



**International Convention on
the Elimination of All Forms
of Racial Discrimination**

Distr.: General
27 February 2023
English
Original: Arabic
Arabic, English, French and
Spanish only

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

**Combined tenth and eleventh periodic reports
submitted by Saudi Arabia under article 9 of the
Convention, due in 2020***

[Date received: 25 January 2023]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	3
I. General information	4
1. Population	4
2. Key economic, social and cultural indicators	5
3. Political system of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.....	5
4. Legal and institutional framework for human rights in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.....	7
5. Equality, non-discrimination and means of redress	12
6. Reservations and interpretive declarations to the Convention	13
II. Specific information on the implementation of the Convention and of the Committee’s concluding observations	14
Article 1.....	14
Article 2.....	14
Article 3.....	18
Article 4.....	19
Article 5.....	20
(a) Freedom of thought, conscience and religion.....	21
(b) Freedom of opinion and expression	21
(c) Freedom of association.....	22
(d) Right to work.....	23
(e) Right to housing	29
(f) Right to public health services, medical care, social security and social services.....	30
(g) Measures taken to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic	33
(h) Right to education and training	35
(i) Right to participate equally in cultural activities	37
(j) Right of access to any location or facility intended for use by the general public, such as transport, hotels, restaurants, cafes, theatres and parks.....	37
Article 6.....	37
Article 7.....	40

Introduction

1. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hereby presents the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination¹ with its combined tenth and eleventh periodic reports,² covering the period 2016–2020, under article 9 (1) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, in line with the recommendations contained in the Committee’s concluding observations issued on 8 June 2018³ (CERD/C/SAU/CO/4-9).⁴
2. The report was prepared by a standing committee formed for that purpose pursuant to High-level Order No. 13084 (27 Rabi’ I A.H. 1436 (18 January A.D. 2015))⁵ within the Human Rights Commission. The Commission is a national mechanism with members drawn from various other bodies, that is responsible for preparing the country’s reports under human rights treaties (see annex 1: terms of reference of the standing committee).
3. The report contains general information to help the Committee understand the geographical and demographic characteristics of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its political and legal system, and the economic and social situation. In fact, Saudi Arabia has not yet submitted a common core document, as the draft is currently being updated to reflect the reforms and rapid developments taking place in the country.⁶ The report also contains information on the implementation of articles 1–7 of the Convention and of the concluding observations of the Committee. References to the paragraph numbers of the concluding observations relevant to the information contained in the report are provided in footnotes. It should be noted that on 21 October 2019, Saudi Arabia submitted information on the implementation of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 20 (a) and (b) and 24 of the concluding observations.⁷
4. The report also includes specific information in response to the paragraphs of particular importance (10, 16, 24, 28 and 30) of the concluding observations, with the relevant paragraphs also being referenced in footnotes.

Methodology for the preparation of the report

5. The present report has been prepared by the standing committee in accordance with the reporting guidelines adopted by the Committee at its seventy-first session (CERD/C/2007/1) following a national consultation in which government agencies whose work is relevant to the topics of the Convention, as well as several civil society organizations, participated. The standing committee has sought to provide even-handed coverage of both positive aspects and challenges. As is usually the case for reports under international human rights treaties, the drafting process involved several stages, as follows:

(a) **Follow-up to the concluding observations:** Since the Committee’s concluding observations on the previous report of Saudi Arabia were issued, the standing committee for reports – as the entity responsible for preparing the country’s reports and following up on recommendations issued by treaty bodies and other relevant mechanisms – has taken steps to implement the recommendations and address any obstacles to their implementation, exercising the wide-ranging powers granted so as to fulfil its functions to the fullest extent.

(b) **Preparation:** During this phase, workshops and focus groups were held, which aimed to equip those contributing to the preparation of the report with the knowledge and skills required for preparing reports under international treaties, particularly the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Several such training courses and workshops were held under a memorandum of understanding on technical cooperation between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Office of the

¹ Referred to hereafter as “the Committee”.

² Referred to hereafter as “the report”.

³ Referred to hereafter as “the concluding observations”.

⁴ Paragraph 48 of the concluding observations.

⁵ Referred to hereafter as “the standing committee”.

⁶ Paragraph 44 of the concluding observations.

⁷ Paragraph 45 of the concluding observations.

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) signed on 7 Sha'ban A.H. 1433 (27 June A.D. 2012).

(c) **Information gathering:** The standing committee developed special questionnaires wherewith to request the information needed for the report from the relevant government agencies, in line with the Convention, the reporting guidelines and the Committee's concluding observations on the fourth to ninth combined periodic reports of Saudi Arabia. Meetings were also held with representatives of civil society organizations to exchange information and gather their views. The National Recommendations Tracking Database, launched in November 2019 in cooperation with OHCHR to monitor the implementation of recommendations from international mechanisms, was also used as a preliminary step.

(d) **Drafting:** The focus of this stage was on the inclusion of general information to help the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination understand the overall situation in the country, specific information relevant to the provisions of the Convention and the Committee's recommendations, and statistical data and analysis. Technical terms have been used to facilitate the Committee's consideration and discussion of the report.

(e) **National review and consultation:**⁸ During this stage, representatives of government agencies and civil society organizations, as well as other persons concerned with the subject matter of the Convention, were invited to participate in workshops and focus groups with the aim of discussing and revising the draft report. Through this process, several amendments were made and the report was finalized.

I. General information

1. Population⁹

6. As of mid-2020, the population of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was 35,013,414, of whom 21,430,128 were Saudi and 13,583,286 were non-Saudi. The rate of population growth was 2.41 per cent and population density stood at 16.1 inhabitants per km². All citizens of the Kingdom are Muslims, and Arabic is the official language in the country. More than 7 million Muslims visit the country each year to perform hajj and umrah. It is to Saudi Arabia that Muslims turn in prayer, as it is where the Two Holy Mosques are located. The Kingdom is also a destination for migrant workers seeking to improve their standard of living, due to its large-scale development projects, excellent job opportunities and economic environment.

7. The country's demographic composition has been determined by developmental factors, such as population size and its distribution according to sex, nationality, age group, and socioeconomic status in urban and rural areas. Work is currently underway to collect data for the 2020 population and housing census, which was postponed in response to the measures taken to limit the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The General Authority for Statistics has adopted a digital, tablet-based method for censuses, whereby data collected from households is sent directly to an information centre. The "National Address" system was also used, which is a system used by Saudi Post to determine the coordinates of (and provide postcodes for) all buildings. A quality control system is also applied via the central operating rooms.

⁸ Paragraph 42 of the concluding observations.

⁹ Paragraph 8 of the concluding observations.

2. Key economic, social and cultural indicators¹⁰

<i>GDP growth at constant prices (2010=100) for the third quarter of 2020</i>	-4.6%
Per capita share of GDP at current prices for the third quarter of 2020	18 972 SAR (5 059 USD)
Cost of living index (inflation) for 2020	101.28
Change in cost of living index (inflation) for 2020	3.4%
Unemployment rate among population aged 15 and over in the third quarter of 2020	8.5%
Neonatal mortality rate per 1,000 live births in 2020	3
Under-five mortality rate per 1,000 live births in 2020	7
Gross primary school enrolment rate in 2019	101.94%
Net primary school enrolment rate in 2019	95.13%
Labour force participation rate among population aged 15 years and over in the third quarter of 2020	59.5%
Employment rate among population aged 15 years and over for the third quarter of 2020	91.5%
Saudi workforce as a proportion of the overall workforce in the third quarter of 2020	47.65%
Saudi workers as a proportion of all workers in the third quarter of 2020	44.3%
Workers as a proportion of total population in the third quarter of 2020	54.40%
Saudi workers as a proportion of total Saudi population in the third quarter of 2020	41.66%
Unemployed as a proportion of total population in the third quarter of 2020	5.06%
Saudi unemployed as a proportion of total Saudi population in the third quarter of 2020	7.31%

3. Political system of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

General principles

8. The Basic Law of Governance, promulgated by Royal Order No. A/90 on 27 Sha'ban A.H. 1412 (2 March A.D. 1992) defines the State, the principles on which it is based, the State authorities and their functions, and the rights and responsibilities of individuals. Article 1 of the Law stipulates that: "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a sovereign Arab and Islamic State. Its religion is Islam and its constitution is the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet. Its language is Arabic and its capital is the city of Riyadh." Article 5 (1) of the Law stipulates that "monarchy is the system of government in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia". Furthermore, according to article 55, it is the responsibility of the King to oversee the application of Islamic sharia and the laws and public policy of the State, as well as the protection and defence of the nation. Article 7 of the Law stipulates that: "Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia derives its authority from the Qur'an and the Sunna. These are the two pillars that underpin the present Law and all laws of the State." The system of government in the Kingdom is based on principles and values that guarantee prosperity, protect human rights and maintain order. Article 8 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates that: "Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be based on justice, shura (consultation) and equality, in accordance with Islamic law."

State authorities

9. Article 44 of the Basic Law of Governance sets out the authorities of the State: the judiciary, the executive and the legislature, which cooperate with one another in the performance of their functions. The following is a brief overview of the principles regulating these authorities and an explanation of their functions:

¹⁰ Paragraph 8 of the concluding observations.

Judiciary

10. The judiciary in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia derives its authority and principles from Islamic sharia, which enjoins justice as the foundation of decision-making and guarantees judicial independence. Article 46 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates: “The judiciary is an independent authority and, in their administration of justice, judges are independent and subject to no authority other than that of Islamic sharia.” Article 1 of the Judiciary Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/78 on 19 Ramadan A.H. 1428 (1 October A.D. 2007) further stipulates: “Judges are independent and, in their administration of justice, are subject to no authority save that of Islamic sharia and the legislation in force. No one may interfere with the administration of justice.” Article 48 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates that the courts shall apply the provisions of Islamic sharia to the cases brought before them, guided by the Qur’an, Sunna and with laws decreed by the ruler that do not conflict with the Qur’an and Sunna. Article 49 of the same law states that courts in the Kingdom shall adjudicate all crimes and disputes, except for cases that fall within the jurisdiction of the Board of Grievances. Article 50 states: “The King or his representative shall be responsible for the enforcement of judicial rulings.”

