



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

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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**Initial report submitted by Mauritania under
article 35 of the Convention, due in 2014***

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Introduction

1. The present initial report of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is submitted to the Committee under article 35 (1) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
2. Prepared in accordance with the Committee's guidelines, the report provides an overview of the country (common core document) in part I and describes the implementation of the provisions of the Convention in part II.
3. Its submission testifies to the commitment of Mauritania to discharge its treaty obligations in the sphere of human rights and its determination to implement the Convention, which calls on States parties to pursue a policy of promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities.
4. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania reiterates its commitment to pursuing its policy to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities and hopes that the submission of its initial report will provide the framework for constructive exchange, consultation and dialogue with the Committee.

Part I Overview of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania – General information

A. Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics

1. Demographic data

5. As a Muslim, Arab and African country, situated at the crossroads of the African and Arab civilizations, Mauritania remains deeply committed to the spirit and letter of the Convention.
6. Mauritania is a multi-ethnic and multicultural country with a predominantly Arab population and Fulani, Soninke and Wolof minorities. It has a population of 3,537,628 inhabitants (General Population and Housing Census, 2013), 27.1 per cent of whom reside in Nouakchott, the capital of the country.¹

¹ Source: National Statistics Office.

Table 1
Total population, by sex and age group

Age group	1977			1988			2000			2013		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
0–4	110 261	106 526	216 787	154 808	150 305	305 113	218 087	208 370	426 457	316 217	298 475	614 692
5–9	113 809	105 397	219 206	154 546	144 263	298 809	186 741	175 736	362 477	263 263	256 839	520 102
10–14	81 141	71 524	152 665	114 455	104 288	218 743	154 508	148 164	302 672	212 838	216 667	429 505
15–19	67 504	70 770	138 274	92 683	96 807	189 490	131 240	138 512	269 752	176 116	185 288	361 404
20–24	52 776	58 542	111 318	74 901	86 562	161 463	100 667	114 292	214 959	144 478	157 962	302 440
25–29	40 969	48 060	89 029	67 126	77 870	144 996	86 990	100 554	187 544	121 586	135 767	257 353
30–34	33 043	40 681	73 724	56 457	60 691	117 148	72 906	81 525	154 431	99 834	113 691	213 525
35–39	28 905	32 804	61 709	44 513	45 159	89 672	64 465	70 887	135 352	83 578	95 379	178 957
40–44	32 665	36 021	68 686	34 802	38 077	72 879	53 010	53 129	106 139	72 108	79 228	151 336
45–49	23 807	24 036	47 843	27 593	28 108	55 701	48 653	50 408	99 061	60 297	64 516	124 813
50–54	22 688	24 432	47 120	30 023	31 908	61 931	32 649	33 165	65 814	50 739	51 751	102 490
55–59	16 911	17 487	34 398	16 847	14 875	31 722	23 010	21 638	44 648	41 075	40 645	81 720
60–64	12 754	14 508	27 262	20 190	20 603	40 793	25 093	24 467	49 560	31 660	30 459	62 119
65–69	6 979	7 593	14 572	11 518	11 131	22 649	16 062	15 582	31 644	24 120	23 055	47 175
70–74	7 708	10 706	18 414	10 812	12 968	23 780	13 773	13 425	27 198	18 167	17 129	35 296
75 and over	6 441	11 382	17 823	11 901	17 446	29 347	13 858	16 593	30 451	26 998	27 443	54 441
Total	658 361	680 469	1 338 830	923 175	941 061	1 864 236	1 241 712	1 266 447	2 508 159	1 743 074	1 794 294	3 537 368

2. Socioeconomic data

7. Mauritania prepared a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) for the period 2001–2015. As a result of the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy, poverty decreased from 51 per cent in 2001 to 31 per cent in 2014. Economic growth during the same period averaged 4.3 per cent, despite the unfavourable international conditions.

8. Notwithstanding those conditions, significant efforts have been made to develop human resources and expand basic services. In primary education: (i) in 2012/13, the gross enrolment ratio was 99.3 per cent; (ii) during that period, it stood at 102.5 per cent for girls and 95.9 per cent for boys, while the gender parity index stood at 1.07; enrolment efforts during 2013 benefited girls more than boys; (iii) the retention rate in primary education has risen steadily, from 67.4 per cent in 2011/12 to 75 per cent in 2012/13.

9. As to secondary education, (i) the gross enrolment ratio rose from 24.9 per cent in 2009/10 to 29.5 per cent in 2012/13; (ii) in 2012/13 the participation rate for girls was 47.6 per cent; and (iii) the transition rate in 2012/13 was 52.7 per cent.

10. In the area of health care, the Government's efforts to improve the health of the population through better quality and more accessible health services have led to: (i) the construction, renovation and fitting-out of health centres; (ii) the expansion and renovation of the Bassikounou health centre in Hodh ech Charghi; (iii) the construction of nursing schools; (iv) the acquisition of medical equipment; and (v) the acquisition of ambulances and 162 four-wheel motorcycles, the recruitment of 582 doctors and allied health professionals, the training of 440 allied health professionals and the hiring of 54 medical personnel from abroad.

11. The status of the main health indicators is as follows: (i) 74 per cent of the population lives within 5 km of health services; (ii) the mortality rate for children under 5 stands at 114 per 1,000 live births; (iii) 78 per cent of children aged 1 have been vaccinated against measles; (iv) the maternal mortality ratio is 585 per 100,000 live births; (v) the contraception rate is 11.4 per cent; (vi) the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate among 15- to 24-year-olds remains below 1 per cent, standing at 0.7 per cent; and (vii) 5.1 per cent of deaths in children under 5 are caused by malaria.

12. With regard to access to safe drinking water, the infrastructure projects currently under way, together with those completed in 2013, will provide access to an improved water source for 58 per cent of the population – 48 per cent in rural areas and 60 per cent in urban areas. Work in the area of sanitation has increased the rate of access to improved facilities from 22 per cent of the population in 2010 to 34.5 per cent in 2013.

13. The roll-out of electrification projects using solar and renewable energy has resulted in a marked increase in access to electricity services.

14. During the third year of phase 3 of the PRSP, significant progress was achieved in all areas of governance (political, democratic, regional, local, environmental and economic) through the good governance and capacity-building initiatives implemented.

15. Following the conclusion of the period covered by the PRSP, the Government decided to establish a new strategy for accelerated growth and shared prosperity for 2015–2030. One of the aims of the strategy is to promote diversified inclusive, environmentally friendly and sustainable economic growth designed to reduce inequality and create jobs. It also aims to tackle unemployment, strengthen resilience and ensure that prosperity is equitably shared.

16. The Government has strengthened political and democratic governance through (i) the establishment of an Independent National Electoral Commission and (ii) the holding of free, transparent legislative and municipal elections.

B. Constitutional and judicial institutions

1. Constitutional institutions

17. The Constitution of 20 July 1991, as amended in 2006 and 2012, established several institutions, including the Constitutional Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Court of Audit, the Supreme Islamic Council and the National Human Rights Commission.

18. Article 1 of the Constitution states that “Mauritania is an indivisible, democratic and social Islamic republic. The Republic guarantees all citizens equality before the law, without distinction as to origin, race, sex or social status.” Article 3 enshrines the principle of democracy, stating that “sovereignty belongs to the Mauritanian people, who shall exercise it through their representatives or by referendum.”

19. The republican State is founded on the principle of separation of powers. The President of the Republic is elected by direct universal suffrage for a term of five years, renewable once. The President defines national policy, which is implemented by the Government, led by the Prime Minister.

20. Legislative power is exercised by the parliament, which adopts laws and is responsible for oversight of government action. The parliament is made up of the National Assembly and the Senate.

21. Mauritania has a decentralized and devolved administrative structure. Its territory is organized into several administrative levels: 15 *wilayas* (governorates), 58 *moughataas* (departments) and 218 communes. The different administrative levels work together to ensure the political, economic and social development of the country.

2. Judicial institutions

22. The judicial system is based on the second-hearing principle (the same case may be tried at first and second instance). The system comprises courts at the level of the *moughataa* and *wilaya*, courts of appeal and a supreme court. The High Court of Justice is responsible for trying the most senior State officials (the President of the Republic and the members of the Government). The Constitutional Council rules upon constitutional matters.

