed at guaranteeing treatment for various social groups outside the Sultanate and regulates treatment at the State's expense;
- Ministerial Decision No. 29/2016 issued by the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, which lists health requirements for public health-related activities.

The right to work

92. The Civil Service Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 120/2004, confers equal rights and duties on all persons occupying public positions, whether Omani or non-Omani and whether male or female. The Act also regulates the relationship between public employees and their administrative units and guarantees job stability and a decent life for employees and their family members in the form of a minimum living wage. It contains several additional basic guarantees relating to employees' career path and the nature of their working environment.

93. The Omani Labour Code promulgated by Royal Decree No. 35/2003 contains all rules governing the right to work, starting with the conclusion of a contract between the worker and the employer, and the effects thereof. It stipulates that an employee's basic working hours should not exceed nine hours per day, that basic working hours plus overtime should not exceed 12 hours per day, and that basic working hours per week should not exceed 45 hours. Working hours must also be interspersed with one break or more of at least 30 minutes for food and rest, and work periods without a break should not continue for more than six hours. The Code also guarantees workers' right to additional pay or leave for overtime work. In addition, the Labour Code entitles workers to a weekly rest period of not less than two consecutive days after five continuous working days, to fully paid annual leave of not less than 30 days, and to fully paid emergency leave of six days per year to deal with any emergency situation that may arise, in accordance with article 61 of Act and Ministerial Decision No. 657/2011 regulating emergency leave.

94. The Omani Labour Code guarantees equality for men and women in terms of the right to work and related matters such as wages and other financial benefits. Given women's status and their social role in the family, they were granted many benefits by the legislature under the Labour Code. In particular, they may not be required to work between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. save in cases and for types of work specified by a decision of the Minister of Manpower. Moreover, women may not be employed in jobs that are detrimental to health, morally damaging or physically demanding or in other jobs specified in a decision by the Minister. Ministerial Decision No. 128/2005, as amended by Ministerial Decision No. 580/2010 and Ministerial Decision No. 656/2011, specifies the cases, jobs and circumstances in which women may be employed at night and the conditions governing their employment. It also requires employers to guarantee comprehensive protection, care, transport and security for working women.

95. The Labour Code guarantees the protection of women from arbitrary dismissal on grounds of illness, pregnancy or childbearing. In addition, Ministerial Decision No. 4/2011 issued by the Ministry of Trade and Industry permits certain types of individual productive work to be performed at home, thereby offering Omani women the opportunity to conduct the business activities specified in the Decree in their homes.

96. With a view to providing workers with the necessary protection and safety, the Regulations governing occupational safety and health measures in establishments subject to the Labour Code issued by Ministerial Decision No. 286/2008, as amended, prohibited the employment of workers in construction sites or outdoor locations during intense midday heat, specifically between 12.30 p.m. and 3.30 p.m. during the months of June, July and August of each year. The prohibition was subsequently amended to permit limited exceptions based on the aforementioned conditions.

97. The Labour Code was amended in 2006 pursuant to Royal Decree No. 74/2006 in order to offer persons working in private enterprises the opportunity to establish trade unions and workers' federations, in accordance with international labour standards. Members of these trade unions and workers' federations enjoy the required degree of independence and protection. Workers in the Sultanate of Oman may also exercise the right to take part in strikes and collective bargaining, in accordance with the provisions of the

law. As a result, 256 trade unions and 5 workers' federations had been registered and proclaimed in the Sultanate by July 2018. The establishment of the General Federation of Trade Unions of the Sultanate of Oman was also proclaimed at its Founding Congress on 10 February 2010.

98. The Labour Code was amended in 2009 pursuant to Royal Decree No. 63/2009 in order to align it with the Trafficking in Persons Act and curtail practices falling within the scope of a human trafficking offence, such as forced labour. The amendment introduced tougher penalties for offenders and tighter regulations governing the employment and recruitment of expatriate workers in the Sultanate, in conformity with the general provisions set forth in the Trafficking in Persons Act No. 126/2008.

99. In the area of ministerial decrees, the Ministry of Manpower issued Ministerial Decision No. 189/2004, which was amended by the Regulations governing the recruitment of non-Omani workers contained in Ministerial Decision No. 1/2011, as amended. They specify the rules and conditions governing their employment, including: the regulations applicable to their recruitment permits, employment contracts, medical examinations and employment cards; the obligation of employers to pay their monthly wages, provide appropriate food, housing and medical care, supply travel tickets, and determine their duties; and the mechanism for the settlement of disputes that might arise between workers and employers so as to protect their rights in accordance with the general rules of the Labour Code.

100. The Ministry of Manpower issued Ministerial Decision No. 294/2006, as amended, which regulates collective bargaining, peaceful strike action and closures. The Decision permits workers to engage in collective bargaining with their employer in order to improve their working conditions, and specifies the procedures for exercising their right to strike and securing their rights. The Decree also entitles workers to obtain their rights in the event of the closure or bankruptcy of an enterprise.