11. The Judiciary Act also provides for the establishment of courts of first instance (general courts, criminal courts, personal status courts, commercial courts and labour courts), courts of appeal, a supreme court for overseeing the enforcement of sentences and assessing their validity. It also envisaged the formation of the Supreme Judicial Council. The Act clarifies the jurisdiction of those courts, as well as the rights and responsibilities of judges, how judges are to be inspected, the portfolio of the Ministry of Justice and the responsibilities and functions of public notaries.

12. The Board of Grievances adjudicates administrative cases. The Board of Grievances Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/78 on 19 Ramadan A.H. 1428 (1 October A.D. 2007), details the composition of the Administrative Judicial Council, and the conversion of the Board of Grievances courts into administrative courts, administrative courts of appeal, and the Supreme Administrative Court. It clarifies the jurisdiction of each of these courts and the processes related to the appointment and status of judges. The Oversight and Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) conducts investigations into administrative and financial irregularities and follows up on cases referred to the Board of Grievance.

13. Royal Order No. A/240 of 22 Ramadan A.H. 1438 (17 June A.D. 2017) changed the “Bureau of Investigation and Public Prosecution” to the “Public Prosecution Service”. Headed by the Attorney General, the Service has full autonomy in performing its functions and is directly answerable to the King. In accordance with its Statute, the Public Prosecution Service investigates crimes, conducts investigations, decides whether to institute proceedings or close the case, conducts prosecutions before judicial bodies, pursues appeal and cassation proceedings and oversees the enforcement of sentences. The Service is also responsible for overseeing the inspections of prisons and detention centres, receiving complaints from prisoners and detainees, verifying the legality of their imprisonment or detention and ensuring that prisoners and detainees are not kept in detention beyond the prescribed period.

14. Royal Order No. A/277 of 15 Rabi’ I A.H. 1441 (12 December A.D. 2019) approved organizational and structural arrangements for combating financial and administrative corruption. The arrangements included merging the Monitoring and Investigations Authority with the National Anti-Corruption Authority to form a single entity called the Oversight and Anti-Corruption Authority. The latter also includes a unit responsible for investigations and criminal proceedings related to financial and administrative corruption.

Legislature

15. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the legislature consists of the King, the Council of Ministers and the Shura (Consultative) Council. Article 55 of the Basic Law of Governance states: “The King shall conduct the affairs of the nation lawfully in accordance with Islamic principles. He shall oversee the implementation of Islamic sharia and the laws and public policy of the State, as well as the protection and defence of the nation.” The Council of Ministers, along with the Shura Council, issues laws and regulations. Article 67 of the Basic Law stipulates that: “The legislature is to formulate laws and regulations that are in the public

interest and that protect the interests of the State against harm, in accordance with the principles of Islamic sharia. It shall exercise its mandate in accordance with this Law and the laws relating to the Council of Ministers and the Shura Council.”

Executive

16. The Council of Ministers is responsible for managing the internal and external affairs of the State and exercises executive authority in accordance with article 19 of the Council of Ministers Act. Article 56 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates that: “The King presides over the Council of Ministers. He shall be assisted in the performance of his duties by the members of the Council, in accordance with the provisions of this Law and other laws. The Council of Ministers Act sets out the powers of the Council in relation to internal and foreign affairs, the organization of government agencies and coordination between them. It also sets out the conditions for appointment for ministers, their powers, ways of holding them to account and all matters pertaining thereto”. Article 58 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates that “ministers and heads of independent agencies are accountable to the Prime Minister”. To ensure that the legislature and the executive perform their duties correctly, and to promote the principle of consultation, the King may summon the Shura Council and the Council of Ministers in joint session, pursuant to article 69 of the Basic Law of Governance.

4. Legal and institutional framework for human rights in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

(a) Legal framework

Laws, regulations and legal principles

17. The laws of Saudi Arabia contain provisions explicitly designed to promote and protect human rights. Chief among these are the Basic Law of Governance, the Judiciary Act, the Board of Grievances Act, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Juvenile Justice Act, the Anti-Harassment Act, the Audiovisual Media Act, the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Rights and Responsibilities of HIV/AIDS Sufferers Act, the regulations governing appeal proceedings and other pieces of legislation. Labour laws and laws relating to health, education and social insurance, as well as other laws, regulations, orders, decrees and ordinances, elaborate in detail on the principles enshrined in the Basic Law of Governance. There follows an overview of the human rights principles contained in the Basic Law, as well as a list of the main laws, decrees, ordinances and amendments introduced during the period covered by the report (2016–2020), which constitute the legal framework for human rights in the country.

• Basic Law of Governance

18. The Basic Law of Governance contains core principles designed to promote and protect human rights. These principles constitute, in sum, the legal framework for human rights. Article 26 of the Basic Law of Governance states: “The State shall protect human rights in accordance with Islamic sharia.” The Basic Law affirms a range of human rights, including the right to justice and equality. Article 8 of the Law stipulates: “Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be based on justice, shura (consultation) and equality, in accordance with Islamic law.”

19. With regard to the right of access to justice and equality before the courts, article 47 stipulates that: “All citizens and residents of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have an equal right to take legal action.” Given that the right to security is the cornerstone of all human rights and that its application should not affect the right to liberty, article 36 states categorically: “The State shall ensure the security of all its citizens and residents. The movement of individuals may not be restricted, nor may they be detained or imprisoned save in accordance with the law.” Article 38 stipulates that: “Penalties are personal and there can be no offence and no penalty save with reference to the provisions of sharia or statutory law. Penalties can be imposed only for actions subsequent to the enactment of a law.”

20. On the right to private property and personal freedom, article 18 stipulates: “The State guarantees the freedom to own property and the inviolability of private property, which may

be expropriated only in the public interest and with fair compensation.” Article 37 states that: “Dwellings shall be inviolable and may not be entered or searched without the permission of the owner except in cases specified by law”. Article 40 stipulates that: “Correspondence by telegraph and mail, telephone conversations and other means of communication shall be protected. Such communications may not be seized, delayed, viewed or intercepted except in the cases provided for by law.”

21. As regards social security and insurance, article 27 stipulates: “The State guarantees the rights of citizens and their families in the event of emergency, sickness, disability or old age. The State shall support the social security system and encourage institutions and individuals to participate in charitable activity.”

22. The Basic Law also regulates the right to work. Article 28 states: “The State shall facilitate employment for everyone who is able to work and shall enact laws to protect the rights of workers and employers.”

23. As regards education, article 30 stipulates: “The State shall provide public education and undertake to combat illiteracy.”

24. With regard to the right to health, article 31 stipulates: “The State shall be responsible for public health and shall provide health care to all citizens.”

25. In relation to cultural participation, article 29 stipulates that: “The State shall promote science, literature and culture, encourage academic research, preserve Islamic and Arab heritage, and contribute to Arab, Islamic and human civilization.”

26. In affirmation of freedom of opinion and expression – while remaining consistent with both Islamic sharia, which prohibits causing offence to others and violating their dignity, and international standards, which include the principle of statutory limitations on the freedom of opinion and expression in order to protect core human rights – article 39 states that: “The media, press and all other means of expression shall use polite language, abide by the laws of the State, contribute towards educating the nation and support national unity. Any form of expression that is conducive to sedition and division, that undermines the security of the State or that violates human dignity and human rights is prohibited. The law sets out how these provisions are to be applied.”

27. On the right to a decent environment, article 32 stipulates: “The State shall endeavour to protect, conserve and improve the environment and prevent pollution.”

- **Juvenile Justice Act**

28. Promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/113 of Dhu al-Qa’dah A.H. 1439 (1 August A.D. 2018), this Act defined the rules and procedures for dealing with juvenile offenders and the cases in which they are involved, including in relation to age-appropriate arrest, detention, investigation and trial procedures that serve to protect their interests correct their behaviour. Article 1 of the Act defines juveniles as “any male or female aged between 7 and 18”. For its part, article 15 (2) stipulates that “any juvenile found guilty of committing a crime punishable by death, shall instead be placed in detention for a period of up to 10 years”.

- **Anti-Harassment Act**

29. Promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/69 of 16 Ramadan A.H. 1439 (31 May A.D. 2018), this Act is part of ongoing national efforts to codify *ta’zir* crimes. This proves involves the enactment of criminal laws to classify such crimes and designate appropriate punishments. Harassment is a crime under Islamic sharia, from which the country derives all its laws.

- **Audiovisual Media Act**

30. Promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/33 of 25 Rabi’ I A.H. 1439 (13 December A.H. 2017), the Act, in article 5, prohibits abuse, insult and any actions apt to provoke enmity, division and hatred among citizens, incite violence or threaten societal harmony. The implementing regulations of the Act (No. 16927 of 4 Rabi’ I A.H. 1440) were issued by the Minister of Information as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the General Authority for Audiovisual Media. The regulations include detailed provisions on audiovisual media activities.

- **HIV/AIDS Prevention and Rights and Responsibilities of HIV/AIDS Sufferers Act**

31. Articles 2, 3 and 4 of the Act, which was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/41 of 16 Rabi' II A.H. 1439 (3 January A.D. 2018), classify AIDS as an infectious disease and seek to preserve the rights of people living with AIDS and their contacts while ensuring that they receive care and rehabilitation and are able to continue in education and work. Under the Act, the health authorities are tasked with providing health care, counselling and psychological support to sufferers; respecting their rights, and ensuring necessary health care is not withheld from any person living with AIDS. Article of the Act 8 stipulates that those affected shall not be prevented from enjoying the rights granted to them by law.

- **Regulations governing appeal proceedings**

32. The regulations governing appeal proceedings issued, on 2 Dhu al-Qa'dah A.H. 1440 (5 July A.D. 2019), marked an important development in the field of court proceedings, as they as they contain in-depth and detailed information about the procedures to be followed in the case of appeals.

33. In addition to laws and regulations, a number of royal orders, and high-level orders, as well as decrees from the Council of Ministers, have served to consolidate the legal framework for human rights, most notably:

- **Royal Order No. 25634 dated 20 Rabi' II A.H. 1441 (17 December A.D. 2019)**

34. The Order stipulates that the Supreme Court sitting in full session is to establish a legal principle whereby flogging is not to be imposed for any *ta'zir* crimes and is to be replaced with other forms of punishment. Courts are obliged to apply this principle and not to deviate from it in any way. Acting under that Order, the Supreme Court, sitting in full session, duly issued Decree No. 40/M dated 24 Jumada II A.H. 1441 (18 February A.D. 2020), in which it decided by majority that the courts should, in cases of *ta'zir* crimes, impose imprisonment and/or a fine or alternative punishments, in line with the laws and decrees issued in that regard.