23. The Supreme Council for Fatwa and Grievances offers those seeking justice solutions that comply with Islamic law.

24. The Government has improved the efficiency of the justice system by making justice more accessible through the establishment of courts, including a court of appeal in Aleg, two regional courts in Nouakchott Nord and Nouakchott Sud, a labour court in Zouerate and three specialized anti-slavery courts. It has also established a national anti-corruption strategy, and sectoral plans to combat corruption are being implemented by Government departments, in collaboration with civil society, to ensure compliance with national anti-corruption legislation.

Table 2

Work of the courts of first instance (2014) Civil, commercial and administrative cases

<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>
Cases filed	5 937
Judgments handed down	1 339
Conciliation proceedings	2 040
Appeals	984
Appeals in cassation	37
Provisional orders	4 601
Appeals against provisional orders	323
Applications to set aside judgments	49

Work of the criminal, correctional and juvenile courts

<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>
Cases filed	2 159
Judgments handed down	1 589
Provisional orders	565
Appeals	1 237
Appeals against provisional orders	30
Applications to set aside judgments	16

Work of investigating judges (2014)

<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>
Cases filed	2 414
Accused persons	3 962
Cases referred to the criminal courts	594
Cases referred to the correctional courts	757
Cases in which the investigation was closed	1 395
Detention orders	1 579
Release orders	421
Orders for release under judicial supervision	915
Dismissal orders	140
Orders resulting from conciliation proceedings	364
Sureties	440
Prison visits	689
Letters rogatory	145
Decisions on release on bail	43
Expert evaluations	63
Arrest warrants	297

Data from the Nouakchott prosecution service (2012)**Serious offences**

<i>Classification</i>	<i>Number</i>
Robbery	156
Rape	49
Possession, sale and importing of drugs	56
Sale of alcohol	52
Unlawful sexual intercourse (<i>zina</i>)	12
Murder	22
Forgery and use of forged documents with intent to defraud	21
Destruction of the property of others	36
Death threats	15
Deliberate assault	47
Terrorism	7

Ordinary offences

<i>Classification</i>	<i>Number</i>
Theft	445
Assault and battery	104
Unintentional injury	105
Manslaughter	73
Fraud	89
Fraudulent breach of trust	67
Drug use	49
Use of psychotropic substances	65
Forgery and use of forged documents with intent to defraud	21
Cheque fraud	106
Obstruction of justice	10
Filial disobedience	12
Morality offences	22
Corruption	10
Threats of violence	15
Witchcraft and charlatanism	15
Gambling	4
Kidnapping	1
Vagrancy	3
Importing of weapons	2
Driving without a licence	21
Driving without insurance	27
Acting under false pretences	13
Desertion	12
Escape from custody	4
Setting of house fires	1
Other ordinary offences	16

C. General framework for the protection and promotion of human rights**1. Acceptance of international human rights standards**

Table 3

Principal international human rights instruments ratified by Mauritania

<i>No.</i>	<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Date of adoption</i>	<i>Date of ratification</i>	<i>Reservations/comments</i>
1	Universal Declaration of Human Rights	1948	Preamble to the Constitution of 20 July 1991	Incorporated into the preamble to the Constitution of 20 July 1991
2	United Nations Convention against Corruption	2003		

<i>No.</i>	<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Date of adoption</i>	<i>Date of ratification</i>	<i>Reservations/comments</i>
3	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	1965	1988	Reservation: art. 14 Mauritania has not made the declaration under article 14 recognizing the competence of the Committee to receive individual complaints.
4	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	1979	1990	Reservations: arts. 13 (a), 16
5	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	1990	2003	
6	Convention on the Rights of the Child	1989	1990	Reservation: Mauritania has approved all parts of the Convention that are not contrary to sharia law.
7	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2006	2010	
8	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	2006	2012	
9	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	1966	1999	Reservations: arts. 18 (2–4), art. 23 (4) The Government of Mauritania declared that the application of these provisions would be without prejudice to sharia law.
10	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	1966	1999	
11	Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment		2012	
12	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2006	2010	
13	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	1984	1999	Reservations: art. 20 (1–5), concerning the competence of the Committee; art. 30 (1), concerning the International Court of Justice

2. Nature and scope of reservations

(a) Scope of reservations

25. Mauritania has entered general or specific reservations on the following conventions:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (arts. 13 (a) and 16);
- Convention on the Rights of the Child: Mauritania has approved all parts of this convention that are not contrary to sharia law;
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: reservations to articles 18 (2–4) and 23 (4);
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment: reservations to articles 20 (1–5), concerning the competence of the Committee, and article 30 (1), concerning the International Criminal Court.

(b) Reasons for the reservations

26. These reservations were deemed necessary because they concern provisions that are contrary to sharia, the sole source of law under the Constitution.

(c) Effect of the reservations

27. Only the provisions to which the reservations relate are not applied; the other provisions retain their full legal force as stipulated in article 80 of the Constitution.

(d) Follow-up to declarations emanating from conferences

28. Mauritania, by virtue of its participation in international human rights conferences, has given effective support to the declarations, recommendations and commitments adopted by those conferences.

29. Pursuant to the declarations and recommendations of international conferences, notably the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights (1993), Mauritania withdrew and replaced its general reservation to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and is contemplating similar action in respect of its general reservation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

(e) Derogations, restrictions, and limitations

30. Other than the reservations it has entered, Mauritania has not restricted, limited or derogated from the international instruments it has ratified.

Table 4

Principal International Labour Organization conventions ratified by Mauritania

No.	Instrument	Date of adoption	Date of ratification	Reservations/comments
1	Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111)	1958	8 Nov. 1963	
2	Equality of Treatment (Accident Compensation) Convention (No. 19)	1925	8 Nov. 1963	
3	Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100) (Agriculture)	1951	3 Dec. 2001	
4	Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention (No. 118)	1962	15 July 1968	Accepted in respect of branches (d) to (g) and (i)
5	Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No. 105)	1957	3 Apr. 1997	

<i>No.</i>	<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Date of adoption</i>	<i>Date of ratification</i>	<i>Reservations/comments</i>
6	Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)	1930	20 June 1961	
7	Maternity Protection Convention (No. 3)	1919	8 Nov. 1963	
8	Night Work (Women) Convention (No. 4)	1919	20 June 1961	Denounced on 2 Aug. 1965
9	Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised) (No. 41)	1934	20 June 1961	Denounced on ratification of Convention No. 89
10	Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised) (No. 89)	1948	8 Nov. 1963	
11	Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182)	1999	3 Dec. 2001	
12	Minimum Age (Industry) Convention (No. 5)	1919	20 June 1961	Denounced on ratification of Convention No. 138
13	Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention (No. 6)	1919	20 June 1961	
14	Minimum Age (Trimmers and Stokers) Convention (No. 15)	1921	8 Nov. 1963	
15	Minimum Age (Non-Industrial Employment) Convention (No. 33)	1932	20 June 1961	
16	Minimum Age (Sea) Convention (Revised) (No. 58)	1936	8 Nov. 1963	
17	Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention (Revised) (No. 90)	1948	8 Nov. 1963	
18	Minimum Age (Fishermen) Convention (No. 112)	1957	8 Nov. 1963	
19	Minimum Age Convention (No. 138)	1973	3 Dec. 2001	Minimum age specified: 14 years
20	Holidays with Pay Convention (No. 52)	1936	8 Nov. 1963	
21	Paid Vacations (Seafarers) Convention (Revised) (No. 91)	1949	8 Nov. 1963	
22	Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 98)	1949	3 Dec. 2001	
23	Holidays with Pay (Agriculture) Convention (No. 101)	1952	8 Nov. 1963	
24	Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention (No. 102)	1952	15 July 1968	Accepted Parts V to VII, IX and X.
25	White Lead (Painting) Convention (No. 13)	1921	20 June 1961	
26	Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention (No. 14)	1921	20 June 1961	
27	Workmen's Compensation (Accidents) Convention (No. 17)	1925	8 Jan. 1963	
28	Workmen's Compensation (Occupational Diseases) Convention (No. 18)	1925	20 June 1961	
29	Seamen's Articles of Agreement Convention (No. 22)	1926	8 Nov. 1963	
30	Repatriation of Seamen Convention (No. 23)	1926	8 Nov. 1963	