101. The legislature did not overlook certain rights of foreign workers. The rights and duties specified in the Labour Code do not discriminate between the national and non-national workforce. Article 4 stipulates that: "The provisions of this Code are applicable to all employers and employees." It also stipulates that any condition that contravenes the Code shall be deemed invalid. However, Ministerial Decision No. 222/2013 established a minimum wage that was applicable only to Omani workers, and Ministerial Decision No. 541/2013 established a minimum periodic wage increase for national workers in the private sector. The wage and periodic increase for non-Omani workers are specified in the employment contract (the agreement between the worker and the employer) or in the internal regulations of the enterprise. In the event of a dispute, the worker is given priority. Article 23 stipulates that the employment contract shall include the basic wage and any allowances, benefits or bonuses to which the worker is entitled. In 2006 the Ministry of Manpower issued Circular No. 2/2006, which prohibits employers from withholding the passports of their workers except in accordance with a court judgement. With a view to facilitating the daily lives of the expatriate workforce and all residents as well as their families, the Omani authorities, represented by the General Department of Personal Status, started issuing residents' cards for use as proof of identity in all official transactions, which dispensed with the need to carry a passport.

102. Ministerial Decision No. 99/2010 established the Social Dialogue Committee, comprising representatives of the three parties involved in production (the Government, employers and workers). It was reconstituted by Ministerial Decision No. 72/2014 with a view to studying proposals that would contribute to the regulation of the labour market and would boost working relations between the parties involved in production. The Committee also studies developments in Arab and international labour standards in order to benefit from them in promoting social dialogue and enhancing working relations between the parties. It cooperates in directing the efforts of social partners in the labour market towards increasing production, strengthening competitiveness, and achieving balance and harmony between the interests of workers and employers in a manner designed to promote national efforts to achieve comprehensive sustainable development.

103. The Ministry of Manpower issued Ministerial Decision No. 294/2014 amending some provisions of Ministerial Decision No. 570/2012 concerning the regulations governing the formation, activities and registration of trade unions, workers' federations and the General Federation of Trade Unions of the Sultanate. The Decree replaced article 8

(1) by a provision entitling trade unions to represent their members and defend their interests before the judicial authorities.

104. Decision No. 10/2016 of the Minister of Manpower established a committee to investigate labour claims and specified its terms of reference to cover private-sector enterprises providing general or basic public services, oil companies, oil refineries, ports and airports. The committee is tasked with investigating labour claims, ruling on them and monitoring compliance with the procedure for implementing settlements. It may also request the Directorate General of Labour Welfare to conduct an inspection of the enterprise that is the target of the labour claims before launching proceedings to settle the dispute.

- Ministerial Decision No. 438/2013 also provided for the establishment of a committee to investigate labour claims in private-sector enterprises in order to facilitate negotiations between the parties to the collective labour dispute, and to record the agreement reached on a settlement to the dispute.

105. Ministerial Decision No. 241/2016 issued by the Ministry of Trade and Industry regulates the work of street vendors in order to protect their rights and guarantee consumers' health by ensuring that vendors comply with the health conditions established by the regulations.

106. Ministerial Decision No. 153/2018 amending Ministerial Decision No. 40/2017 issued by the Ministry of Manpower regulates short-time work in order to guarantee the workers' rights. This means, according to the definition in the Decision, that the normal working hours or working days in such cases are less than the legally prescribed hours and days.

- Ministerial Decision No. 32/2012 amending Ministerial Decision No. 541/2013 specified the minimum periodic wage increase for the national workforce and the procedures and conditions for its disbursement. Employees' service period should not have been less than six months and they should not have received a weak assessment in the annual job performance report.

107. Article 45 of the Children's Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 22/2014 prohibits the employment of children in activities or industries which, by their nature or the circumstances in which the work is conducted, are likely to be detrimental to their health or safety or to be morally damaging. Such activities and industries are determined by a decision of the Minister of Manpower taken following coordination with the competent authorities. Ministerial Decision No. 217/2016 regulating the employment of juveniles and the occupations in which they may be employed was issued in this context.

The right to social security and social assistance

108. In accordance with the provisions of article 14 of the Basic Law of the State and in the interests of social solidarity, the Social Security Act was promulgated pursuant to Royal Decree No. 87/1984. It establishes a monthly allowance for individuals and families who are without a source of income or whose provider is incapacitated. It also covers persons who do not benefit from the retirement system or whose retirement income is insufficient to meet the needs of all family members. Their entitlement is consequently topped up by social security. The groups benefiting from this system are orphans, widows, divorced women, families of prisoners, the incapacitated and persons with disabilities. When guaranteeing this protection for families with few resources, the legislature intended, among other things, to create an environment conducive to bringing up children in a manner that would be reflected in their education and health. Furthermore, in assessing the amount of benefits, the legislature took into consideration the number of family members, particularly minors under working age, including children.

109. Royal Decree No. 44/2013 promulgated the "Social security system for self-employed Omanis and persons of similar status", which supplements the insurance systems and programmes applicable under the social insurance system. Participation in the system is optional. It comprises insurance against the risks of old age, disability and death contained in the Social Insurance Act, but it does not include insurance against work-related injuries and occupational diseases. The system is designed to expand insurance coverage to include

all segments of society, and to provide occupational and professional stability for workers outside the regulated private sector.

110. With a view to enhancing social solidarity, the Social Housing Act was promulgated by Royal Decree No. 37/2010. Housing units, housing assistance or housing loans may be obtained under the Act. A special committee in the Ministry of Housing studies each case and determines whether it meets the conditions for persons with limited income specified in the implementing regulations of the Act.

111. Ministerial Decision No. 72/2014 issued by the Ministry of Social Development contains the Regulations governing social assistance, which is provided, for instance, under exceptional climatic circumstances such as tempests and heavy rainfall. Emergency assistance is provided when people are exposed to unforeseen social or living conditions that could prove harmful, and special assistance is provided in social security and similar cases. For instance, electricity and water is supplied where necessary and assistance is provided to persons who are ill, especially those suffering from renal failure.