- **Council of Ministers Decree No. 418 of 19 Rajab A.H 1440 (26 March A.D. 2019)**

35. The Decree ratifies a resolution of the Supreme Council of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, issued at its thirty-ninth session held in Riyadh on 2 Rabi' II A.H. 1440 (9 December A.D. 2018), which endorsed a four-year framework law of the Cooperation Council for the prevention of violence, exploitation and domestic abuse.

- **Royal Order No. 33322 of 21 Rajab A.H. 1438 (18 April A.D. 2017)**

36. The Order informs all relevant authorities that they are not to require women to obtain the consent of a guardian in order to receive services or complete procedures. It also instructs the authorities to review their current procedures and requires employers to provide transportation for female workers in line with the Labour Code. In addition, the Order envisages support for the Human Rights Commission as it runs programmes to promote awareness of the international treaties to which the country has acceded, including through a comprehensive awareness-raising campaign on women's rights via the media and educational and training institutions. Furthermore, it instructs authorities providing services to women to publish instructions and procedures related to women's rights on their official websites.

- **Royal Order No. 26458 of 8 Jumada II A.H. 1438 (7 March A.D. 2017)**

37. The Order instructs all government agency staff and members of civil society organizations to avoid any action that could lead to sports fanaticism or the dissemination of abuse in the media.

- **Council of Ministers Decree No. 679 of 15 Dhu al-Qa'dah A.H. 1438 (7 August A.D. 2017)**

38. The Decree approves the statutes of the Alimony Fund and aims to ensure that alimony is paid out to beneficiaries without delay (art. 3 of the statutes). Under article 4, the Fund is to disburse payments to persons declared eligible for alimony under a court ruling that has not been enforced for reasons not relating to insolvency; to persons who have been declared

eligible under a court ruling whose claims remain pending before the court; and, as a temporary measure, to persons awaiting a court ruling.

• **Council of Ministers Decree No. 713 of 30 Dhu al-Qa'dah A.H. 1438 (22 August A.D. 2017)**

39. The Decree enables organizations and individuals to express their views regarding the work of government agencies by publishing online proposals for draft regulations or decrees in their fields of expertise.

Key amendments to laws

40. Royal Decree No. M/134 of 27 Dhu al-Qa'dah A.H. 1440 (30 July A.D. 2019) approved amendments to a number of laws with the aim of promoting women's rights in various fields. The amendments were as follows:

- Amendments to the Travel Documents Act: Article 2 was amended, article 3 was deleted and the implementing regulations were amended to ensure that women could obtain passports and travel abroad on an equal basis with men.
- Amendments to the Civil Status Act: The key amendments were made to article 30 (deleting the phrase "A married woman's place of residence is the same as her husband's if the marital bond remains unsevered ..."), article 33 (granting women equal rights to men with regard to reporting births), article 47 (allowing either spouse, the father of either spouse, or a relative of either spouse to report marriage, divorce, spousal reunification, unilateral divorce or *khul*" declared by either spouse), article 50 (granting both spouses equal rights to request a family register from the Civil Status Department), article 53 (allowing women to report the death of any of her ascendants or descendants, her spouse or any other close relative, on an equal basis with men), and article 91 (amended to read: "Under the present Act, the head of the family shall be the father or the mother of minor children.")
- Amendments to the Labour Code: Amendments were made to ensure equal rights and responsibilities for all in relation to work. Article 3 was amended to stipulate that citizens have a right to work and may not be discriminated against on grounds of sex, disability, age or any other grounds. Article 155 was amended to prohibit dismissal or threat of dismissal against any employee during pregnancy or maternity leave, including during any illness arising from pregnancy or childbirth.
- Amendments to the Social Insurance Act: Article 38 of the Social Insurance Act has been amended to achieve equality between men and women in relation to the retirement age, set at 60 years for both sexes.

41. Royal Decree No. M/5 of 7 Muharram A.H. 1442 (26 August A.D. 2020) amends the Labour Code by deleting articles 149 and 150 and adding article 131 bis, which stipulates: "The Minister shall determine, a decree, the professions and jobs considered dangerous, harmful or likely to expose the worker to risk or injury, as well as the categories in which employment – permanent or temporary – is prohibited or subject to special conditions, such as limitations on working hours, in accordance with the 'country's obligations under international treaties". It also amended article 186 to read as follows: "No person under the age of 18 may be employed in a mine or quarry." The objectives behind the deletion of the two articles were:

- To economically empower women and support them to work without discrimination.
- To increase career opportunities for women.
- To regulate the working environment in order to protect all groups.
- To expand employment opportunities for women in the private sector.

42. Under High-level Order No. 905 of 6 Muharram A.H. 1439 (26 September A.D. 2017), the provisions of the Traffic Act and its implementing regulations – including the issuance of driving licenses – are to apply equally to males and females. In application of that Order, women started driving as of 10 Shawwal A.H. 1439 (24 June A.D. 2018).

Instruments and treaties ratified or acceded to by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia¹¹

43. Saudi Arabia is still considering acceding to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. During the period under review, Saudi Arabia acceded to the following instruments of the International Labour Organization (ILO): ILO Convention No. 95 on the Protection of Wages; ILO Convention No. 120 on Hygiene in Commerce and Offices; and the Protocol to the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29).

44. Saudi Arabia does not currently intend to accede to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

45. With regard to the follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, it should be noted that national laws are consistent with both documents, which have served as references for the Human Rights Commission in its work to review and draft laws, as well as in carrying out its other tasks.¹²

(b) Institutional human rights framework

• Human Rights Commission

46. The Commission was established under Council of Ministers Decree No. 207 of 8 Sha'ban A.H. 1426 (12 September A.D. 2005). It was subsequently restructured under Council of Ministers Decree No. 237 of 5 Jumada II A.H. 1437 (14 March A.D. 2016), which consolidated its independence, streamlined its operations and made it directly answerable to the King, whereas it was previously part of the executive branch. A Royal Order was issued on 9 Dhu al-Qa'dah A.H. 1441 (30 June A.D. 2020) to reconfigure the Board of the Human Rights Commission in its fourth session to include 13 female members alongside 13 male members.¹³

47. Numerous governmental institutions have been established and approval has been given for the establishment of non-governmental institutions concerned with protecting and promoting general or specific human rights. These institutions include:

• Authority for Persons with Disabilities

48. The Authority for Persons with Disabilities was established by Council of Ministers Decree No. 266 of 27 Jumada I A.H. 1439 (13 February A.D. 2018) with the aim of providing care for persons with disabilities, ensuring their access to disability-related rights and improving the services provided to them by government agencies. It seeks to facilitate their access to care and rehabilitation, raise the level of prevention, define the role of each agency concerned with the welfare of persons with disabilities, and, to that end, cooperate and coordinate with stakeholders to ensure that the necessary measures are taken.

• National Centre for Mental Health

49. The National Centre for Mental Health was established pursuant to Council of Ministers Decree No. 685 of 27 Dhu al-Qa'dah A.H. 1440 (30 July A.D. 2019) seeks to promote national mental-health programmes, create a better life for members of society, foster positive participation and support the groups most vulnerable to mental disorders.

• Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property

50. The Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property was established by Council of Ministers Decree No. 496 of 14 Ramadan A.H. 1439 (29 May A.D. 2018) and is responsible for

¹¹ Paragraphs 34 and 39 of the concluding observations.

¹² Paragraph 40 of the concluding observations.

¹³ Paragraph 10 of the concluding observations.

regulating, supporting, developing, protecting, enforcing and promoting intellectual property, which is a human right.

- **Ideological War Centre**

51. The Ideological War Centre was established on 30 April 2017 with a mandate to address the roots of extremism and terrorism, promote true understanding of Islam and protect young people around the world from extremism through prevention and deradicalization programmes. The goals of the Centre include: formulating a deep-rooted understanding of the problem of extremism by studying its underlying causes, understanding the tools and methods used by extremist groups, identifying the social groups targeted by such groups, and cooperating effectively with national and international organizations.

- **Family Affairs Council**

52. The Family Affairs Council was established under Council of Ministers Decree No. 443 of 20 Shawwal A.H. 1437 (25 July A.D. 2016) and tasked with responsibility for family affairs. Article 6 of its statutes envisages the formation of a number of technical committees, including a committee for childhood, a committee for older persons and a committee for women.

- **King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre**

53. The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre was established on 27 Rajab A.H. 1436 (13 May A.D. 2015) as an international centre providing humanitarian aid and relief without discrimination on grounds of race, religion, gender, disability or any other grounds. The Centre acts as the country's charitable humanitarian aid and relief organization and aims to alleviate suffering and enable people to live a decent life. It works with United Nations organizations and international and local non-profit organizations in beneficiary countries to conduct relief and humanitarian work in all fields, including education, health, protection, shelter, early recovery, nutrition and food security. As of December 2020, the total amount of aid provided by Saudi Arabia amounted to \$51.23 billion, of which \$4,892,033,493 was provided through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre.

- **Committee on Trafficking in Persons**

54. Established pursuant to Council of Ministers Decree No. 244 of 20 Rajab A.H. 1430 (13 July A.D. 2009), the Committee on Trafficking in Persons monitors the situation of victims in order to ensure that they are not subjected to further harm, formulates policies for actively seeking out victims, and returns victims to their countries of origin.

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

55. Established pursuant to Council of Ministers Decree No. 202 of 16 Jumada I A.D. 1435 (18 March A.D. 2014), the Committee aims to coordinate the various authorities responsible for providing services to persons with disabilities in order to ensure that such persons can easily access the services they require.

- **Institution for the care of children with paralysis**

56. This institution aims to provide medical, health, social, psychiatric and educational services for children with disabilities.

5. Equality, non-discrimination and means of redress¹⁴

57. The country derives all its laws from Islamic sharia, which enjoins equality and prohibits injustice and racism. Equality is a principle on which governance in Saudi Arabia is based, with article 8 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulating that: "Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be based on justice, shura (consultation) and equality in accordance with Islamic law." Article 47 of the Law stipulates that: "All citizens and residents of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have an equal right to take legal action."