<i>No.</i>	<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Date of adoption</i>	<i>Date of ratification</i>	<i>Reservations/comments</i>
31	Minimum Wage-Fixing Machinery Convention (No. 26)	1928	20 June 1961	
32	Officers' Competency Certificates Convention (No. 53)	1936	8 Nov. 1963	
33	Safety Provisions (Building) Convention (No. 62)	1937	8 Nov. 1963	
34	Labour Inspection Convention (No. 81)	1947	8 Nov. 1963	
35	Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (No. 87)	1948	20 June 1961	
36	Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Convention (No. 94)	1949	8 Nov. 1963	
37	Protection of Wages Convention (No. 95)	1949	20 June 1961	
38	Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention (Revised) (No. 96)	1949	31 Mar. 1964	Accepted the provisions of Part II
39	Fishermen's Articles of Agreement Convention (No. 114)	1959	8 Nov. 1963	
40	Final Articles Revision Convention (No. 116)	1961	8 Nov. 1963	
41	Employment Policy Convention (No. 122)	1964	30 July 1971	

Table 5
Ratification of instruments relating to international humanitarian law and refugees

<i>No.</i>	<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Date of adoption</i>	<i>Date of ratification</i>	<i>Reservations/comments</i>
1	Convention relating to the Status of Refugees	1951	1987	
2	Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field	1949	1962	
3	Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea	1949	1962	
4	Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War	1949	1962	
5	Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War	1949	1962	
6	Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts (Protocol I)	1977	1980	
7	Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the protection of victims of non-international armed conflicts (Protocol II)	1977	1980	
8	Convention relating to the Status of Refugees	1951	1987	
9	Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa	1969	1972	

<i>No.</i>	<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Date of adoption</i>	<i>Date of ratification</i>	<i>Reservations/comments</i>
10	Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees	1967	1987	
11	Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction	1997	2000	

Table 6
Ratification of regional human rights instruments

<i>No.</i>	<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Date of adoption</i>	<i>Date of ratification</i>	<i>Reservations/comments</i>
1	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights	1981	1986	Incorporated into the preamble to the Constitution of 20 July 1991
2	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights	1988	2005	
3	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	1990	2005	
4	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa	2003	2005	
5	African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance	2011	2008	
6	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights	1998	2005	
7	African Union Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa	1969	1972	

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

(a) Constitutional guarantees

31. The Constitution enshrines human rights in its preamble: "The Mauritanian people, fortified by their spiritual values and the development of their civilization, solemnly proclaim their attachment to Islam and to the principles of democracy, as defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948 and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 28 June 1981 and by the other international conventions to which Mauritania is a party." The Constitution protects all the rights and freedoms set forth in the aforementioned instruments.

(b) Incorporation of human rights treaties into national legislation

32. Under the country's monist legal system, the international human rights treaties ratified by Mauritania are incorporated into national legislation in accordance with article 80 of the Constitution.

(c) Competent authorities on human rights

33. The principal authorities with competence in human rights matters are the Constitutional Council, the courts, the Commission for Human Rights and Humanitarian Action, the National Human Rights Commission, the relevant ministries, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Supreme Council for Fatwa and Grievances and the national mechanism for the prevention of torture. They are competent at the national level for issues relating to their respective areas of responsibility.

(d) Invocation before the courts

34. All the provisions of the conventions ratified by Mauritania can be invoked before the courts, and judges are required to apply them.

(e) Remedies

35. Administrative and judicial remedies are available and may result in the award of civil damages and the imposition of administrative and/or criminal penalties on the perpetrator.

(f) National mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights

36. The Commission for Human Rights and Humanitarian Action is responsible for drafting and implementing the national policy for the promotion, defence and protection of human rights.

37. The remit of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family includes the development of project and programme proposals aimed at furthering the advancement of women and their involvement in the development process and promoting and protecting the rights of children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

38. The remit of the National Human Rights Commission, which is an independent body, includes issuing, at the request of the Government or on its own initiative, advisory opinions on general and specific questions concerning the promotion and protection of human rights and respect for individual and collective freedoms.

39. The Commission, which was awarded A status by the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in May 2011, was made a constitutional institution in 2012.

40. The majority of the Commission's members are representatives of civil society organizations and professional bodies, who have the right to vote; it also includes representatives of the various authorities concerned, who are non-voting members. The Commission is funded from the State budget, which has a separate allocation for it.

41. The authorities and human rights organizations disseminate the texts of the various treaties and conventions to which Mauritania is a party via the press, through workshops and in promotional materials, and ensure that these instruments are accessible by explaining their content in the various national languages as necessary.

42. The parliament makes laws and ensures that national legislation is in conformity with the provisions of duly ratified international instruments. The parliamentary group on human rights ensures the promotion and dissemination of human rights principles and the protection of those rights.

43. The national mechanism for the prevention of torture ensures compliance with the relevant legislation in force.

44. The Supreme Council for Fatwa and Grievances ensures compliance within in its own area of competence.

45. Associations are regulated by Act No. 64.098 of 9 June 1964, as amended by Act No. 73.007 of 23 June 1973 and Act No. 73.157 of 2 July 1973. More than 6,028 national and 57 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operate in the country. The number of associations has increased markedly since 2008, when there were only 1,106. Associations are active in fields including human rights, social issues, development, health, the environment, culture, sports and the arts and may, upon request, be granted tax exemptions for the equipment and materials they require to carry out their activities. This exemption is automatic for recognized public-interest associations.

(g) Recognition of the jurisdiction of a regional human rights court or other such mechanism

46. Mauritania recognizes the jurisdiction of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

(h) Dissemination of human rights instruments

47. Several conventions have been the subject of information and awareness-raising campaigns, including the following:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Measures to disseminate the Convention have included:
 - Translation into the four national languages;
 - Publication of a simple guide to the Convention and the organization of large-scale awareness-raising campaigns in the media (radio and television);
 - Community-based campaigns carried out by NGOs;
 - Implementation of other programmes, supervised by the communications unit of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family through its regional offices.
- Convention on the Rights of the Child. Measures to disseminate the Convention have included:
 - Preparation and dissemination of a simplified guide to the Convention;
 - Establishment of regional networks to promote the rights of the child, consisting mainly of departmental children's rights units;
 - Organization of annual awareness-raising campaigns on the rights of the child to mark national children's days;
 - Provision of training on children's rights for civil society stakeholders.
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The following actions have been taken to disseminate the Convention:
 - Campaigns in all *wilayas* throughout the country;
 - Preparation of a simplified guide to the provisions of the Convention;
 - Provision of training for several organizations of persons with disabilities.
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. A number of activities have been organized to raise awareness of the Convention, including the following:
 - Awareness-raising and training seminars for law enforcement officers on the subject of prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
 - Workshops for judges and criminal investigation officers on police custody and torture prevention.

48. The administrative and judicial authorities have a duty to systematically undertake investigations as soon as an allegation of torture is made.

49. The penalties imposed in cases of torture are stipulated in Act No. 2015.033 of 10 September 2015 on the prohibition of torture.

50. All the international instruments ratified by Mauritania that are subject to monitoring by the human rights treaty bodies have been published in the Official Gazette.

(i) Raising human rights awareness among public officials and other professionals

51. Plans of action to raise awareness and train officials on respect for human rights have been implemented. Seminars have been organized for law enforcement officers by the Ministry of Justice, the Commission for Human Rights and Humanitarian Action and the National Human Rights Commission, with technical support from the country office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT).

(j) Raising awareness through educational programmes and disseminating information through school “hygiene, health and environment clubs”

52. Initial training programmes at teacher training colleges.

53. In-service training programmes, including awareness-raising campaigns and ad hoc courses.

(k) Promotion of human rights awareness through the media

54. State and private media are asked to provide national coverage of activities to promote and protect human rights. Radio and television programmes on topics relating to human rights are broadcast periodically.

(l) Role of civil society

55. Civil society works with the authorities on human rights awareness-raising programmes for the general public.

(m) Budget allocations and trends

56. Budget allocations are made annually to ministerial departments, institutions and other bodies and NGOs working in the field of human rights.

(n) Development cooperation and assistance

57. Technical assistance for the promotion and protection of human rights is provided by OHCHR, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other partners.

D. Obstacles to the fulfilment of international human rights obligations

58. The following are the main obstacles preventing the country from achieving full enjoyment of human rights:

- Inadequate human and financial resources in the institutions and organizations responsible for defending human rights.
- Lack of specialist knowledge among human rights actors.

E. Reporting process

1. Interministerial technical committee responsible for preparing State reports relating to international legal instruments in the field of human rights

59. The Government has set up an interministerial technical committee to draft reports and follow up on the implementation of the recommendations made by treaty bodies and during the universal periodic review process. The committee comprises representatives of all ministerial departments, the National Human Rights Commission and the Office of the Ombudsman. The OHCHR office in Mauritania has observer status.