112. Ministerial Decision No. 19/2016 amended certain provisions of the Regulations governing prosthetic devices and assistive equipment promulgated by Ministerial Decision No. 254/2014 concerning disbursements for prosthetic devices and means of life support, especially for persons with disabilities, older persons and persons who are ill.

113. Ministerial Decision No. 140/2016 issued by the Ministry of Social Development contains the Regulations governing the work of social development committees. The committees, whose work covers all governorates of the Sultanate, are required to propose and study social projects, to support voluntary social work and the relevant institutions, to raise public awareness, to promote a spirit of social work in the areas of disability and childhood and active citizen participation in meeting the needs of these groups, and to eliminate problems and specific social phenomena.

114. Ministerial Decision No. 95/2018 issued by the Ministry of Social Development contains the Regulations governing the social solidarity account, the purpose of which is to create a bank account for the payment of alimony, to support services for persons with disabilities and older persons, and to support civil society organizations. The account is designed to provide financial support for beneficiaries, to foster a spirit of social solidarity and interdependence among the general public, and to enhance the private sector's role in the framework of community responsibility.

The right to litigate

115. With regard to the right to litigate, which is guaranteed by the Basic Law of the State, the Omani legislature promulgated Royal Decree No. 29/2002 under the Code of Civil and Commercial Procedure, which specifies the limits, scope and procedures for exercising the right to litigate, judicial bodies, levels of litigation, judgments, appeal procedures and enforcement of judgments.

116. Procedures for litigation in criminal proceedings are regulated by the Code of Criminal Procedure, which was promulgated by Royal Decree No. 97/99. They include provisions concerning the right to submit a communication to the legally concerned parties, proceedings before the Public Prosecution Service, criminal justice, the powers of law enforcement officers, defendants' guarantees, including their rights during interrogation, arrest and search procedures, public hearings and imprisonment, their right to appeal against criminal sentences, and the conditions governing a general and special amnesty.

117. The Sultanate signed a regional agreement, the Riyadh Agreement on Judicial Cooperation, as well as bilateral legal agreements with a number of countries (Turkey, Morocco and India) with a view to codifying and regulating legal procedures between State law enforcement agencies in the area of civil, commercial, criminal and personal status litigation in order to guarantee the rights of litigants, such as legal aid, judicial notices, extradition of defendants and enforcement of judgments.

118. With regard to judicial, administrative and other bodies whose mandates include human rights issues, reference has already been made to the judiciary, the Public Prosecution Service, the National Human Rights Commission, the National Commission to Combat Human Trafficking and the Labour Grievances Committee.

119. The provisions of human rights instruments may be invoked before judicial and administrative courts, since they form part of domestic law pursuant to the Basic Law of the State.

C. Framework for the promotion of human rights at the national level

(a) Parliamentary bodies and national human rights institutions

120. In conjunction with its efforts to establish constitutional and legislative human rights norms, the State has established a number of national institutions tasked with safeguarding all human rights. The most important of these institutions are the Council of Oman, municipal councils, the National Human Rights Commission, the National Commission to Combat Human Trafficking, the National Committee on Family Affairs, the National Committee on Follow-up of the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the National Committee on Follow-up of the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the National Committee for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities, media institutions, civil society organizations, the high Electoral Commission, and the State's administrative and financial oversight body.

Council of Oman

121. The bicameral Council of Oman, composed of the State Council and the Shura Council, is vested with broad legislative and oversight powers consisting in the enactment of laws, monitoring of the performance of the executive, and the expression of opinions on international conventions, which added new dimensions to the political rights of Omanis and their participation in comprehensive development in line with the requirements of aspired development goals. The legislature also plays an important role in monitoring the implementation of international human rights treaties.

Municipal councils

122. The functions of the elected municipal councils are closely linked with human rights inasmuch as the councils issue views and recommendations concerning the development of municipal systems and services within the governorates, particularly in relation to public health, protection of the environment from pollution, water projects, roads, parks, schools, housing, places of worship, maternity, childhood, and other public services for citizens.

National Human Rights Commission

123. The National Human Rights Commission was established in 2008 pursuant to Royal Decree No. 124/2008 as a national institution mandated to draw national and international attention to the human rights of Omanis and of residents in the Sultanate. It seeks to promote a culture of human rights throughout the country. The Commission was established in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). The Decree specifies the Commission's regulations, its terms of reference and its members, who represent the State Council, the Shura Council, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the General Federation of the Sultanate of Oman. Its membership also comprises a member of the legal community, three members of civil society institutions, and one member from each of the following ministries, which play a role in the area of human rights: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Manpower and the Ministry of the Civil Service.

124. The Commission monitors the protection of human rights and freedoms in the Sultanate, in accordance with the Basic Law of the Sultanate and international conventions and agreements, reviews observations on the human rights record of the Sultanate of Oman made by other governments, international organizations and NGOs, and coordinates with the competent authorities in verifying them and taking the requisite action. It also monitors any human rights violations or abuses in the State and helps to address and resolve them, and receives communications from individuals seeking protection of their rights and freedoms, and endeavours to oversee their resolution.

125. The Commission monitors, together with governmental and non-governmental bodies, the implementation of international treaties ratified by the Sultanate. It participates in the preparation of periodic human rights reports and their discussion in the relevant international and regional committees. In the interests of transparency and awareness-raising, the Commission has published annual reports since its establishment on the human rights situation in the Sultanate. The report reviews progress made through measures and procedures in the area of human rights and freedoms in the Sultanate and achievements in respect of communications received and challenges to the rights of certain individuals.