¹⁴ Paragraph 27 of the concluding observations.

Consequently, all laws concerning human rights in the country are based on the principle of equality and criminalize all forms of racial discrimination mentioned in article 1 of the Convention. Furthermore, all relevant government authorities are obliged to promote and protect human rights and to guarantee justice for all persons, regardless of their descent, colour, ethnicity or national or ethnic origin. If any such authority or its representative violates any right, the victim is entitled to have recourse to any of the following mechanisms:

- **Relevant government departments**

58. All ministries, authorities and government agencies are required, each within its own area of responsibility, to provide redress to any person who has suffered a human rights violation, including racial discrimination, and to work to prevent the recurrence of such a violation. This does not preclude recourse to judicial redress as, under Council of Ministers Decree No. 662 of 24 Shawwal A.D. 1441 (16 June A.D. 2020), legal departments in government agencies are authorized to conduct human rights-related duties, including detecting human rights violations and taking necessary action in relation to them.

- **Governmental and non-governmental human rights institutions and mechanisms**

59. A number of governmental and non-governmental institutions work to ensure that victims of human rights violations, including racial discrimination, obtain redress. To that end, they receive complaints and reports of violations then take the appropriate legal action. Such institutions include the Human Rights Commission; a centre for receiving reports of violence, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development; the child support line of the National Family Safety Programme; and the National Society for Human Rights.

- **Provincial governors**

60. Article 7 (c) of the Provincial Administration Act, promulgated by Royal Order No. A/92 of 27 Sha'ban A.H. 1412 (2 March A.D. 1992), states that provincial governors are to guarantee the rights and freedoms of individuals and take no measures to infringe these rights and freedoms except within the limits stipulated in sharia and statutory law.

- **Judicial authorities**

61. The judicial authorities include courts at all levels of the ordinary judiciary, administrative courts at all levels of the Board of Grievances (the administrative judiciary) and the Public Prosecution Service.

- **The Royal Council and the Council of the Crown Prince**

62. Article 43 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates that: "The Royal Council and the Council of the Crown Prince shall be open to all citizens and to anyone with a complaint or a grievance. All persons shall have the right to contact the public authorities regarding matters affecting them."

6. Reservations and interpretive declarations to the Convention

63. When Saudi Arabia acceded to the Convention pursuant to Royal Decree No. M/12 of 16 Rabi' II A.H. 1418 (20 August A.D. 1997) it entered a general reservation to the effect that it would implement those of its provisions which do not conflict with Islamic sharia, as well as a specific reservation to article 22. That article stipulates: "Any dispute between two or more States parties with respect to the interpretation or application of this Convention, which is not settled by negotiation or by the procedures expressly provided for in this Convention, shall, at the request of any of the parties to the dispute, be referred to the International Court of Justice for decision, unless the disputants agree to another mode of settlement." Yet, for its part, Saudi Arabia believes that State parties to a dispute must consent for that dispute to be submitted to the International Court of Justice.

64. At present, Saudi Arabia does not intend to make the optional declaration provided for in article 14 of the Convention recognizing the competence of the Committee to receive and consider individual complaints.¹⁵

65. The competent national authorities continuously review the country's obligations under the Convention, including the reservations it has entered. Those reviews have found that the general reservation has no practical impact on the purposes and objectives of the Convention. Nevertheless, the question of withdrawing, maintaining or amending the general reservation remains under consideration.¹⁶

II. Specific information on the implementation of the Convention and of the Committee's concluding observations

Article 1

66. Saudi Arabia adopts the definition of racial discrimination contained in article 1 of the Convention which, as a consequence of accession, is now considered part of domestic law and has the same legal force as national laws. Article 11 (1) of the Procedures for Contracting International Treaties, promulgated by Council of Ministers Decree No. 287 of 14 Sha'ban A.H. 1431 (27 July A.D. 2010), states that, once a treaty comes into force, the authorities are required to take measures to implement it and ensure that the country meets all obligations arising from accession. Furthermore, the Royal Decree approving accession to the Convention states that the Deputy Prime Minister and ministers – each in their own sphere of competence – are to be responsible for implementation. A circular issued by the Chief Prosecutor in October 2015 states that human rights treaties, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, are to be referenced in all relevant bills of indictment and memorandums of charges.

67. Application of the Convention at the national level takes account of both direct and indirect forms of discrimination as well as of double and multifaceted discrimination; for example, discrimination on the basis of both skin colour and sex, or on the basis of both race and disability. Thus, double or multifaceted racial discrimination would be considered an aggravating circumstance and perpetrators could face more severe penalties. Any preferential treatment envisaged in the country's laws, regulations, procedures or bilateral or regional agreements is based on legality and proportionality and is consistent with the purposes and objectives of the Convention. In the event of preferential treatment on any other basis, due process is followed to address such treatment.

68. The relevant authorities in Saudi Arabia are still considering whether a law prohibiting racial discrimination in the light of the Convention is required, especially since the country's laws collectively promote the principle of equality and the prohibition of racial discrimination in all its forms.¹⁷

Article 2

69. National laws and regulations collectively prohibit racial discrimination as defined in article 1 (1) of the Convention.¹⁸

- Article 26 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates that “the State shall protect human rights in accordance with Islamic sharia”. Article 8 of the same Law stipulates: “Governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be based on justice, shura (consultation) and equality in accordance with Islamic law.” Article 47 stipulates that:

¹⁵ Paragraph 43 of the concluding observations.

¹⁶ Paragraph 6 of the concluding observations.

¹⁷ Paragraph 12 of the concluding observations.

¹⁸ Paragraph 28 of the concluding observations.

“All citizens and residents of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have an equal right to take legal action.”

- Article 1 of the Civil Service Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/49 of 10 Rajab A.H. 1397 (27 June A.D. 1977) stipulates that: “The appointment of persons to public office shall be on the basis of merit.” Therefore, there is no legal impediment to any citizen holding public office or senior positions in the State.
- Article 3 of the Labour Code promulgated by Royal Decree No. (M/51) of 23 Sha’ban A.H. 1426 (27 September A.D. 2005) and amended by Royal Decree No. M/134 of 27 Dhu al-Qa’dah A.H. 1440 (30 July A.D. 2019) states that every citizen has an equal right to work, without discrimination on grounds of sex, disability or any other grounds; this applies in the performance of their duties, in recruitment and in job advertisements.
- Article 2 of the Health Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/11 of 23 Rabi I A.H. 1423 (4 June A.D. 2002) states that: “This Act is designed to ensure the provision of comprehensive and integrated health care for the whole population in an equitable, accessible and orderly manner.”
- Article 5 of the Health Professions Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/59 of 4 Dhu al-Qa’dah A.H. 1426 (6 December A.D. 2005), stipulates: “Health care workers shall exercise their profession in the interests of the individual and society, with respect for the right to life, security and dignity. In the course of their work, they shall observe the customs and traditions of the country and avoid exploitation.” Article 16 (1) to (16) of the Act’s implementing regulations stipulate that health care workers may not refuse treatment to any patient on the basis of their religion, colour, gender or race.
- Article 9 of the Printing and Publications Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/32 of 3 Ramadan A.H. 1421 (29 November A.D. 2000) forbids the dissemination of material that violates Islamic sharia and the laws in force, provokes enmity and division among citizens, encourages or incites criminal activity or undermines public order.
- Article 2 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/2 dated 22 Muharram A.H. 1435 (26 November A.D. 2013) stipulates that “No person may be arrested, searched, detained or imprisoned except as provided by law. Persons may be detained or imprisoned only in facilities designated for that purpose and only for the duration specified by the competent authority.” Article 36 of the Code stipulates that detainees must be treated in a manner that preserves their dignity and must not be subjected to physical or mental harm.
- Article 23 of the Code of Sharia Procedure, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/1 of 22 Muharram A.H. 1435 (25 November A.D. 2013) stipulates that court hearings are to be held in public and that parties to a lawsuit may request translators for non-Arabic speakers.
- Article 2 of Royal Decree No. 43 of 29 Dhu al-Qa’dah A.H 1377 (17 June A.D. 1958) envisages penalties for abuse of power in criminal proceedings; for abuse of authority in order to commit human rights violations or to perpetrate acts of ill-treatment or coercion; and for the acceptance of bribes or commission.
- Article 28 of the Prison and Detention Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/31 of 21 Jumada II A.H. (29 May A.D. 1978) prohibits any kind of assault against prisoners or detainees and allows disciplinary measures to be taken against military or civilian personnel who commit such assault.
- Article 3 (4) and (5) of the Cybercrime Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/17 of 8 Rabi’ I A.H. 1428 (27 March A.D. 2007) envisages imprisonment for up to 1 year and a fine of up to 500,000 Saudi Arabian riyals (SRI) for anyone who uses technology to violate an individual’s private life or to defame or harms others.
- Article 8 (2) of the Civil Associations and Organizations Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/8 of 19 Safar A.H. 1437 (1 December A.D. 2015) prohibits the

establishment of any association the statutes of which are inconsistent with Islamic sharia or are liable to disturb public order, contradict public morals or undermine national unity.

- Article 5 of the Audiovisual Media Act prohibits any material that might provoke enmity and division among citizens, incite violence or threaten societal harmony.
- High-level Order No. 26458 of 8 Jumada II A.H. 1438 (7 March A.D. 2017) requires governmental and civil society organizations to instruct their staff to avoid any action that could lead to sports fanaticism or the dissemination of abuse in the media.

70. The premises, objectives and programmes of “Saudi Vision 2030” collectively promote the principles of equality, tolerance and moderation. Under the Vision, Islam and its teachings are a way of life, a reference point for decision-making and the basis for work to achieve the Vision, while the values of moderation, tolerance, ability, discipline, justice and transparency are fundamental to success.