2. Transmission of reports to stakeholders prior to submission to the treaty bodies

60. The national report submitted under the universal periodic review process was made available to the parliamentary bodies for comment prior to its submission to the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. This practice is applied to all reports to be submitted to the treaty bodies.

3. Participation of non-governmental and independent bodies

61. The reports take account of recommendations made during workshops held for the purposes of consulting and exchanging views with civil society and parliamentary bodies.

F. Follow-up to concluding observations of human rights treaty bodies

62. The various concluding observations and recommendations are shared and discussed at workshops, and the conclusions reached are then transmitted to the competent authorities. This process has been followed for the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee against Torture, the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Sectoral action plans for implementing the concluding observations are in place. A national action plan is currently being drawn up, with the cooperation of the OHCHR country office, covering the recommendations of treaty bodies and those made during the universal periodic review process.

G. Measures to ensure wide dissemination of the concluding observations or recommendations issued by treaty bodies following consideration of the State party's report

63. The interministerial technical committee responsible for drafting reports to treaty bodies shares those documents – and the conclusions and recommendations made by treaty bodies and during the universal periodic review process – with the parliament. They are also disseminated through the media.

1. Follow-up to international conferences

64. Mauritania ensures systematic follow-up to the declarations adopted at the various world conferences, in particular the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights (1993), the Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (2001), the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) and the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Government implements the commitments entered into at the various conferences through its ministries and institutions.

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

(a) Non-discrimination and equality

65. The principle of non-discrimination is established in the Constitution. It is incorporated in legislation and has been given effect in several areas, including equality of treatment in taxation and in access to justice, equal pay for work of equal value and equal access to public services.

66. The Constitution guarantees women the right to participate in political and public life. It also recognizes for women all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 1981.

67. Article 1 (2) of the Constitution stipulates that “the Republic guarantees all citizens equality before the law, without distinction as to origin, race, sex or social status”. Article 12 provides that “all citizens may accede to public office or employment without any conditions other than those determined by law”.

68. Positive discrimination and temporary special measures have been applied with regard to elections and elected office. The quota reserved for women in those areas has risen significantly. In all recruitment exercises, posts are set aside for women.

69. The 2001 Personal Status Code sets the legal age for marriage at 18 years.

70. The 2005 Code governing the judicial protection of children prohibits and penalizes female genital mutilation (art. 12).

71. The 2001 Act on Compulsory Primary Education sets the school age at 6 to 14.

72. The Ordinance concerning the Organic Act on Women's Access to Elective Posts and Elected Office sets a 20 per cent quota for women.

73. The Legal Aid Act provides for assistance to persons of reduced means.

74. The Ordinance on the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities provides for benefits for such persons.

75. The Labour Code and the Act governing the Pension Fund's civilian pension scheme authorize the payment of a pension to the beneficiaries of female civil servants on the same terms as for male civil servants.

76. Pensions are granted to the survivors of deceased female civil servants.

77. The retirement age has been equalized at 60 for women whose conditions of employment are governed by the collective agreement.

78. The authorities have put in place an institutional framework to ensure that women's rights are promoted and gender is mainstreamed into public policy. This framework includes:

- The Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family, which is responsible for promoting and protecting the rights of women, families, persons with disabilities and children.
- The National Gender Monitoring Group and its regional counterparts.
- The network of women ministers and parliamentarians.
- The National Committee to Combat Gender-based Violence, including Female Genital Mutilation.
- Regional and departmental committees to combat gender-based violence.
- Centres for addressing and resolving family disputes. Follow-up to the recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and promotion of human rights.

(b) Measures taken to improve women's political participation and their involvement in decision-making

79. These measures include:

- Adoption of a national list of 20 women candidates for election as deputies.
- Adoption of a national list of 20 women candidates and another list of 18 women candidates for election in the Nouakchott constituency.
- Increase in the number of constituencies with three seats to be filled by proportional representation.
- Granting of financial incentives for political parties that increase the number of women candidates elected.
- Organization of a special competitive procedure that allowed an additional 50 women to gain entry to the National College of Administration, Journalism and the Judiciary.
- Creation of eight university teaching posts for women.
- Increase in the number of bursaries reserved for girls.

(c) Principle of non-discrimination and general binding principle

80. The Constitution of 20 July 1991, as amended in 2006 and 2012, states that "human freedom, equality and dignity may be assured only in a society that honours the rule of law". It also guarantees the fundamental principles of non-discrimination.

(d) Measures taken to prevent and combat discrimination in all its forms

81. Several institutions contribute to efforts to prevent and combat all forms of discrimination, including the ministerial departments responsible for human rights issues, the Tadamoun National Agency for the Eradication of the Consequences of Slavery, for Social Integration and for Action to Fight Poverty, the National Human Rights Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Supreme Council for Fatwa and Grievances and the courts.

(e) General information regarding the human rights situation of persons belonging to specific vulnerable groups

82. The Government's poverty reduction policy provides for a strong and sustained focus on vulnerable segments of the population.

3. Specific measures to reduce disparities

83. Several measures have been put in place to reduce economic, social and geographical disparities, particularly for women. These include the following:

- Development and implementation of a National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence for the period 2015–2018.
- Implementation of standard operating procedures to improve the response to gender-based violence and ensure holistic care for survivors.
- Implementation of an action plan to encourage the voluntary abandonment of female genital mutilation in *wilayas* where the practice is very widespread.
- Dissemination, via public and private media, of a fatwa on the prohibition of female genital mutilation.
- Organization of campaigns to combat child marriage.

84. Measures have been taken to raise public awareness of stereotypes and practices that are harmful to women. These include the following:

- Observance of the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation.
- Implementation of a programme to promote the abandonment of female genital mutilation.
- Approval of a bill on the criminalization of female genital mutilation.
- Organization of several awareness-raising campaigns to combat other harmful practices such as force-feeding and forced or early marriage.

4. Equality before the law and equal protection of the law

85. Mauritania has established a judicial system founded on the second-hearing principle and has facilitated access to justice through the provision of legal assistance.

5. Effective remedies

86. The international human rights treaties ratified by Mauritania are incorporated directly into national legislation in accordance with article 80 of the Constitution, whereby all the provisions on human rights derived from duly ratified conventions can be invoked before the courts, and judges are required to apply them.

Part II: Implementation of the provisions of the Convention

A. Monitoring mechanisms

87. The Government has made the following institutions responsible for monitoring and coordinating the national policy for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities:

1. The Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family

88. The Ministry's functions include:

- Proposing projects and programmes to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities;
- Monitoring the application of international conventions ratified by Mauritania on the rights of specific groups.

89. The Ministry has a central department dedicated entirely to dealing with matters affecting persons with disabilities, which is responsible for:

- Coordinating and monitoring the implementation of legislation to promote the rights of persons with disabilities;
- Developing and implementing a national strategy for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities;
- Contributing to the coordination and promotion of specialized education for children who are deaf, mute and blind;
- Developing and implementing specific programmes for the rehabilitation and social reintegration of persons with disabilities;
- Improving the quality of life, social inclusion and socio-professional integration of persons with disabilities;
- Supporting vocational training for persons with disabilities;
- Drafting and updating legislation and regulations on the advancement of persons with disabilities to ensure compatibility with the relevant provisions of international conventions;
- Promoting the social inclusion of persons with disabilities;
- Adapting services to each person's background and the nature of his or her disability;
- Promoting improved quality and coordination of actions taken for the benefit of persons with disabilities;
- Setting up a database on persons with disabilities.

2. The Commission for Human Rights and Humanitarian Action

90. The Commission is responsible for:

- Drafting and implementing national policy on the promotion, defence and protection of human rights;
- Coordinating national human rights policy;
- Carrying out educational and awareness-raising activities on human rights;
- Preparing periodic reports pursuant to the requirements of the international and regional human rights instruments ratified by Mauritania;
- Harmonizing national legislation with the provisions of the international and regional human rights conventions ratified by Mauritania;
- Drafting and translating action plans and programmes to better promote and protect the rights of vulnerable social groups.

3. National Multisectoral Council for the Advancement of Persons with Disabilities

91. The Council assists the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family in coordinating and monitoring various activities for the rehabilitation and inclusion of persons with disabilities. Its functions include:

- Proposing programmes and measures to ensure the advancement of and health care and social protection for persons with disabilities;
- Offering advice on matters referred to it by the Ministry relating to disability prevention and the advancement of persons with disabilities;
- Designing materials and signage for persons with disabilities;
- Participating in media and awareness-raising campaigns related to disability prevention;
- Monitoring the implementation of treaties and conventions concerning the rights of persons with disabilities.