The National Commission to Combat Human Trafficking

126. As part of the Sultanate's efforts to combat the growing global phenomenon of human trafficking, the Human Trafficking Act was promulgated pursuant to Royal Decree No. 126/2008 and the National Commission to Combat Human Trafficking, which is chaired by the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was established pursuant to a Council of Ministers decision issued in 2009, in accordance with article 21 of the Human Trafficking Act. The Committee includes members of various governmental and non-governmental bodies and is responsible for submitting a regular report to the Council of Ministers on national efforts to combat human trafficking. In addition, the Public Prosecution Service established a special department on 1 November 2017, pursuant to Decision No. 50/2017, to investigate and prosecute cases of human trafficking.

127. Human trafficking victims benefit from free medical and legal care, access to shelters, and legal and social assistance. A dedicated shelter for such victims has been established, and the public has been made increasingly aware of the human trafficking issue through radio and television programmes and articles in the press. The Royal Oman Police and other authorities help in providing information, advice and support through free hotlines for victims, who are permitted to remain in Oman until the completion of all legal proceedings, if they so wish. The Commission cooperates closely with the National Human Rights Commission. The Sultanate has achieved considerable progress in its efforts to combat human trafficking.

128. The Commission prepared a national plan and elaborated procedures for providing assistance to trafficking victims. This action consists in helping to identify offenders and bring them to trial, for which purpose a special division was established at the Muscat Court of Appeal. The plan also focuses on the development of mechanisms for cooperation between the relevant authorities in the public and private sectors.

The National Committee on Family Affairs

129. The National Committee on Family Affairs was established pursuant to Royal Decree No. 12/2007 and is composed of members of various governmental bodies, such as the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, and members of the Public Prosecution Service and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Committee's numerous functions include: coordination with official bodies and voluntary entities working in the area of family affairs; cooperation with Arab and international family-related committees, councils and organizations; submission of proposals for general family welfare policies and programmes in diverse social, health-care and cultural areas, and monitoring of their implementation in coordination with the competent authorities; encouragement of family studies and research; monitoring and implementation of resolutions and recommendations adopted at international and regional meetings and conferences on family issues; and expression of opinions on relevant international and regional conventions. An independent technical secretariat of the National Committee on Family Affairs was established pursuant to Ministerial Decision No. 300/2012.

National Committee to Monitor the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

130. The National Committee to Monitor the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was established pursuant to Ministerial Decision No. 56/2009, as amended by Ministerial Decision 127/2014. Its members include representatives of various governmental bodies responsible for children's rights, such as the State Council, the Royal Oman Police, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Social Development, the

Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Information, Sultan Qaboos University, the National Human Rights Commission, and the National Centre for Statistics and Information. Its members also include representatives of civil society, such as the Children First Association, the Association for the Care of Children with Disabilities, and the Early Intervention Association. The Committee performs a variety of functions such as: submission of proposals to implement the principles of the Convention; establishment of the mechanisms and programmes required to guarantee comprehensive protection for all children; participation in the development and implementation of child-related programmes; preparation of national periodic reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and monitoring of the implementation of the concluding observations and recommendations of the international Committee on the Rights of the Child.

National Committee to Monitor the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

131. The Committee was established pursuant to Ministerial Decision No. 348/2005. Its membership comprises representatives of the State Council, the Shura Council, the Council of Administrative Affairs of the Judiciary, the Public Prosecution Service, the Supreme Council for Planning, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Legal Affairs, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Civil Service, the Ministry of Manpower, the Ministry of Information, the National Centre for Statistics and Information, Sultan Qaboos University, the Women's Committee of the General Federation of Omani Trade Unions, and the National Human Rights Commission. Its membership also includes representatives of civil society institutions, including Omani women's associations, the Omani Association for Persons with Disabilities, the Lawyers Society and the Omani Society for Writers and Literati. Its functions include monitoring of the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and preparation of periodic reports on its implementation.

National Committee for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities

132. The Act on the Care and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities promulgated by Royal Decree No. 63/2008 provided for the establishment of a National Committee for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities to be chaired by the Minister of Social Development and composed of representatives of relevant government agencies, the private sector, rehabilitation centres and persons with disabilities. The Act mandates the Committee to provide rehabilitation equipment and prosthetic devices for persons with disabilities. The Act also guarantees that the Committee is fully able to perform its tasks and functions through the allocation of financial resources from the State Treasury. Ministerial Decision No. 179/2014 established the Committee, which is chaired by the Minister of Social Development and is composed of under-secretary level representatives of several governmental bodies as well as representatives of private-sector bodies and civil society institutions associated with persons with disabilities. The Committee is tasked with studying and preparing the general plan for the welfare and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, and with developing programmes for their care, rehabilitation, training and advancement. In 2015 Ministerial Decree No. 193/2015 established the Technical Committee for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities, chaired by the Director-General of the Directorate General for Persons with Disabilities. It is composed of representatives, at director-general or managerial level, of various ministries responsible for civil and military affairs, and representatives of the private sector and civil society organizations associated with persons with disabilities.