71. In accordance with its statutes, the Human Rights Commission seeks to ensure that government agencies implement human rights-related laws and regulations, to detect infringements of those laws that constitute human rights violations and to take the necessary legal measures in that regard. The Commission also monitors government agencies to ensure that they are duly implementing the international human rights instruments to which Saudi Arabia has acceded, including this Convention. The Commission prepares an annual report on the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia, which is submitted to the King. Its recent 2019 report included a number of recommendations for the elimination of racial discrimination, most notably: enacting a criminal law to combat racial discrimination, in accordance with the provisions of Islamic sharia and the country’s obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; and urging civil society institutions, the media, preachers and imams to strengthen national unity within the framework of tolerance, coexistence, non-discrimination, anti-racism, the avoidance of hatred and anti-extremism.¹⁹

72. Under its own statutes, the Public Prosecution Service is responsible for monitoring prisons and detention centres. In implementation of the provisions of articles 38, 39 and 40 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/2 of 22 Muharram A.H. 1435 (25 November A.D. 2013), staff from the Public Prosecution Service make periodic visits to prisons, receive complaints from prisoners and detainees and take the statutory measures with regard to any violations they discover. Ninety-one special sections with 103 staff visit prisons and detention centres during and outside official working hours, including on weekends. The tables below show the number of visits made by the Public Prosecution Service to prisons and detention centres from 2016 to 2019 and the number of cases examined:

Visits by the Public Prosecution Service to detention centres

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of patrols</i>	<i>Number of cases examined</i>
2016	44 310	149 295
2017	38 845	150 018
2018	25 170	138 446
2019	29 104	118 200

Visits by the Public Prosecution Service to prisons

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of patrols</i>	<i>Number of cases examined</i>
2016	10 987	95 424
2017	11 882	90 030
2018	13 936	75 409

¹⁹ Paragraph 28 of the concluding observations.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of patrols</i>	<i>Number of cases examined</i>
2019	9 729	81 308

73. Article 5 (6) of the statutes of the Human Rights Commission stipulate that the Commission may visit prisons and detention centres, at any time and without permission from the relevant authority, and that it is to submit reports on those visits to the King. On that basis, the Commission visits prisons and detention centres in order to determine the extent to which convicted prisoners and detainees enjoy all their human rights and are not subjected to any violation, including racial discrimination. The Commission's activities in this regard are governed by domestic laws, by the human rights conventions to which Saudi Arabia is a party, including the Convention, and by other relevant international standards such as the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules). The Commission has increased its visits to prisons and detention centres through specific programmes and annual plans, including regular inspections, unannounced visits, visits in response to complaints and visits in response to information gathered via social media and other channels.

74. The Commission has visited all prisons affiliated with the General Directorate of Prisons and the General Directorate of Investigations; the majority of detention centres affiliated with law enforcement agencies and certain military authorities; all social surveillance centres; and all girls' welfare institutions in all regions and governorates of Saudi Arabia. The Commission made a total of 2,094 visits in 2019. The table below shows the number of visits made by the Commission to prisons, detention centres, social surveillance centres and girls' welfare institutions during the reporting period:

<i>Type of institution</i>	<i>Number of visits</i>			
	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>
Public prisons	209	312	338	614
General Investigation Prisons	225	352	461	557
Detention centres	398	514	581	835
Social surveillance centres	25	29	44	49
Girls' welfare institutions		22	14	39
Total	857	1 229	1 438	2 094

75. The National Society for Human Rights (a civil society organization in Saudi Arabia) carried out 52 visits to prisons and detention centres from 2016 to October 2020. The table below shows the number of complaints received by the Society from 2016 to October 2020, classified by topics and years:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Administrative</i>	<i>Prisoners</i>	<i>Domestic violence</i>	<i>Personnel</i>	<i>Judicial</i>	<i>Personal status</i>	<i>Civil status</i>	<i>Violence against children</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
2016	485	478	366	321	62	135	746	188	335	3 116
2017	384	397	353	266	85	144	636	215	391	2 871
2018	452	601	415	180	65	175	874	252	408	3 422
2019	490	862	378	174	47	181	926	311	370	3 739
2020	125	175	66	32	16	31	200	61	75	781
Total	1 936	2 513	1 578	973	275	666	3 382	1 027	1 579	13 929

76. Permanent offices of the National Society for Human Rights have been established inside prisons, alongside offices of the Public Prosecution Service and Human Rights Commission. Staff in these offices receive complaints from prisoners and detainees and take

action to address these promptly and directly. Closed circuit television monitoring has been installed in interrogation rooms to ensure the integrity of interrogation procedures. The National Society for Human Rights holds awareness-raising and educational seminars and workshops on combating racism, discrimination and hatred, the most important of which were a seminar called “Women’s Rights and Racial Discrimination”, held at the Society’s headquarters in Riyadh, and a symposium organized by the Society’s branch in Al-Jawf region entitled “Racial Discrimination”. The Society observes the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March each year, with all its branches throughout the country holding awareness-raising and educational campaigns and distributing a series of “Know Your Rights” leaflets, published by the Society under the title “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination”.

77. The Society is determined to promote a culture of human rights with regard to combating racism, discrimination and hatred. To this end, it issues media statements on occasions such as Saudi National Day, its most recent statement being to condemn insults against the Prophet while other statements have called for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and the rejection of hatred. Civil society institutions, including the National Society for Human Rights take every opportunity to highlight the need to respect international treaties, charters and covenants on combating racism and discrimination, in accordance with article 20 (2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that: “Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.” The National Society for Human Rights also works in coordination with regional and international human rights and humanitarian institutions to combat all incitement to hatred and racism, in compliance with relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. In addition, the Society monitors discrimination and rights violations against citizens or residents; works to eradicate such abuses and prevent them from reoccurring; makes recommendations and proposes solutions; and promotes a culture of peaceful coexistence and dialogue that is free from fanaticism and racism.

78. As stated in paragraph 46 of the present report, the Human Rights Commission has been restructured to consolidate its independence and streamline its operations so as to ensure that it has sufficient human and financial resources to carry out its tasks effectively. As a civil society institution, the National Society for Human Rights is currently assessing whether it would be appropriate for it to be accredited by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI).²⁰

79. A programme to address the situation of groups who reside in the country irregularly was established by Royal Order No. 6986 of 2 Safar A.H. 1441 (1 October A.D. 2019). The programme envisages a specific mechanism to address the situation of such groups, that takes account of the nature of each group. The key objectives of the programme are to regularize the status of the categories concerned, enabling them to obtain regular residence permits and to work and benefit from health and educational services. It should be noted that Saudi Arabia is not currently considering amending the Saudi Arabian Nationality Act.²¹

80. High-level Order No. 8248 of 14 Safar A.H. 1442 (1 October A.D. 2020) enabled the Ministry of Education to receive children of groups in an irregular situation in Saudi Arabia, in order to enable them to enjoy their right to education on an equal basis with other children.

Article 3

81. National laws and policies prevent the emergence of any form of racial segregation or apartheid. In fact, the Basic Law of Governance and the national laws emanating therefrom, including those mentioned in paragraphs 18, 19, 20 and 75 of the present report, guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons on an equal footing and prohibit all forms of racial discrimination. Article 12 of the Basic Law of Governance states: “The consolidation of national unity is a duty, and the State shall forbid anything that may lead to

²⁰ Paragraph 10 of the concluding observations.

²¹ Paragraphs 32 and 30 of the concluding observations.

disunity, schism or separation.” Article 22 of the same Law stipulates that: “socioeconomic development is to be well and fairly planned”. The Saudi “Vision 2030” is based on values and principles that represent an impenetrable barrier to racial segregation and all forms of social exclusion. In practice, this is in line with the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations and its slogan “Leave No One Behind”.

82. The report includes detailed information reflecting the commitment of Saudi Arabia to realizing and protecting human rights, including the right to housing, education, health care and work without any discrimination on grounds of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin. The Basic Law of Governance contains provisions relating to the State’s obligation to provide education and health care and to facilitate employment for all persons able to work, without discrimination on grounds of race. On that basis, laws have been introduced to uphold these rights and specify how they should be implemented, promoted and protected. For example, Article 28 of the Basic Law of Governance, stipulates that: “The State shall facilitate employment for everyone who is able to work and shall enact laws to protect the rights of workers and employers.” Furthermore, the Civil Service Act makes merit the basis for appointing individuals to public office, while the Labour Code stipulates that every citizen has an equal right to work without discrimination on grounds of sex, disability or any other grounds; this applies in the performance of their duties, in recruitment and in job advertisements. For its part, the Health Act stipulates that health care shall be provided to the whole population in an equitable and accessible manner.

83. These laws are implemented by the relevant government agencies, namely the ministries of education, human resources and social development, health, municipal and rural affairs and housing. Their implementation is monitored by bodies such as the Oversight and Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) as well as by governmental and non-governmental bodies concerned with the promotion and protection of human rights, including the Human Rights Commission and civil society institutions. There are mechanisms and bodies, most notably the ordinary and administrative courts, that provide redress to victims of racial discrimination and punish perpetrators. This does not prevent disciplinary (administrative) sanctions from being imposed on perpetrators by the relevant government authorities.

Article 4²²

84. The dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination and other conduct described in article 4 (a) of the Convention are offences under domestic law. Article 39 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates: “The media, press, and all other means of expression shall use decent language, comply with national legislation, contribute towards educating the nation and support national unity.”

85. Domestic law prohibits organizations, propaganda and media that promote racial discrimination. Article 8 (2) of the Civil Associations and Organizations Act, mentioned earlier in the present report, prohibits the establishment of any association the statutes of which are inconsistent with Islamic sharia or are liable to disturb public order, contradict public morals or undermine national unity. Article 9 of the Printing and Publications Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/32 of 3 Ramadan A.H. 1421 (29 November A.D. 2000) forbids the dissemination of material that violates Islamic sharia and the laws in force, provokes enmity and division among citizens, encourages or incites criminal activity or undermines public order. Article 5 of the Audiovisual Media Act prohibits any material that might provoke enmity and division among citizens, incite violence or threaten societal harmony. High-level Order No. 26458 of 8 Jumada II A.H. 1438 (7 March A.D. 2017) requires governmental and civil society organizations to instruct their staff to avoid any action that could lead to sports fanaticism or the dissemination of abuse in the media.

86. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Dawah and Guidance publishes working papers instructing imams and preachers not to offend or disparage persons or groups, and advising them that the penalties for doing so include termination of service as an imam. Furthermore, the Ministry has launched a programme to promote moderation and combat extremism and

²² Paragraph 14 of the concluding observations.

fanaticism. The programme consists of special seminars and training courses where imams and preachers explain and warn about the dangers of racism, citing passages that prohibit racism from the Qur'an and Sunna. These courses have been attended by a large number of imams and preachers. The Ministry has also implemented a number of specialized courses for imams and preachers to promote moderation and tolerance and to reject hatred.

87. In addition, the Ministry of Sport uses high-profile sporting events as occasions to condemn racism and warn of its danger to society.

88. The promotion of racial discrimination by public authorities and institutions is prohibited under article 2 of Royal Decree No. 43 of 29 Dhu al-Qa'dah A.H. 1377 (17 June A.D. 1958). The Decree also envisages penalties for abuse of power in criminal proceedings or for abuse of authority in order to commit human rights violations or to perpetrate acts of ill-treatment or coercion. The table below shows the number of public officials and law enforcement personnel who were faced criminal sanctions for abuse of power and violation of human rights during the period 2016–2020:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of offenders</i>
2016	327
2017	400
2018	547
2019	465
2020	315
Total	2 054

89. A number of laws contain rules regulating the behaviour of public officials including, in the context of criminal justice, the Code of Criminal Procedure. In fact, article 2 of the Code prohibits any physical or mental harm or degrading treatment against detainees, while article 36 stipulates that detainees must be treated in a manner that preserves their dignity and may not be physically or mentally ill-treated. In the context of public service, article 12 of the Civil Service Act prohibits abuse of power by public officials.

90. In accordance with article 5 (3) of its statutes, the Human Rights Commission monitors government agencies to ensure that they are duly implementing the international human rights instruments to which Saudi Arabia has acceded. Under article 5 (1) of the statutes, the Commission also seeks to ensure that government agencies implement human rights-related laws and regulations, to detect infringements of those laws that constitute human rights violations and to take the necessary legal measures in that regard. The Commission also attends court hearings as an observer to verify that the rights of accused persons are being upheld and that due process is being followed.

Article 5²³

91. National laws, foremost among them the Basic Law of Governance, guarantee the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons, with no discrimination on grounds of race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin. The Basic Law of Governance, in fact, contains principles that explicitly endorse equality (art. 8), the protection of human rights (art. 26) and equal access to justice for citizens and residents (art. 47), as well as other principles mentioned in the report; and all the laws, regulations that together constitute the legal framework promoting and protecting human rights in the country are bound by those principles. There follows an overview of the measures taken to give effect to the rights referenced by the Committee in its concluding observations, as well as other measures taken since the previous reporting period that affect the rights enshrined in article 5 of the Convention.

²³ Paragraph 26 of the concluding observations.

(a) Freedom of thought, conscience and religion²⁴

92. Current national laws and regulations guarantee the freedom of non-Muslim residents to worship and to practise their religious rites without interference, subject to the restrictions envisaged in national law to protect public order, public morals, public health and the fundamental rights and freedoms of others. The Saudi “Vision 2030” includes goals and initiatives that interact, directly or indirectly, to make the country a destination for persons of different religions, cultures and ethnicities, for investment, work, education, tourism or other purposes.

93. School curricula are continuously being reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with national and international human rights standards and do not include elements that might, in any way, give rise to racial discrimination or racism, xenophobia or contemporary forms of intolerance. During the reporting period, 185 elements were eliminated from curricula at all levels of schooling, while 171 elements were replaced and 77 elements were amended, taking due account of the age and maturity of students. The purpose of this process was to promote tolerance, coexistence and a positive life outlook and to eliminate any content that, by being abused or misapplied, could give rise to racism or racial discrimination. As concerns discrimination in the workplace on the basis of religion or belief, the Labour Code does not contain any provisions that could be considered to undermine the right to work or other labour-related rights for non-Muslims or for followers of a particular Islamic doctrine. To further reinforce this principle, the Labour Code has been amended (as explained in paragraph 40 of the present report) to underscore the fact that work is a right for all citizens, who may not be discriminated against on grounds of sex, disability, age or any other grounds. The legal system, in fact, rests upon the principle that all persons are equal before the law, save vis-à-vis those legal provisions that accord preferences between citizens and non-citizens, as envisioned in article 1 (2) of the Convention. All persons, be they Muslims or followers of any other religious doctrine, have the right to seek redress, first and foremost by pursuing legal action before the courts.

(b) Freedom of opinion and expression

94. National laws, notably the Basic Law of Governance, act together to promote freedom of opinion and expression, while taking due account of other rights since, as stated in the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, human rights are interdependent, interrelated and indivisible. This is fully consistent with the relevant international standards according to which freedom of opinion and expression are to be subject to certain necessary restrictions under the law in order to protect other freedoms set forth in those standards. It is also consistent with the Committee’s general recommendation No. 15 of 1993. The restrictions imposed meet the requirements of legality, necessity and proportionality as they do not circumscribe freedom of opinion and expression save under provisions enshrined in law and are necessary and proportionate to the goals or interests being pursued. According to article 8 of the Press and Publications Act, freedom of expression is guaranteed for the media in all its forms in accordance with the provisions of Islamic sharia and statutory law. The country’s media policy was promulgated under Council of Ministers Decree No. 169 dated 20 Shawwal A.H. 1402 (9 August A.D.1982), article 26 of which stipulates: “Freedom of expression in Saudi Arabian media outlets is guaranteed to the extent that it respects Islamic and national objectives and values, to which the Saudi media aspires.” In this connection, the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue was established as a contribution from Saudi Arabia to promoting global peace, disseminating values of tolerance and harmony and propagating a culture of dialogue and peace.

95. As stated earlier in the present report, the Audiovisual Media Act enjoins respect for freedom of opinion and expression that does not violate the relevant laws and regulations (art. 5). Under Council of Ministers Decree No. 713 of 30 Dhu al-Qa’dah A.H. 1438 (22 August A.D. 2017), government agencies are to publish online their proposals for draft regulations or decrees within their fields of expertise so as to enable organizations and individuals to express their views and comments thereon. The King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue

²⁴ Paragraph 24 of the concluding observations.

aims to provide a suitable environment for the discussion of problems and concerns affecting citizens. The Centre, which is independent in its operations and in choosing which topics to pursue, holds meetings, conferences, seminars and workshops at the national level. National meetings organized by the Centre include “We and others: a national vision for interaction with world cultures” and “The reality and development paths of Saudi media: premises, roles and future prospects”. The work of the Centre will be considered in detail later in the present report.

96. During the course of the reporting period, the country witnessed a widespread media dynamism with the formation of two independent radio, television and audiovisual media entities and the establishment of a number of television channels and radio stations in multiple languages. At the time of publishing the present report, there were 105 satellite channels and 7 radio stations. The number of online newspapers has also increased, standing at 283 at the time of publishing. A number of press and media associations have been set up and have begun operating, such as the Society for Opinion Writers, established in 2016, which seeks to meet the needs and serve the interests of writers of opinion pieces.

97. The country’s media policy is based on respect for individual and group rights. Article 27 of the policy states: “In its external broadcasting, the Saudi media is to take a humanitarian approach, one that is rooted in respect for the right of human beings to live in freedom on their own land, that rejects any affront against the rights of peoples or individuals, that combats any expansionist ambitions, that stands up for law, justice and peace and that opposes injustice and racial discrimination.”

98. The number of Internet users is seen as an indicator of the strength of freedom of opinion and expression and, as of December 2019, 92.77 per cent of households in Saudi Arabia had the possibility of accessing the Internet. Moreover, the country’s “Vision 2030” includes several programmes and initiatives that aim to achieve transformation at the national level. Thanks to those efforts, Saudi Arabia has advanced 40 places in the Information and Communications Technology Development Index, issued by the United Nations as measure of the growth of e-government. In 2020, in fact, the country ranked twenty-seventh globally and eighth among the Group of 20.

(c) Freedom of association

99. Civil society organizations in the country are seen as essential partners of government agencies in the promotion and protection of human rights. This effective partnership has led to measures that have spurred on progress in this field. Civil society institutions play an active oversight role that consists in receiving complaints concerning women’s rights, monitoring violations and bringing them to the attention of the relevant government agencies. The institutions also play an advisory and educational role, in which capacity they have been involved in the drafting of reports, including reports on women’s rights which have provided a valuable opportunity to review the current state of such rights in the country, and they strive to raise awareness about women’s rights, including the definition of such rights in the Convention. The legal framework for freedom of association is the Civil Society Associations and Institutions Act, which includes provisions intended to guarantee that this right can be enjoyed without discrimination on grounds of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin. The Act also aims to facilitate the formation of associations by, inter alia, reducing to 10 the number of persons required to establish an association (before the enactment of the Act it had stood at 20) and obliging the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development to respond to an application to create an association within 60 days of submission, with a failure to respond on the part of the Ministry constituting tacit approval.

100. The number of civil society associations and institutions in the country has increased, numbering 2,279 at the date of publication of the present report, including 1,625 associations, 284 cooperatives, 219 institutions and 151 family funds. Many of these bodies deal with human rights-related issues. Two councils have been formed, one concerning itself with associations and the other with institutions, while a number of specialized councils have also been set up such as a council for orphans’ associations, a council for family development associations and other councils. Civil society groups are able to work alongside other stakeholders in the drafting of laws and regulations and in monitoring their implementation.

Due consideration is given to human rights reports issued by civil society groups, including the reports of the National Society for Human Rights.

101. Civil society associations and institutions have contributed to measures aimed at promoting and protecting human rights in the country via several initiatives and programmes, including the following:

- The Protection against Abuse Act, the first draft of which was prepared by a civil society institution;
- The creation of bureaux providing legal support, guidance and counselling inside personal status courts, and the provision of legal and procedural assistance to women to facilitate their access to justice;
- The preparation of a legal study that contributed to the issuance of the statutes of the Alimony Fund, referenced in paragraph 38 of the present report.