92. The Council may be assigned other responsibilities related to the protection and advancement of persons with disabilities.

93. The Council is headed by an adviser to the Prime Minister and is made up of representatives of ministries, organizations of persons with disabilities, the parliament and employers. The Council may also call upon other persons whose participation is deemed to be useful.

94. The Council has prepared a multisectoral five-year action plan (2016–2020) covering various areas, which is aimed at ensuring that the needs of persons with disabilities are taken into account in national policies and strategies and at improving the living conditions of persons with disabilities and promoting their effective enjoyment of their rights.

4. The interministerial technical committee responsible for preparing reports and following up on the implementation of recommendations made by treaty bodies and during the universal periodic review process

95. This body is made up of representatives of ministries, the National Human Rights Commission and the Office of the Ombudsman. The OHCHR office in Nouakchott participates as an observer.

96. To ensure better follow-up to the recommendations made by treaty bodies and during the universal periodic review process, various events (seminars and workshops) have been organized in partnership with the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights and Humanitarian Action and the OHCHR country office.

97. At these events, the recommendations of the universal periodic review were presented and an action plan on their implementation was drafted and approved.

98. The interministerial committee will monitor the implementation of the recommendations issued by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities following the consideration of the present report.

5. National Human Rights Commission

99. The Commission is an advisory body responsible for promoting and protecting human rights throughout Mauritania. It is an independent public institution with administrative and financial autonomy.

6. National mechanism for the prevention of torture

100. The national mechanism helps to ensure that allegations of torture are investigated. It has the following functions:

- Carrying out regular scheduled or unscheduled visits, without notice, at any time and in any place where there are or may be persons deprived of their liberty, in order to determine the conditions in which detainees are held and ensure that they have not

been subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;

- Regularly examining the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty in places of detention as defined in article 2, with a view to strengthening, if necessary, their protection from torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- Receiving complaints and allegations of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment occurring in places where persons are deprived of their liberty and transmitting such complaints and allegations to the administrative and judicial authorities or other institutions with competence to investigate them;
- Advising on draft laws and regulations on the prevention of torture and degrading practices;
- Drawing up recommendations intended to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, taking into account the relevant standards of the United Nations, and monitoring their implementation; the relevant State agencies engage in constructive dialogue with the national mechanism for the prevention of torture and respond to its recommendations within one month;
- Raising awareness among concerned stakeholders about the harmful effects of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- Creating a database to ensure that the mechanism has statistics to be used in carrying out the tasks assigned to it;
- Producing and publishing research, studies and reports on the prevention of torture and degrading practices;
- Working with civil society and institutions engaged in combating torture;
- Publishing an annual report on its activities to be submitted to the President of the Republic, the National Assembly and the Senate; the report is also made public.

B. General provisions – Implementation of articles 1 to 5 of the Convention

101. Ordinance No. 2006-043 of 23 November 2006 reflects the aim of the Convention, namely the advancement and protection of persons with disabilities, and defines a person with a disability as “any person who is unable to perform, in whole or in part, one or more activities of daily living because he or she was either born with or acquired a permanent or temporary impairment of his or her mental or motor functions”.

102. Article 24 of the Ordinance requires the State, local governments and public and private agencies that are open to the public to ensure that the buildings, roadways, walkways, outdoor areas and means of transport and communication under their control conform to international accessibility standards so as to ensure that persons with disabilities can access them, move about within them and make use of the services that they provide.

103. The principle of non-discrimination, as set forth in the Convention, is enshrined in the Constitution and given effect in national legislation governing various areas, including laws relating to equality of treatment in taxation and in access to justice and services.

104. Article 1 of the Constitution stipulates that “the Republic guarantees all citizens equality before the law, without distinction as to origin, race, sex or social status”. Article 12 provides that “all citizens may hold public office or employment without any conditions other than those established by law”.

105. In accordance with Decree No. 2013-129, any measures or acts that result in exclusion or that could lead to a reduction of opportunities or be detrimental to persons with disabilities shall be considered discriminatory.

106. Special incentives intended to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for persons with disabilities and measures taken to protect them as persons with disabilities are not considered discriminatory.

107. As part of efforts to implement the Convention, several pieces of implementing legislation (decrees, orders, circulars, etc.) have been adopted to give effect to the Ordinance on the protection and advancement of persons with disabilities.

C. Rights

Article 6

Women with disabilities

108. Measures taken to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by women and girls with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms have included:

- The implementation of a national strategy for the advancement of persons with disabilities;
- The National Gender Mainstreaming Strategy;
- The action plan of the National Multisectoral Council for the Advancement of Persons with Disabilities;
- A capacity-building programme for organizations of women with disabilities;
- The presentation of awards to women with disabilities as part of events organized for International Women's Day, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and the national day of persons with disabilities, which takes place each year on 29 June;
- The awarding of annual grants to organizations of persons with disabilities that are either led by or made up of women.

Article 7

Children with disabilities

109. The Government has adopted and implemented a national child protection strategy that takes into account the particular requirements of children with disabilities.

110. It has also set up a centre for the education and social development of children with disabilities, which carries out the following activities:

- Schooling of children with special education needs arising from serious learning disabilities;
- Education and training of children with special education needs arising from a disability or disabling disease;
- Training of sign language and Braille teachers;
- Development of training courses on the teaching and training of children with disabilities;
- Capacity-building for teachers on inclusive education;
- Capacity-building for parents on communicating with their deaf-mute children;
- Introductory Braille courses for parents of blind children;
- Vocational training adapted to the needs of blind children, deaf-mute children and children with mild mental retardation;
- Production of teaching materials to promote the education of children with disabilities and the development of specialized inclusive teaching.

111. The Government has included a component on the schooling of children with disabilities in the National Programme for the Development of the Education Sector.

112. The Government has awarded grants to organizations working for the education of children with disabilities and has provided mobility aids to students with disabilities.

113. Children with disabilities are represented in the children's parliament.

114. The families of children with multiple disabilities receive monthly cash transfers.

115. Parents of children with disabilities have been encouraged to ensure that they are enrolled in the civil registry.

Article 8

Awareness-raising

116. The Government has conducted several awareness-raising campaigns to promote the rights of persons with disabilities through:

- Training workshops for stakeholders concerned with disability issues;
- Awareness-raising activities, conducted in national languages and in all *wilayas*, on the rights enshrined in the Convention, the Protocol and the Ordinance on the protection and advancement of persons with disabilities.

117. These campaigns were conducted with the participation of national associations of persons with disabilities.

118. Conferences on the rights of persons with disabilities are organized annually on the national and international days of persons with disabilities.

119. The heads of organizations of persons with disabilities have taken part in several media events held to raise awareness among the general public on the problems and needs of persons with disabilities.

120. Financial support has been provided to organizations of persons with disabilities to help fund awareness-raising activities during Deaf Week (*Semaine des sourds*) and at a music festival for persons with disabilities.

Article 9

Accessibility

121. The Government has adopted a decree that establishes the requirements for accessibility of buildings, accommodation, adaptation of information and communications media and facilitation of transport for persons with disabilities. The decree states: "Any building, establishment or facility that persons with disabilities or limited mobility can, under normal conditions, enter, move around in and make use of all the facilities therein and the functions for which the building or facility has been designed, shall be considered accessible. Accommodation and adaptation of information and communications media and means of transport for persons with disabilities are understood to mean:

- The adaptation of audiovisual and print media and means of communication to make them accessible to persons with disabilities and enable them to receive and access information;
- Provision of adapted public transport that can be used by persons with disabilities without barriers or obstacles."

122. The measures taken to ensure personal mobility with the greatest possible independence for persons with disabilities include:

- The allocation of an annual grant for the acquisition of technical aids adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities;
- Access by persons with disabilities to mobility aids, devices and assistive technologies at affordable cost;
- The distribution of mobility aids to persons with disabilities (wheelchairs, crutches and white canes);
- The allocation of a grant from the National Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation Centre to ensure access by persons with disabilities to orthopaedic equipment and services;

- Mobility training for blind students.