Working Group to Monitor the Implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

133. A national Working Group was established to monitor the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination pursuant to a decision by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs based on instructions from the Council of Ministers. The current Working Group is chaired by the Vice-President of the

Supreme Court and is composed of representatives of ministries and civil society institutions that deal with human rights issues. It includes representatives of the Public Prosecution Service, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Legal Affairs, the Ministry of Manpower, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, the National Human Rights Commission, the Ministry of the Interior, the Supreme Council for Planning and the Council of Administrative Affairs for the Judiciary. The Working Group is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Convention, preparing the periodic reports required by the Convention, discussing the reports before the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and monitoring the implementation of the Committee's concluding observations and recommendations. The Working Group presents the recommendations and measures required to comply with the provisions of the Convention.

(b) Dissemination and raising awareness of human rights instruments

134. As already noted, decrees ratifying international legal instruments are published in the *Official Gazette* and the instruments then form part of domestic legislation. The Government decided, as from 2011, to publish all ratified instruments in the *Official Gazette* instead of merely publishing the ratification decree. The substance of these conventions and protocols is discussed in various mass and social media, and the ministries that deal with human rights issues or the ministries tasked with monitoring the implementation of specific treaties publish the conventions and protocols on their official websites. They also issue printed versions in both Arabic and English and disseminate them to various bodies. International, regional and national human rights days are celebrated. Compliance with the conventions and protocols is monitored by the competent committees in coordination with diverse media, civil society organizations and relevant international organizations by holding a series of seminars and workshops to raise awareness and to familiarize people with the terms of the instruments.

135. The competent authorities monitor the implementation of the treaties together with responsible staff and other professionals in order to maintain adequate oversight. Diverse human rights training courses are also provided for officials and specialists, such as government personnel in ministries and judicial institutions, prosecutors, lawyers, members of the armed forces, teachers, physicians, and health-care and social workers.

136. Human rights awareness has been incorporated into school curricula, particularly the goals of respect for and promotion of human rights, tolerance and gender equality. The Ministry of Education produced a document aimed at incorporating human rights concepts and education for peace into curricula at all levels, and at incorporating human and children's rights concepts, values and principles into the curricula for grades 1 to 12. The Sultanate thus guarantees the adoption of a human rights approach in education.

137. In May 2017, the Council for Education of the Sultanate adopted, with the approval of His Majesty the Sultan, a document on the philosophy of education, which serves as a reference document for the formulation of educational policies and is designed to ensure the continuous development of education at all levels and in all areas. The document identifies 10 key sources and foundations for education, including international treaties. It also specifies 16 principles underlying general educational goals and highlights, inter alia, education on human rights and duties, education for sustainable development and education for peace and mutual understanding.

138. The Sultanate uses the various media, such as the press, radio and television, and the Internet to promote, raise awareness of and disseminate information on human rights, including international instruments. Special training courses on human rights instruments are also organized for journalists and media professionals. These measures are supplemented by awareness-raising through other channels, including places of worship. The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs disseminates human rights concepts in places of worship by means of religious sermons and various religious events. In addition, it publishes a periodical that promotes interfaith dialogue and disseminates a culture of peace. The magazine, which was previously entitled "Tolerance", is now entitled "Mutual Understanding".

139. Many civil society organizations in the Sultanate of Oman contribute to the dissemination of a culture of human rights, especially concerning the rights of women,

children and persons with disabilities, and assistance for families in need and other groups protected by international treaties. They promote awareness of such issues and of international treaties of relevance to their work. A number of civil society organizations also participate in the preparation of national periodic reports and in monitoring compliance with international treaty bodies' concluding observations and recommendations on the Sultanate's reports.

D. National reporting process

140. The State's legislative, executive and judicial authorities and civil society organizations participate in the process of national reporting on the Sultanate's compliance with obligations arising from the core human rights conventions to which it has acceded. The Sultanate has taken vigorous action to meet its obligations under the core human rights treaties, that is to say: the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two Optional Protocols thereto; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It has done so through its submission of national reports on legislative, executive, judicial and other measures taken to fulfil the obligations it has incurred under the treaties.

141. The Sultanate has endeavoured in this context to involve all relevant parties in the implementation of the treaties, including the National Human Rights Commission, NGOs, other civil society organizations and the State's legislative and executive authorities. The aim is to ensure that the reports meet credibility and transparency requirements so that the international committees mandated to oversee compliance with the treaties can identify the extent to which the Sultanate has implemented their provisions.

142. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in coordination with the competent authorities, monitors the implementation of human rights agreements on the preparation and review of comprehensive periodic reports and of periodic reports on international treaties. It also monitors regulatory procedures with the competent international committees and participates through its representatives in the preparation and discussion of reports.

143. The Sultanate established a committee of competent bodies to monitor the implementation of human rights treaties, to submit periodic reports and, under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Development, to submit the first common core document. It was submitted on 11 April 2013 and reviewed the implementation of three international conventions and two optional protocols. The committee includes representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Legal Affairs, the Ministry of Social Development, the State Council, the National Human Rights Commission and Sultan Qaboos University. A wider range of ministries and other bodies as well as representatives of civil society organizations were involved in preparing the current updated version of the document.

144. The parties involved in preparing periodic reports organize conferences, seminars or workshops to discuss and approve reports prior to their submission to the relevant international committees. It also publishes the reports in the media and on websites in both Arabic and English as well as the concluding observations and recommendations of the international committees on the Sultanate's reports.