(d) Right to work

102. Apart from the amendments to the Labour Code – mentioned in paragraph 40 above, which are intended to ensure equality and prevent unlawful discrimination, including racial discrimination – labour tribunals have been established and began operating in November 2018. Seven such tribunals have been opened in a number of cities across the country, as well as 27 labour divisions in other cities and governorates and 9 appeals divisions in 6 appeal courts in different provinces, where 139 specialized judges and 99 judicial auxiliaries are employed.²⁵

103. Measures and initiatives have been taken to combat unemployment within the framework of the country’s “Vision 2030”, which aims to reduce the unemployment rate to 7 per cent by 2030. This includes amending or issuing a number of pieces of legislation – such as the Civil Service Act, the Labour Code and the 2019 Civil Service Human Resources Regulations – aligning vocational education and training with the needs of the labour market and seeking to create posts and job opportunities by promoting foreign investment. In 2019, the growth rate of foreign investment stood at 51 per cent while 1,131 licenses were granted to foreigners. In addition to this, the private sector has been provided with support and a system of flexible working was introduced in August 2020, which aims to increase the opportunities for job seekers to obtain flexible jobs and to engage in the labour market while improving their skills and gaining experience. Unified regulations governing the working environment in private sector facilities were issued in September 2020, which have the goal of creating a safe and attractive workplace environment that keeps pace with the latest developments in the labour market. All this is in addition to earlier programmes aimed at tackling unemployment directly, such as the *Nitaqat 1* and *Nitaqat 2* programmes and the *Tawfiq* programme, under which specific jobs or a proportion of them were allocated to nationals. Another initiative was the social security programme, which aims to provide social security for the national private sector workforce. Further initiatives – such as the *Jadara*, *Hafez* and *Tamhir* programmes – have the goal of helping persons who are out of work access employment opportunities. In the two-year period 2019–2020, more than 400,000 persons found employment thanks to programmes aimed at allocating jobs to nationals and agreements with oversight bodies. The proportion of women’s involvement in the labour market has increased and has exceeded the target set for 2021.

104. The labour market policy committee has sought to improve labour market mechanisms and to create a more stimulating working environment by providing greater job opportunities for Saudis of both sexes and promoting the allocation of jobs in the private sector to nationals. The following initiatives have contributed to achieving the committee’s objective, which is to enable Saudi men and women to find work and thus to reduce unemployment rates:

- In 2018, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development launched 68 initiatives aimed at stimulating the private sector and allocating posts to nationals;

²⁵ Paragraph 28 of the concluding observations.

- A 2019 structural reform project for the labour market focuses on unifying efforts via a more comprehensive strategy which seeks to enhance quality and improve regulation within the labour market;
- A 2020 labour market strategy aims to address the challenges in that market at the level of demand, skills and value; it also seeks to improve employment support policies, contracts and employment channels; to develop a comprehensive labour market governance system; and to facilitate the transition to a diversified economy that relies heavily on skills and technology;
- In 2020, certain small and medium-sized businesses were exempted from the payment of fees for their migrant workforce, the aim being to raise employment levels in the target groups.

105. Action has been taken to consolidate mechanisms for receiving complaints from foreign workers via the unified telephone number 19911, which operates in several languages. Action has also been taken to regularize their situation, address their problems and raise their awareness.²⁶ In addition to this, a wage protection system has been rolled out to ensure that workers' wages are paid on time through local banks. The *Madad* platform has been launched as a second phase of the wage protection system.

106. A number of ministerial decrees have been issued in order to ensure that the protection for foreign workers envisaged in the Labour Code is effectively applied, notably:

- Ministerial Decree No. 738/1, dated 16 Jumada I A.H. 1425 (4 July A.D. 2004), which prohibits all forms of trafficking in persons, such as selling work visas; seeking remuneration in return for employment; taking remuneration from workers in exchange for entry, exit or re-entry visas or work permits; breaching contractual obligations; or treating workers inhumanly or unethically;
- Ministerial Decree No. 2370/1, dated 18 Ramadan A.H. 1431 (28 August A.D. 2010), which prohibits wage discrimination between male and female workers for work of equal value;
- Ministerial Decree No. 2425, dated 3 Jumada II A.H. 1434 (14 April A.H. 2013), which identifies cases in which services offered to employers can be suspended, with the restoration of service being dependent upon employers regularizing their situation before the law; among the situations contemplated in the Decree is that of a company failing to comply with the wage protection system;
- Ministerial Decree No. 4786, dated 28 Dhu al-Hijjah A.H. 1436 (12 October A.D. 2015), which envisages penalties for employers who detain a worker's passport without the latter's consent.

107. As part of efforts to protect and consolidate workers' rights,²⁷ an amendment to the implementing regulations of the Labour Code was introduced pursuant to Ministerial Decree No. 51848, dated 19 Rabi' I A.D. 1442 (5 November A.D. 2020). The amendment affected article 14 (2) (7) of the Code, which was changed to read as follows:

“Migrant workers may transfer to another employer in the following cases:

- On expiry of the employment contract, without the consent of the current employer;
- Transfer to another employer in cases where workers do not receive their salary;
- Non-renewal of work permit;
- Non-renewal of residency;
- Court recommendation.”

108. An initiative has been launched aimed at “improving contractual relationships”, which is just one initiative of the national transformation programmes that are helping to achieve the country's “Vision 2030”. The initiative – which seeks to boost the labour market, increase

²⁶ Paragraphs 18 (b) and (e), 20 (a) and 22 (a), (b) and (c) of the concluding observations

²⁷ Paragraph 18 (a) and (c) of the concluding observations

employment rates, improve productivity and attract skills from across the globe, while at the same time promoting and protecting human rights – envisages a number of services:

- A “job mobility” service, which allows migrant workers to transfer to another company once 12 months have passed since they first entered the country; the transfer can take place without the agreement of their first employer under rules that are intended to protect both parties to the contract;
- A “definitive departure” service, which allows migrant workers to submit an application for definitive departure during the period of validity of their employment contract or following its termination; the application is to be made online using the *Absher* platform and the workers then have the right to leave the country without the agreement of their employer, under rules that are intended to protect both parties to the contract;
- A “departure and return” service, which allows migrant workers to submit an application for departure and return during the period of validity of their employment contract; the application is to be made online using the *Absher* platform and the workers then have the right to leave the country without the agreement of their employer, under rules that are intended to protect both parties to the contract.

109. All matters relating to the rights and obligations of migrant workers are governed by the Labour Code and the Regulations Governing Domestic Workers and other Similar Categories of Worker. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development is responsible for issuing visas for migrant workers, while residency permits are issued by the General Directorate of Passports. These are statutory procedures that have no impact whatsoever on workers’ rights.²⁸

110. Departments have been created inside the Public Prosecution Service that specialize in investigating cases of human trafficking, and 107 such cases have been addressed across all the branch offices of the Service. In January 2020, special criminal chambers were set up in the competent courts to consider cases of trafficking in persons and, in March 2020, a “national referral mechanism for trafficking victims” was launched. The purpose of the mechanism is to document human trafficking cases, from their original discovery until adjudication by the competent courts. It also seeks to guide staff of the relevant authorities in the procedures they need to follow at each stage, in line with the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/40, dated 21 Rajab A.H. 1430 (14 July A.D. 2009).

111. With a view to coordinating and integrating efforts at the national level, Decree No. 244 of the Council of Ministers, mentioned in paragraph 54 above, endorses the creation of the Committee on Trafficking in Persons, as part of the Human Rights Commission. The Committee seeks to promote national efforts to combat this offence, using both national laws and the international treaties to which Saudi Arabia is a party, and to this end it monitors government agencies as they seek to implement those laws and treaties. At the same time, the Committee addresses the situation of trafficking victims while also working on prevention, conducting studies and research, organizing media campaigns and running training programmes.

112. A national plan to combat trafficking in persons (2021–2023) was adopted on 25 Dhu al-Hijjah A.H. 1442 AH (25 July A.D. 2021). The plan – which was drafted in coordination with the committee and with international organizations – includes four strategic priorities: prevention, protection and assistance, prosecution, partnership and cooperation. Strategic objectives, activities and initiatives associated with each priority have been defined in terms of achievable goals.

113. In 2021, as part of its efforts to combat trafficking in persons within the labour market, Saudi Arabia acceded to the 2014 Protocol to the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29). Saudi Arabia thus became the first Gulf nation to ratify the Protocol, the purpose of which is to consolidate prevention, protection and compensation measures and to intensify efforts aimed at eliminating all forms of forced labour, which is one manifestation of human

²⁸ Paragraph 18 (a) of the concluding observations.

trafficking. In the same context, in 2021, Saudi Arabia adopted a national policy to prevent child labour in the country.

114. Royal Decree No. M/109, dated 24 Shawwal A.H. 1438 (18 July A.D. 2017), was issued to endorse a memorandum of understanding on technical cooperation between the Saudi Human Rights Commission and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The purpose of the memorandum is to enhance cooperation in areas related to combating and preventing trafficking in persons; assisting, protecting and sheltering victims; developing activities and programmes; and building national capacities. For its part, Royal Decree No. M/91, dated 12 Sha'ban A.H. 1440, endorsed a memorandum of understanding on technical cooperation between the Saudi Human Rights Commission and the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons at the Department of State of the United States of America (19 November 2018).²⁹

115. As concerns trade unions and the role they play in protecting working conditions, the workplace environment and workers' rights,³⁰ rules for the formation of private sector labour committees were promulgated under Council of Ministers Decree No. 12 of 8 Muharram A.D. 1422 (2 April A.D. 2001). According to article 17 of those rules, workers in a private sector facility may, if they so wish, establish a committee made up of between three and nine of their elected representatives. For its part, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development is to follow up on the recommendations emanating from such committees.

116. Specialized staff in the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development conduct periodic inspections of companies to ensure that migrant workers are able to enjoy all their rights, as envisaged in national law and as per the country's obligations under the human rights treaties to which it is a party. Between 2019 and 2020, a total of 934,780 field visits were made and 123,295 violations were recorded. From the beginning of 2021 until the end of the third quarter, the total amount paid in fines reached 438,867,000. Any situation discovered that constituted a crime under national law, including under the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, was duly referred to the Public Prosecution Service.³¹

117. The Human Rights Commission conducts thematic studies into human rights, including into such matters as racial discrimination and racism, xenophobia and contemporary forms of intolerance. In 2017, the Commission issued a report on prisons and detention centres, which contains a number of recommendations intended to address the situations that had been observed. These included a recommendation to study criminal phenomena, particularly repeat offences, and to take measures to prevent them, as well as a recommendation to strengthen administrative detention procedures aimed at preventing the commission of crimes.