Article 10

Right to life

123. The right to life is a universally recognized right enjoyed by all human beings. It is an inherent right of every person. From birth, each individual is considered to be a living being who must be protected. Indeed, humanity demands that the dignity of the person must be respected, which means, first and foremost, that each person's right to life must be protected. The right to life also means the right not to have one's life taken; it is the formal prohibition of intentionally causing the death of another person. To protect the right to life, Mauritanian law prohibits abortion unless the mother's life is at risk ((i) article 278 of the Criminal Code, on infanticide, and (ii) article 293 of the Criminal Code, on abortion).

Article 11

Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies

124. Associations of persons with disabilities are involved in designing and implementing humanitarian emergency plans. The national federation of persons with disabilities is represented on the National Multisectoral Council for the Advancement of Persons with Disabilities.

Article 12

Equal recognition before the law

125. Legal capacity is established by the law for persons in general and for persons living with a disability in particular. Decisions regarding legal capacity are regularly reviewed by a guardianship judge, who may take any measures deemed to be necessary and in the interests of the individual concerned, the first priority being to protect the person living with a disability.

Article 13

Access to justice

126. Article 6 of the Ordinance on the protection and advancement of persons with disabilities requires appropriate measures to be taken to enable persons with disabilities to have access to and benefit from the overall system by which society functions. Accordingly, the Ministry of Justice has organized several training workshops for justice officials aimed at facilitating access by persons with disabilities to justice. In addition to physical access, intellectual access is ensured through advice offices that provide services to persons with disabilities. Financial access is ensured through legal aid for persons with disabilities who cannot afford legal services.

127. The justice department periodically organizes awareness-raising seminars on the application of laws for all justice officials, including court officials, police officers and the gendarmerie. The International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Ordinance on the protection and advancement of persons with disabilities have been made available to justice personnel, and awareness-raising campaigns have been conducted to ensure that they know what needs to be done to facilitate access to justice for persons with disabilities.

128. The courts follow up on all cases brought by persons with disabilities. The judicial process is explained to them and legal aid is provided where necessary. Legal aid offices and citizen advice and guidance offices play an important role in that regard.

129. As part of the judicial process, necessary accommodations are made to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to exercise all the rights to which they are entitled as parties to the proceedings, and summonses are issued in such a way as to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to be present during legal proceedings. At hearings, persons with disabilities are offered, at the State's expense, whatever assistance and human resources that they require in order to understand and take part in the proceedings. The available remedies are explained to them.

130. A person with a disability who is deprived of his or her liberty is protected by a number of fundamental safeguards from the moment of detention, including:

- The right to have a family member or person of his or her choosing immediately informed of his or her detention and whereabouts;
- The right, at his or her request, to be examined by a physician upon admission, arrest or detention;
- The right to have access to a lawyer from the outset of his or her deprivation of liberty or access to the assistance of a person of his or her choosing and prompt access to legal aid, where appropriate;
- The right to be brought before a judge without delay and to have the legality of his or her detention examined by a court in accordance with the legislation in force;
- The right to be informed, in a language that he or she understands, of the rights listed above and of the possibility of requesting legal aid;
- The obligation of the detaining authority to keep an up-to-date register containing the following information: the identity and health status of the person deprived of his or her liberty; the date, time and reason for the deprivation of liberty; the name of the authority that deprived the person of liberty; the date and time of release or transfer to another place of detention; and the place to which he or she has been transferred and the authority overseeing the transfer.

131. Failure to observe these safeguards results in the imposition of disciplinary sanctions or the institution of criminal proceedings, as appropriate.

132. It is prohibited to detain a person with a disability in any place other than those provided for by law.

133. In addition to the role played by civil society and socio-professional bodies in ensuring access to justice for persons with disabilities, the public authorities ensure that such persons are provided with legal aid both during the proceedings and afterwards for the exercise of remedies or the enforcement of court decisions. By law, all persons with disabilities, whether plaintiffs or defendants, are entitled to legal aid at all stages of a civil proceeding. Legal aid is also available to persons with disabilities participating as civil parties in a criminal proceeding or as petitioners in applications for review.

134. If necessary, a person with a disability involved in a criminal case may benefit from the applicable provisions on payment of court costs.

135. Legal aid is also provided for the enforcement of judgments and for the exercise of the right of appeal.

Article 14

Liberty and security of the person

136. The fundamental rights and freedoms are set forth both in the Constitution and in law. The following rights are enshrined in the preamble to the Constitution:

- The right to equality;
- Human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- The right to property;
- Political and trade union freedoms;
- Economic and social rights;
- The rights associated with family life.

137. Article 10 provides that: “The State shall guarantee collective and individual freedoms to all its citizens, including:

- Freedom of movement and residence in any part of the national territory;
- Freedom to enter and leave the national territory;

- Freedom of opinion and thought;
- Freedom of expression;
- Freedom of assembly;
- Freedom of association;
- Freedom to join any political or trade union organization of their choice;
- Freedom of trade and industry;
- Freedom of intellectual, artistic and scientific creative effort;
- Freedom may be restricted only by law.”

Article 15

Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment

138. Under a law amending the Constitution, torture is classified as a crime against humanity. Following the country’s ratification of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its Optional Protocol, the prohibition of torture has been incorporated into various legal instruments.

139. The Government reaffirmed its commitment to preventing and combating torture during the presentation of the report of Mauritania before the Committee against Torture in 2013 and in its appearance before the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. On that occasion, the Government did not reject any of the recommendations made in relation to torture. The same commitment has more recently been reflected in the establishment of the national mechanism for the prevention of torture and in the Government’s interactions with the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which undertook a working visit to Mauritania in October 2016.

Article 16

Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse

140. The Government has established the national mechanism for the prevention of torture and has also passed legislation to criminalize torture.

141. Awareness-raising and training seminars on the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment have been organized for law enforcement officers.

142. The administrative and judicial authorities are required to investigate all allegations of torture. The penalties available are those provided for in the Act on Punishment of the Crimes of Torture and Slavery.

143. The National Human Rights Commission and the national mechanism for the prevention of torture are authorized to make unannounced visits to places of detention.

Article 17

Protecting the integrity of the person

144. The Constitution prohibits all forms of mental or physical violence.

145. Decisions rendered by criminal courts are subject to appeal and there is a de facto moratorium on the death penalty.

146. Any violation of the physical or mental integrity of the human person is prohibited under the law criminalizing torture, the Criminal Code and the law regulating the national police.

147. Persons in police custody are protected under the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which establishes their right to access to counsel and to contact with their family from the moment of their arrest. It also establishes limits on the custody period, which may only be extended by request of the public prosecutor.

Article 18**Liberty of movement and nationality**

148. The Constitution guarantees the right of all citizens to liberty of movement, to freedom to choose their residence and to a nationality. These freedoms are set out in Article 10, which provides that: “The State shall guarantee collective and individual freedoms to all its citizens, including:

- Freedom of movement and residence in any part of the national territory;
- Freedom to enter and leave the national territory;
- Freedom of opinion and thought;
- Freedom of expression;
- Freedom of assembly;
- Freedom to join the political or trade union organization of their choice.”

149. These freedoms are explicitly guaranteed to persons with disabilities, whether they are Mauritanian nationals or foreign nationals residing in Mauritania.

150. The procedure for acquiring Mauritanian nationality is established by law. The law provides that any child born to a Mauritanian parent is entitled to Mauritanian nationality.

151. The law also provides for the acquisition of Mauritanian nationality by naturalization. Naturalization is available, without distinction of any kind, to all persons meeting the relevant conditions.

152. Persons of foreign nationality with disabilities can acquire Mauritanian nationality by naturalization.

153. In addition, the Mauritanian Civil Registry Code guarantees registration at birth to any child born on Mauritanian territory, regardless of the child’s nationality or physical or mental condition.

Article 19**Living independently and being included in the community**

154. The State has the duty to take appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to have access to and benefit from the overall system by which society functions. The law defines associations of persons with disabilities as human rights organizations working in favour of equal opportunities for and the participation of persons with disabilities in development. Persons with disabilities are actively involved in decisions that affect them.

Article 20**Personal mobility**

155. According to the law: “The cost of essential orthopaedic appliances and assistive devices is covered by the State for persons who hold a card identifying them as having a disability and who do not have social security coverage. Social security institutions also provide orthopaedic appliances and other assistive devices for covered persons with disabilities. The State and public agencies promote the creation of industries that manufacture orthopaedic appliances and assistive devices. The State offers the services of qualified personnel to institutions that provide services to persons with disabilities. At the request of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family, any material, equipment or vehicle intended for associations and organizations of persons with disabilities may be exempted from payment of taxes, duties and tariffs.”