145. The Sultanate pays special attention to the interactive dialogue and to the recommendations and concluding observations of the treaty bodies. The competent authorities submit the observations and recommendations to the Council of Ministers, which requests the ministries and competent authorities to study the observations and to implement the recommendations within a specific time frame. The competent authorities also monitor the implementation of the recommendations, and publish them as official documents and in various media outlets in order to raise awareness of their content among the general public.

146. In preparing comprehensive periodic reports on human rights treaties, the Sultanate has consistently complied with the guidelines issued by the competent treaty monitoring bodies. It also seeks to ensure transparency and clarity in reviewing the measures taken and identifying difficulties encountered in implementing treaty provisions.

147. In accordance with the functions and roles assigned to the Ministry of Social Development, the various committees tasked with oversight of the treaties prepare periodic reports on the rights of children, women and persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs supervises the preparation of reports by a working group on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

148. The Sultanate submitted its second national report for consideration under the universal periodic review of human rights in 2014. It was discussed on 5 November 2015 and adopted on 10 November 2015. The Sultanate accepted or partially accepted 169 of the recommendations and took note of 28 recommendations. It refrained from supporting 36 recommendations either because they were incompatible with Islamic law or with the Sultanate's laws and culture or because the recommendations were premature.

E. Other related human rights information

149. The Sustainable Development Goals served as a linchpin for the preparation of the Ninth Five-Year Plan (2016–2020). The Plan requires the Sultanate to keep abreast of developments in international development instruments, primarily the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 28 September 2015 and, in particular, Goal 8, which stresses the need “to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”. With a view to translating these principles into practice, the prime objective of the Plan is to promote the transition from an economy dependent on a single major resource, namely oil, to a diversified economy, in which other promising sectors alleviate the impact of external shocks resulting from price fluctuations in the global oil markets.

150. The Sultanate has established a national team to oversee the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is headed by the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and includes representatives of various ministries, civil society and the private sector. The parties concerned were instructed to give priority to the Sustainable Development Goals in the implementation of their five-year development plans. The Sultanate is a member of a number of regional committees that monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. It also participates in diverse international conferences, seminars and workshops aimed at reviewing progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and builds local capacity to achieve the Goals in practice. The National Centre for Statistics and Information prepares technical progress reports on the implementation of a number of Goals in cooperation with the relevant ministries.

151. Concurrently with the process of promoting the Sustainable Development Goals, a number of national strategies have been developed, such as the Social Action Strategy (2016–2025) of the Ministry of Social Development, the draft national strategy for children (2016–2025), the draft women's health strategy as part of the 2050 long-term plan for the Sultanate health-care system, the draft 2040 strategy for sustainable agriculture and rural development, and the draft 2040 national education strategy. The Sustainable Development Goals are incorporated in these strategies, plans and projects in accordance with their respective sectors, and the ministries and stakeholders are taking steps to implement the Goals within the framework of the five-year plans covering the period until 2030.

152. The National Centre for Statistics and Information, as the competent statistical authority in the Sultanate, compiles, submits and updates indicators concerning the Sustainable Development Goals on a regular basis. It provides data in cooperation and interaction with the producers, takes steps to calculate indicators stemming from different sources, and develops statistical models in order to find the most effective approaches or to estimate unavailable data.

153. The Sultanate is currently preparing the Oman Vision 2040, which will be based on three pillars. The “People and Society” pillar emphasizes that Omani citizens are the basis and goal of the comprehensive development process and highlights the importance of a vibrant society in which citizens enjoy the best possible living conditions and social welfare. The “Economy and Development” pillar highlights the priority of building a prosperous and diversified Omani economy, unleashing the potential of the economy, producing employment opportunities for citizens, and developing capacities among the various governorates of the Sultanate in order to achieve prosperity and development. The

“Governance and Institutional Performance” focuses on the need to promote principles of good governance and the rule of law in order to guarantee the efficient use of available resources and to improve the quality of service delivery. The first draft of the Oman Vision 2040 is expected to be released by the Supreme Council for Planning in late 2018.

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

A. Non-discrimination and equality

154. The issue of equality and non-discrimination of any kind has attracted the attention of the Sultanate’s executive, legislative and judicial authorities, as well as that of civil society institutions, and is enshrined in the Basic Law of the State, article 9 of which stipulates that: “Governance in the Sultanate shall be based on justice, consultation and equality, and citizens shall have the right to participate in public affairs.” Article 17 refers to the principles of equality and non-discrimination, stating that: “All citizens are equal before the law and share the same public rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination between them on the grounds of gender, origin, colour, language, religion, sect, domicile or social status.” Furthermore, article 35 stipulates that foreigners residing in the Sultanate shall enjoy legal protection of their person and property. All legislation is consistent with these articles. The Sultanate’s accession to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other human rights treaties that reaffirm the principles of non-discrimination and equality falls within this framework.

155. The Sultanate ensures that the legislation it enacts is consistent with the Basic Law of the State and is devoid of any discrimination based on the grounds cited in article 17. In this context, article 2 (b) of the Children’s Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 22/2014 guarantees the right to non-discrimination on the ground of colour, gender, origin, language, religion, social status or any other ground.

156. The guiding principles of the State’s policy in the political, economic, social, cultural and security spheres, as enshrined in the Basic Law of the State, guarantee non-discrimination in any way, shape or form. They also guarantee equal enjoyment of rights for all persons. As part of the Sultanate’s efforts to combat discrimination, laws have been enacted to criminalize any act of racial discrimination. Thus, the Criminal Code promulgated by Royal Decree No. 7/2018 criminalizes all forms of incitement to racial discrimination. Article 108 stipulates that: “Anyone who seeks to stir up religious or sectarian unrest or discord shall be liable to a term of imprisonment of not more than 10 years.” It may be concluded from this provision that the Sultanate’s laws criminalize all forms and manifestations of discrimination and impose deterrent penalties to prevent such offences from being perpetrated.