Article 21**Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information**

156. Access to appropriate information is guaranteed to everyone under the law on freedom of the press. The law characterizes information as an essential tool for economic

and social development, cultural enrichment, intellectual advancement and civic, political and democratic education.

157. The High Authority on the Press and Audiovisual Media, an independent regulatory body, is responsible for ensuring that the principles contained in the law on the press are respected, and may impose penalties for non-compliance. These penalties range from suspension and fines to the closure of the institution concerned. The proliferation of audiovisual media has made it possible to expand and diversify the information available to persons with disabilities, with access facilitated by the use of subtitles or sign language interpretation during televised news bulletins.

Article 22

Respect for privacy

158. The Constitution guarantees respect for the privacy of every citizen, regardless of age: “No one may be prosecuted, arrested, detained or punished except in cases determined by law and in accordance with the procedures prescribed by law. A citizen’s honour and privacy, the inviolability of the human person, of domicile and of correspondence are guaranteed by the State.” However, the law provides for restrictions on this principle in exceptional cases. The Criminal Code establishes penalties for breach of the inviolability of domicile and the confidentiality of correspondence.

Article 23

Respect for home and the family

159. The Government has taken measures to eliminate discrimination against persons with disabilities in all matters relating to marriage, family, parenthood and relationships, on an equal basis with others, so as to ensure that:

- The right of all persons with disabilities who are of age to marry and to found a family on a basis of free and full consent is recognized. The Personal Status Code regulates all issues relating to marriage without discrimination. It also defines the conditions of marriage, ensuring the same rights for all, including persons with disabilities;
- The rights of family planning, birth spacing and access to reproductive health information and education are guaranteed to all;
- Awareness-raising programmes on female genital mutilation are organized for all citizens on an equal basis.

Article 24

Education

160. The Government has undertaken a major structural reform of the education system, the implementation of which has been supported by the National Education Development Programme. The Programme’s principal aim has been to build a coherent educational development framework for the entire system, from preschool to higher education.

161. The programme has brought about significant gains in terms of access and equity. The primary school attendance rate in rural and peri-urban areas is among the highest in Africa. Efforts to develop local schools and campaigns to draw attention to and disseminate legislation, especially relating to compulsory education, have been undertaken with a view to ensuring access to and universal completion of high-quality basic education.

162. The specific needs of children with disabilities are taken into account with a view to ensuring consistency of the measures for the protection and advancement of persons with disabilities.

163. The Government has transformed the school for deaf, mute and blind children into a training and support centre for children with disabilities. The centre welcomes students with disabilities and offers them transport solutions and half board.

164. Schools for the deaf exist in various regions of the country. These schools are run by associations of persons with disabilities and receive an annual subsidy from the State.

165. Education is compulsory for all children, without exception.

166. Other centres or schools have been set up by organizations of persons with disabilities.

Article 25

Health

167. As part of its primary health care services (health centres, clinics and basic health units), the Government provides health-care packages that include free preventive services and affordable therapeutic care. These services are offered to all citizens, without discrimination.

168. The different health-care facilities provide a range of services to persons with disabilities, including health education, disease control and prevention, promotion of essential family health practices and the vaccination of children against viral diseases.

169. These services are available in rural areas and in community settings, at both the central and regional levels. The facilities offer all persons the same quality of care.

170. Services and care are provided to address various issues, including maternal and neonatal mortality, the health of adolescents and young people in relation to sexually transmitted diseases, prevention of mother-to-child transmission and obstetric care.

Article 26

Habilitation and rehabilitation

171. The National Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation Centre provides free services to persons with disabilities. It has five regional offices. The Centre provided the follow services in 2015:

Functional rehabilitation

<i>Pathology</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Number of therapy sessions</i>
Hemiplegia	86	1 548
Paraplegia	22	396
Encephalopathy	5	90
Sequelae of polio	0	0
Peripheral	21	378
Brachial	5	90
Brachial	26	468
Lumbago	54	972
Sciatica	44	792
Rheumatoid arthritis	9	162
Osteoarthritis	37	666
Sprain and dislocation	21	378
Sequelae of bone fracture	39	702
Sequelae of pleurisy	9	162
Club foot	5	90
Sequelae of burns	4	72
Limb amputation	6	108
Other	0	0
Total	393	7 074

Orthopaedics

<i>Pathology</i>	<i>Total</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	
Femoral prostheses	9	6	15
Tibial prostheses	9	6	15
Gritti-Stokes prostheses	4	1	5
Gait orthoses	2	1	3
Splints	15	12	27
Spinal corsets	10	4	14
Back braces	10	6	16
Cervical collars	8	4	12
Orthopaedic shoes	5	16	21
Simple shoes	3	7	10
Crutches	13	2	15
Upper limb orthoses	3	10	13
Orthopaedic boots	13	12	25
Walking frames	7	9	16
Wheelchairs	7	9	16
Ankle braces	2	4	6
Repairs	3	3	6
Other	1	2	3
Total	124	114	238

Article 27**Work and employment**

172. All national legislation and ratified international instruments safeguard and support the realization of the right to work and the equality of all as far as conditions allowing access to work are concerned. Any labour- or wage-related violations are punishable under the Labour Code, which also sets out applicable penalties.

173. A decree on the implementation of the Ordinance on the protection and advancement of persons with disabilities provides for affirmative measures aimed at ensuring equal access to employment for all and stipulates that a certain number of jobs are to be reserved for persons with disabilities.

174. The Government has recruited over a hundred unemployed graduates with disabilities to positions in the civil service and has created the National Multisectoral Council for the Advancement of Persons with Disabilities.

Article 28**Adequate standard of living and social protection**

175. The Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity is based on a vision for the future founded on equality and respect for human rights.

176. The Government has expanded the scope of the National Health Insurance Fund to cover all workers. The National Social Security Fund and the National Health Insurance Fund are responsible for providing social security coverage to all workers in both the formal and informal sectors.

177. The purpose of the national social protection strategy is to establish universal health coverage and to coordinate the efforts of the various stakeholders in this area.

178. The Social Affairs Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family covers costs relating to hospitalization, orthopaedic devices and medical evacuations for persons with disabilities in a situation of poverty. Persons with disabilities who are registered with the national social security or health insurance schemes are covered either by the National Social Security Fund or by the National Health Insurance Fund.

179. The Government has allocated land for housing for persons with disabilities and for the premises of associations of persons with disabilities.

180. Organizations of persons with disabilities across the country have been receiving subsidies since 2010.

Association

<i>N</i>	<i>Association</i>	<i>Subsidy received in 2015</i>
1	Association promotion et enseignement des aveugles	600 000
2	Association Mauritanienne des déficients auditifs et de la voix	1 700 000
3	Association Nationale des aveugles de Mauritanie	2 383 000
4	Association mauritanienne des handicapés de la lèpre	779 500
5	Assistance des nécessiteux	20 000
6	Association des femmes handicapées pour la solidarité	790 000
7	Regroupement Mauritanien des femmes handicapées	812 055
8	Association des diplômés handicapés	992 911
9	FEMANPH	6 640 000
10	FEMHANDIS	500 000
11	Association Mauritanienne Assistance des Handicapés	3 641 020
12	Association mauritanienne des hémophiles	150 000
13	Association Mauritanienne pour l'insertion des aveugles	728 000
14	Association mauritanienne secours des lépreux	200 000
15	AMIREADI	6 443 355
16	Association développement social en Mauritanie	2 050 000
17	Assistance des handicapés pour le développement	150 000
18	Forum des sourds	2 830 000
19	Association des jeunes handicapés aveugles	553 500
20	Organisation communautaire pour la promotion des handicapés	400 000
21	Organisation insertion des albinos	150 000
22	Association Mauritanienne pour le secours de l'enfant handicapé	460 000
23	Association Mauritanienne pour la Promotion des Handicapés moteurs	1 163 000
24	Secours des handicapés	150 000
25	Association volonté et développement	690 000
26	Association appui à l'éducation des enfants sourds muets et handicapés	510 000
27	Association Aziza	150 000
28	Association Mauritanienne pour la santé et les handicapés	150 000
29	Association Mauritanienne des femmes handicapées	600 000
30	Association Mauritanienne pour l'insertion des enfants handicapés à l'école	784 000
31	Association ressortissants des mahadras	200 000
32	RBC Handicapés	150 000
33	Association développement des personnes handicapées	200 000
34	Association Besma	576 400

<i>N</i>	<i>Association</i>	<i>Subsidy received in 2015</i>
35	Association Elmoustakbel	150 000
36	Association secours enfants	150 000
37	Projehm	147 000
Total		38 743 741

Activities of the Department for Persons with Disabilities of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family

<i>Activity undertaken</i>	<i>Number of beneficiaries</i>	
	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>
Distribution of mobility aids to persons with disabilities: wheelchairs, crutches and white canes	1 200	600
Hearing aids – consultations and distribution		1 000
Medication – consultations and distribution	200	
Subsidies to associations	32	38
Distribution of food	1 360	1 000
Social assistance for persons with disabilities who are unable to work	61	252
Cash transfers for the care of children with multiple disabilities	55	55
Allocation of land for persons with disabilities	200	
Income-generating activities	99	202
Recruitment and training of unemployed graduates with disabilities	100	

Article 29

Participation in political and public life

181. Access to elected office and posts is open to all citizens, without discrimination on the basis of sex, race or disability.

182. Persons with disabilities occupy posts in various national institutions and bodies, including:

- The National Human Rights Commission;
- The Economic and Social Council;
- The National Multisectoral Council for the Advancement of Persons with Disabilities;
- The boards of several public institutions.

Article 30

Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

183. The Government has provided organizations, associations and clubs with various forms of support to boost the participation of persons with disabilities in international, national and regional cultural and sporting events.

Article 31

Statistics and data collection

184. There are 33,920 people living with a disability in Mauritania, out of a total population of 3,537,368, making the disability prevalence rate 0.96 per cent. One in three of those people have a motor disability, making this the most common type of disability. The proportion of persons with disabilities who are blind stands at 20.2 per cent.

185. There is a higher prevalence of disability among males than among females: 18,470 males have disabilities, compared with 15,450 females. The disability prevalence rates in urban and rural areas are almost identical (0.97 and 0.96 per cent, respectively). With regard to prevalence by *wilaya*, the highest rate is found in Tiris Zemmour (1.40 per cent), while the lowest is in Guidimaka (0.73 per cent). Nouakchott is home to the largest number of persons with disabilities.

186. Children under 15 years of age make up 18.4 per cent of the total population of persons with disabilities; persons aged 15 to 59 account for more than half (55.4 per cent) and persons aged 60 and over make up 26.3 per cent of the total population of persons with disabilities.

187. The main cause of disability is disease, followed by congenital anomalies. A total of 41.8 per cent of persons with disabilities acquired the disability as a result of a disease, while 29.5 per cent were born with a disability. For 16.3 per cent of persons, the cause of disability has not been determined. The proportion of persons whose disability was caused by an accident stands at 11.6 per cent. Disease is the main cause among persons with motor disabilities, visual impairments and multiple disabilities. Deafness and intellectual disabilities tend to be congenital.

188. Of the persons with disabilities who are of marriageable age, 40.9 per cent are married, 11.4 per cent are widowed and 10.7 per cent are divorced.

189. As far as educational levels are concerned, nearly half of persons with disabilities have not completed any level of schooling (49.53 per cent), while 25.8 per cent have a Qur'anic level of schooling.

190. Respectively, 12.9 per cent and 6.7 per cent of persons with disabilities have completed primary and general secondary school.

191. The proportions of males and females with disabilities who have not completed any level of education stands at 44.09 per cent and 56.07 per cent, respectively. The proportions are 32.48 per cent for males and 44.76 per cent for females in urban areas, 56.1 per cent for males and 65.92 per cent for females in rural areas, and 57.18 per cent for males and 65.8 per cent for females among nomadic groups.

192. A total of 66 per cent of persons with disabilities are employed and a further 7.9 per cent have been employed and/or are looking for work. Persons with disabilities who are looking for their first job account for 26.1 per cent of the working population with disabilities. A significant proportion of persons with disabilities are unable to work because of their disability (32.4 per cent). Women with disabilities who do not work outside the home and other persons with disabilities who are not economically active for other reasons account for, respectively, 28.3 per cent and 20.3 per cent of the total population of persons with disabilities who are not economically active.

193. The proportion of persons with disabilities who are in employment is highest in the *wilayas* of Dakhlet Nouadhibou, Tiris Zemmour and Nouakchott.

194. The majority of persons with disabilities who are in work are self-employed (59.7 per cent). Wage labour is fairly common among persons with disabilities, with 14.8 per cent working as temporary employees in the private sector and 13 per cent in the public sector. It is relatively rare for persons with disabilities to work as caregivers (3.8 per cent), employers (3.5 per cent) or apprentices (0.6 per cent).

195. Of the 11,817 heads of household who are living with a disability, 68.5 per cent are men. The most common form of disability among these men is motor disability. In terms of marital status, most male heads of household with disabilities are married.

196. Most heads of household with disabilities have not completed any level of education. A small proportion have completed some level of modern education (primary, general secondary, university or technical/vocational).

Table 1
Persons with disabilities as a proportion of the total population, by sex and place of residence

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Total population</i>	<i>Population with disabilities</i>	<i>Persons with disabilities as a proportion of the total population (%)</i>
Sex			
Male	1 743 074	18 470	1.06
Female	1 794 294	15 450	0.86
Setting			
Urban	1 710 103	16 548	0.97
Rural	1 760 937	16 966	0.96
Nomadic groups	66 328	406	0.61
Total	3 537 368	33 920	0.96

Table 2
Disability prevalence rate (%), by wilaya and sex

<i>Wilaya</i>	<i>Sex</i>		<i>≠</i>
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
Hodh ech Chargui	1.01	0.91	0.96
Hodh El Gharbi	0.88	0.74	0.80
Assaba	0.86	0.65	0.75
Gorgol	1.15	0.92	1.03
Brakna	1.24	1.08	1.16
Trarza	1.08	0.92	1.00
Adrar	1.26	0.96	1.11
Dakhlet Nouadhibou	1.04	0.79	0.93
Tagant	1.05	0.89	0.97
Guidimaka	0.90	0.57	0.73
Tiris Zemmour	1.52	1.26	1.40
Inchiri	0.77	0.70	0.74
Nouakchott	1.11	0.90	1.01
Mauritania	1.06	0.86	0.96

Table 3
Distribution (%) of persons with disabilities, by place of residence/living situation and sex

<i>Setting</i>	<i>Sex</i>					
	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Urban	9 349	50.6	7 199	46.6	16 548	48.8
Rural	8 863	48.0	8 103	52.5	16 966	50.0
Nomadic groups	258	1.4	148	1.0	406	1.2
Total	18 470	100.0	15 450	100.0	33 920	100.0

Table 4
Distribution of persons with disabilities, by sex and type of disability

<i>Type of disability</i>	<i>Sex</i>				<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>			
Motor	6 343	34.3	5 093	33.0	11 436	33.7
Deaf/mute	2 558	13.8	2 234	14.5	4 792	14.1
Visual	3 704	20.1	3 149	20.4	6 853	20.2
Mental	2 613	14.1	1 845	11.9	4 458	13.1
Multiple	1 331	7.2	1 226	7.9	2 557	7.5
Other	1 921	10.4	1 903	12.3	3 824	11.3
Overall	18 470	100.0	15 450	100.0	33 920	100.0

Article 32

International cooperation

197. The national federation of persons with disabilities has held the presidency of the Pan African Federation of the Disabled for the last three years. Over this period, the Government has contributed a total of 140 million ouguiyas to fund the activities of this regional body.

198. The Government also subsidizes the Association maghrébine des organisations de personnes handicapées (the Maghreb Association of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities), of which Mauritania is the president.

199. For over a decade, the support and development office of the Pan African Federation of the Disabled has been located in Mauritania.

200. The specialized agencies of the United Nations also support the activities of organizations of persons with disabilities.

Article 33

National implementation and monitoring

201. The national implementation and monitoring mechanisms are:

- The Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family;
- The Commission for Human Rights and Humanitarian Action;
- The National Human Rights Commission;
- National Multisectoral Council for the Advancement of Persons with Disabilities;
- The interministerial committee responsible for drafting reports and following up on the implementation of recommendations made by treaty bodies and during the universal periodic review;
- Organizations of persons with disabilities.

Conclusion

202. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is pleased to submit its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and reaffirms its commitment to implementing the provisions of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It stands ready to engage in an ongoing constructive dialogue with the Committee with a view to addressing the shortcomings identified in the implementation of the Convention, which it fully supports.

203. Finally, the Government wishes to take this opportunity to thank all the partners that have supported its efforts to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities.