157. The Omani Labour Code and the Civil Service Code guarantee equal rights for women and men in terms of work and the ensuing consequences. Thus, women account for 41.5 per cent of the workforce in the public sector and 24 per cent of employees in the private sector. The number of women working at high, medium and basic levels of public administration has also increased by 21 per cent.

158. With regard to the education policy, the Sultanate has guaranteed implementation of the principles of equality and non-discrimination in both government-run and private schools by ensuring that educational rights are enjoyed by all, with no distinction between citizens and residents, who are also permitted to enrol in government-run schools. The curricula in the Sultanate contain many concepts relating to equality and non-discrimination on racial grounds and enshrine the principle of coexistence with persons of different nationalities. They include texts and photographs showing families of different nationalities engaged in joint activities in order to promote acceptance of other persons, regardless of nationality, and coexistence, regardless of looks and colour. The Sultanate has also adopted policies designed to promote gender equality in education. It has succeeded in increasing the school enrolment rate of girls to 50 per cent and their university enrolment rate to 55 per cent.

159. A number of scholarships have been awarded to women without competition from men. In addition, females accounted for 54 per cent of all admissions to higher education establishments within and outside the Sultanate in 2016, and an increase of 93 per cent was recorded in the number of female graduates from higher education establishments in 2016 compared with 2012. Furthermore, female graduates in 2016 accounted for 59.3 per cent of total graduates from higher education establishments.

160. The Sultanate provides health-care, educational and other services to all parts of the country, without making any distinction between rural and urban areas. Domestic legislation also guarantees the welfare of members of low-income groups such as divorcees, widows, persons with disabilities and others, who are granted allowances under the Social Security Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 87/84 in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth therein.

161. The Sultanate has promoted principles of equality and human rights through diverse media campaigns and by ensuring that such principles are incorporated in educational curricula. As a result, there is no evidence of any kind of prejudice against a specific population group. On the contrary, all inhabitants of the Sultanate live in a State that seeks to build a harmonious and cohesive society.

162. The Sultanate has taken a number of temporary measures aimed at promoting equality between men and women. For instance, it has provided support through the media for women candidates for election to the Shura Council and municipal councils, and has awarded a number of scholarships to women without competition from men. Omani women ran for election to the municipal councils in 2012 and four women were elected. In the second round of municipal council elections held in December 2016, seven women were elected. The percentage of women voters in the municipal council elections increased from 28.6 per cent in the first round to 46 per cent in the second round.

B. Effective remedies

163. The remedies available in the Sultanate include the right of individuals to seek redress from the competent court or from special committees such as the National Human Rights Commission. Recourse to the courts is a constitutional right guaranteed by the Basic Law of the State, article 25 of which stipulates that: "The right of legal recourse is a protected right guaranteed to all persons. The law shall prescribe the procedures and circumstances necessary for the exercise of this right and the State shall guarantee, as far as possible, the proximity of judicial authorities to litigants and the prompt settlement of cases." In addition, article 23 of the Basic Law of the State stipulates that: "Accused persons shall be entitled to appoint a person capable of defending them during the trial. The law shall specify the circumstances in which the presence of a lawyer on behalf of the accused is required and shall guarantee, on behalf of indigent persons, the means to seek legal redress and defend their rights." Victims whose rights have been violated are consequently able to institute legal proceedings before courts of all levels and types. The level and type of court is determined on the basis of the right that has been violated and the law governing that right.

164. All persons, whether citizens or residents, are guaranteed the right of litigation under domestic legislation and Omani law also enshrines the right to claim civil compensation. The Civil Transactions Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 29/2013 specifies the legal procedures to be followed by a civil plaintiff in order to claim damages. Victims are also entitled to claim civil compensation under article 20 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which stipulates that: "Anyone who has suffered direct personal injury as a result of a crime may file a civil suit as a plaintiff before the court hearing the public proceedings in any case, until such time as the pleadings are closed."

165. The promulgation of the Criminal Code pursuant to Royal Decree No. 7/2018 produced a paradigm shift in criminal legislation, since an entire chapter is devoted to the criminalization of disruptions of judicial proceedings and the perversion of justice.

166. Legal aid is provided in order to exempt insolvent litigants from payment of prescribed legal fees for filing a lawsuit and appointing a lawyer to institute proceedings in cases in which institution by a lawyer is legally required. The exemption includes fees for publishing legal statements and covering the costs of experts, in accordance with article 1

of the Regulations governing Legal Aid for Indigent Persons issued pursuant to Ministerial Decision No. 91/2009 of 14 February 2009 adopted by the Ministry of Justice.

167. With a view to guaranteeing the right of juveniles to a fair trial, access to a lawyer is required in cases involving juveniles, in accordance with article 39 of the Juvenile Accountability Act, which stipulates that: “The parents of the juvenile or others mentioned in the previous article shall appoint a lawyer to defend the juvenile offender. Otherwise the court shall appoint a lawyer to assume the task.”

Judicial remedies

168. The Sultanate has taken steps to ensure that litigants have access to judicial bodies and that cases are promptly adjudicated, in accordance with the above-mentioned provisions of the Basic Law of the State. In view of the vast geographical area of the Sultanate, ordinary courts and administrative justice departments have been established in the various governorates according to the following hierarchy:

(a) The Supreme Court

169. The Supreme Court constitutes the top level of jurisdiction in the Sultanate of Oman. It was established pursuant to the Judiciary Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 90/90 and its amendments. It is a single court based in Muscat and is composed of a President and an adequate number of vice-presidents and judges. The Supreme Court has jurisdiction to hear appeals against any final judgment, regardless of the court that handed down the judgment. It also has jurisdiction to hear appeals filed by the Attorney General on legal grounds against final judgments handed down by any court, if the judgment is based on a breach of the law or an error in its application or interpretation in the legally specified circumstances.

(b) Appeal courts (courts of second instance)

170. They have jurisdiction to hear appeals filed against judgments (that are legally subject to appeal) handed down by courts of first instance. Disputes may not be brought before an appeal court at the outset, because appeals are a means of redress aimed at remedying errors that may occur in the rulings of courts of first instance by referring the dispute to judges other than those serving in the lower court. The appeal courts were established by royal decree and are composed of a president and a number of judges. Chambers are established to meet the court’s needs and are headed by the president of the court or senior judges. Judgments are handed down by three judges. There are 13 appeal courts spread across the governorates of the Sultanate.

(c) Courts of first instance

171. Disputes are initially referred to courts of first instance, which are composed of an individual judge or of three judges (tripartite chambers). There are currently 44 courts of first instance throughout the Sultanate, and each has a president and an adequate number of judges. Chambers are established as and when necessary, provided that the chamber is presided over by a judge whose status is not lower than that of a senior judge of the court of first instance.

172. Cases involving individuals and the State’s administrative apparatus may be heard by the Administrative Court of Justice, which was established by an Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 91/99, and amended by Royal Decree No. 3/2009, as an independent judicial body with jurisdiction to adjudicate administrative disputes defined by law concerning public officials, administrative decisions, compensation claims, administrative contracts and other matters. According to article 2 of the Administrative Court of Justice Act, it is composed of trial chambers and one or more appeal chambers. There are currently three trial chambers and two appeal chambers at the Court headquarters in Muscat. In accordance with the principle of bringing the judiciary closer to litigants and ensuring the speedy adjudication of cases, the Salalah Trial Chamber was established by Royal Decree No. 61/2006 on 18 June 2006, and the Sohar Trial Chamber was established by Royal Decree No. 118/2010 on 5 December 2010.

Remediation committees

173. National legislation provides for non-judicial remedies through committees mandated to deal with issues and rights pertaining to citizens in general, based on the rights guaranteed by the Basic Law of the State in the areas of equity and social justice, on the human rights instruments to which the Sultanate has acceded, and on the principles applicable to a number of bodies, such as the Paris Principles. The following commissions or committees in the Sultanate play a remedial role alongside the judicial institutions:

(a) The National Human Rights Commission

174. The National Human Rights Commission was established pursuant to Royal Decree No. 124/2008 and vested by law with a legal personality and financial and administrative independence, thereby ensuring the best performance of its functions. It was entrusted with a number of human rights mandates, in particular those of monitoring any infringements or violations of human rights in the State and helping to settle or resolve them. The units of the State's administrative apparatus are required by law to cooperate with the Commission and provide it with any information and data that it needs in order to discharge the mandates assigned to it. Individuals whose rights are violated can therefore have recourse to the Commission, which has been entrusted by law with various powers in order to achieve justice. The Commission has a dedicated hotline for receiving reports and complaints from individuals concerning violations of rights guaranteed by the Basic Law of the State and the laws in force in the Sultanate, as well as by human rights instruments to which the Sultanate has acceded. It should be noted that the Commission received and monitored more than 80 communications and complaints during 2016 and 2017, and participated with the competent authorities in finding appropriate solutions for many of them.

(b) Mediation and conciliation committees

175. They were established by Royal Decree No. 98/2005 on 28 November 2005 as a mainstay for the establishment of justice and the documentation of rights as easily and speedily as possible and without requiring adversaries to bear the costs, on the ground that justice is a mission and duty of the State. They are affiliated with the Ministry of Justice and are mandated to settle disputes before they are brought before the courts by reconciling the parties, regardless of whether the dispute concerns civil, commercial or personal status issues. Recourse to the committees is optional for the parties concerned, in accordance with article 3 of the Mediation and Conciliation Act, and the committees' services are provided to Omani citizens and residents and to enterprises and institutions. The statistics indicate that there have been a large number of applicants for conciliation, reflecting society's awareness of the need to end disputes through reconciliation because of the ensuing benefits. The committees received 18,592 applications for conciliation in 2014, 18,047 applications in 2015 and 18,934 applications in 2016.

(c) The Labour Claims Commission

176. The Commission was established pursuant to Ministerial Decision No. 10/2016 adopted by the Minister of Manpower. It is chaired by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Manpower for Labour Affairs and is tasked with examining and ruling on labour claims and monitoring the procedure for implementing settlements. It may also, pursuant to article 2 of the Decision, entrust the Directorate General of Labour Welfare with the task of inspecting the establishment that has given rise to the labour claims before initiating measures to settle the dispute.

177. A total of 21 labour claims were referred to and considered by the Commission during the period from 2013 to 2017. Seven claims were settled and 14 were referred to the competent court. It should be noted that most labour claims are discussed between the parties and friendly settlements are reached before they are referred to the above-mentioned Commission.