118. With regard to the abolition of the death penalty, Saudi Arabia is committed to international standards relating to the application of that penalty, including the "safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty" approved by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in its resolution 1984/50 of 25 May 1984. In fact, the death penalty in Saudi Arabia is applied only under the law and for the most serious crimes. It is not handed down save if there is clear and convincing evidence that leaves no room for any alternative explanation of the facts of a case, and the competent court issues a definitive sentence only once all legal safeguards have been duly respected, including the provision of legal aid. A sentence of death handed down by a court of first instance is subject to mandatory appeal before a court of appeal and is then reviewed by the Supreme Court. This means that such cases are reviewed by 13 judges in courts of different levels. This is in addition to other safeguards that are consistent with relevant international standards. Laws in Saudi Arabia, including criminal laws, are subject to constant review, and this has led to several legislative reforms, including that of the Juvenile Justice Act under which any juvenile found guilty of committing a crime that is punishable by death, is instead to be placed in detention for a period of up to 10 years. A royal order was issued in March 2020 to apply the Juvenile Justice Act and thus suspend the enforcement of the death penalty against

²⁹ Paragraphs 18 (b) and (e), 20 (a), (b) and (d), 22 (b) and 36 of the concluding observations.

³⁰ Paragraph 18 (c) of the concluding observations.

³¹ Paragraph 18 (d) of the concluding observations.

persons who, prior to the enactment of the Act, had been definitively sentenced to death for offences they had committed when under 18. Work is continuing in this regard with the codification of crimes and penalties, a process that has led to the enactment of numerous pieces of criminal legislation and which represents an advance in the field of criminal justice.³²

119. With reference to the possibility of ratifying the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), Saudi Arabia constantly examines all international labour standards, including the Convention, and competent authorities in the country are eager to develop and review national laws and practices to guarantee the rights of domestic workers.³³

120. A number of other measures have been taken to promote the rights of domestic workers, notably the *Musaned* programme, which consists of an integrated online platform the purpose of which is to facilitate procedures for contracting domestic workers while at the same time promoting the rights of all parties and helping to give both employers and workers a clearer understanding of their rights and duties. The programme also serves to bring together under a single umbrella all the authorities and parties involved in domestic labour, including the offices and companies responsible for contracting migrant workers, which are evaluated according to several criteria such as their response rate to complaints, client satisfaction and acceptance rate. A total of 1,492 offices and companies are registered with the programme while the number of workers benefiting from its services stands at 328,714. The programme also includes provision for storing the résumés of domestic workers. As of the end of the second quarter of 2020, there were 3,704,641 domestic workers in the country, an estimated increase of 0.4 per cent compared to the end of the fourth quarter of 2019, when the number stood at 3,690,719.³⁴

121. A number of other measures have been taken to promote the rights of domestic workers,³⁵ notably awareness-raising initiatives launched by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, the Human Rights Commission, the National Society for Human Rights and other civil society institutions. In addition, the Committee on Trafficking in Persons examines and addresses the causes that lie behind economic and sexual exploitation, while the oversight department of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development and the Human Rights Commission both continue to play a supervisory role. In view of the fact that abuse, exploitation and violence against domestic workers are violations that could potentially be practised with impunity, steps have been taken to create a workplace environment for migrants on the Saudi labour market that guarantees workers' rights. Those steps can be summarized as follows:

- Developing contractual mechanisms by providing the offices and companies responsible for contracting migrant workers with training on professional standards and on how to recognize different forms of trafficking in persons; action is also taken to verify whether the companies concerned meet the criteria required for obtaining a licence and to coordinate with embassies of countries with which treaties of cooperation have been signed. Thanks to these efforts, there has been a decline in cases of abuse against domestic workers and in other forms of trafficking;³⁶
- Developing control and oversight thanks to the *Musaned* programme (see paragraph 120 above). Procedures for documenting domestic workers have been automated, from when they first enter the country until the end of their contract, and their rights have been further protected through the use of wage slips and the obligation on employers to adhere to the wage protection system. The payment of wages is monitored, and contracts are duly documented and recorded, thus ensuring further support and protection for workers' rights. These measures have had the effect of preventing violations against the rights of domestic workers and infringements of the relevant laws and regulations;

³² Paragraph 18 (g) of the concluding observations.

³³ Paragraph 20 (c) of the concluding observations.

³⁴ Paragraphs 20 (a) and 22 (b) of the concluding observations.

³⁵ Paragraph 20 (a) and (b) of the concluding observations.

³⁶ Paragraph 22 (b) of the concluding observations.

- Developing support and protection mechanisms thanks to the launch of the 19911 hotline, which receives reports in eight languages (see paragraph 105 above). Booklets and leaflets have been circulated to make workers aware of the redress procedures available to them in the event of any violation of their rights; these include mechanisms for receiving complaints, ways to obtain legal assistance and access to translation services. The hotline receives reports of violations from individuals, offices, companies and embassies. If a violation of labour rights is reported, teams are sent out to handle the case according to predefined mechanisms, thanks to which domestic workers have gained a greater awareness of their rights and have been able to seek redress for violations.³⁷

122. In 2020, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development received 8,974 complaints from domestic workers and other similar categories of worker relating to their rights and working conditions. In response to those complaints, legal measures were taken, either by imposing penalties such as fines against offending employers or by referring the case to the Public Prosecution Service for it to launch criminal proceedings against the perpetrators. During the course of 2020, 751 migrant workers were able to transfer their services from one employer to another.³⁸

123. As concerns instances of abuse against migrant workers including domestic workers, the 2013 Protection against Abuse Act prohibits and criminalizes all forms and manifestations of abuse against any person, including migrant workers. However, the Act does not stop there; it also concerns itself with forms of behaviour that might indicate the presence of environments conducive to abuse in society. Moreover – in view of the fact that abuse constitutes a crime or violation that requires immediate intervention because of the physical, mental and social damage it can cause and because it can occur with impunity and without being seen – the Act imposes an obligation upon anyone who is aware of an instance of abuse to report the matter immediately. Similarly, the Act requires any official who becomes aware of an instance of abuse to report the matter to his or her office which, in turn, must immediately inform the competent authority or the police. In order to consolidate mechanisms for reporting violence, a centre was opened on 20 March 2016 which receives reports of abuse via the 24-hour hotline 1919. The centre oversees the completion of the necessary procedures, assists victims and refers persons against who there is sufficient evidence of having committed a crime to the Public Prosecution Service for it to take action in line with the Protection against Abuse Act. During the period covered by the report – 2016 to October 2020 – the centre received 108,590 reports of various forms of abuse, including negligence and mental, physical and verbal ill-treatment, etc. A total of 12,571 reports were submitted by non-Saudis.³⁹

124. Steps were taken to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the context of the right to work and workers' rights, notably:

- Implementing remote working arrangements;
- Postponing the collection of municipal taxes from private sector companies;
- Allowing business owners to defer the payment of value added tax, excise duties and income tax for three months;
- Exempting migrants whose residency expired before 30 June 2020 from payment of fees, by extending their period of residency by three months, free of charge;
- Launching – on the part of the Saudi Central Bank – a programme worth SRI 50 billion to support and finance small and medium-sized enterprises so as to help the private sector play its role in promoting economic growth and supporting government efforts to combat COVID-19;
- Providing a support package amounting to SRI 177 billion for small and medium-sized enterprises to help them bolster economic growth and preserve jobs, as part of

³⁷ Paragraph 22 (b) of the concluding observations.

³⁸ Paragraphs 20 (d) and 22 (a) and (c) of the concluding observations.

³⁹ Paragraphs 22 (c) and 22 (d).

efforts to mitigate the impact of the precautionary measures taken against the pandemic;

- Requiring the State to pay 60 per cent of wages of private sector workers, in order to preserve jobs;
- Reducing electricity bills for consumers in the commercial, industrial and agricultural sectors; the 30-per-cent reduction lasted two months (April and May), with the possibility of extension if necessary;
- Providing direct support equivalent to the minimum wage to workers of both sexes who, while not dependent on any enterprise, are registered with the Public Transport Authority and involved in passenger transport activities, whose work was suspended as a result of the preventive measures.

(e) Right to housing

125. The country's "Vision 2030" rests on the conviction that each family has the right to own a decent home and that this right has an important role in maintaining family bonds. The current rate of home ownership is 47 per cent and the number of citizens of an age where they wish to own a home is constantly growing; therefore, efforts are being made to increase that rate by not less than 5 per cent by the year A.H. 1442 (A.D. 2020). To that end, several laws and regulations have been enacted; the private sector has been incentivized and partnerships have been built with citizens to enable them to obtain a home within a reasonable time period, using financing and saving solutions commensurate with housing needs. The "Vision 2030" has given rise to a programme that aims to offer housing solutions that will allow Saudi families to own a suitable home, or to have the use of one, in line with their needs and economic capabilities thus improving conditions for current and future generations. This is to be achieved thanks to subsidized and appropriate financing solutions, increasing the supply of housing units at reasonable prices in record time, rolling out special housing programmes for the most vulnerable groups in society, developing the legislative and regulatory environment for the housing sector, maximizing the economic impact of the housing sector and making it more attractive to the private sector and developing local inputs thereby helping to create more jobs and strengthen the country's economic foundations. The programme includes 66 initiatives plus a further 4 critical initiatives, which come together to achieve the programme objectives, in the context of realizing the country's "Vision 2030".

126. The obligation to provide domestic workers with suitable accommodation is enshrined in the Regulations Governing Domestic Workers, issued on 15 July 2013. For his part, the Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Housing has issued a decree requiring companies to provide accommodation for their workers, in line with conditions and standards annexed to the decree and published on the website of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development. The decree envisages penalties for companies violating the requirement for employers to provide decent accommodation for migrant workers. Work is currently under way to create an automatic link between the *Madad* platform for documenting contracts of employment and the *Ejar* platform so as to ensure that migrant workers' rental contract is linked to the data in their employment contract.

127. To this end, several steps have been taken under the housing support regulations issued pursuant to Council of Ministers Decree No.82, dated 5 Rabi' I A.H. 1435 (6 January A.D. 2014). Under the regulations, each family has the right to apply for housing support in line with rules and priorities that take account of the number of family members as well as of the socioeconomic status and state of health of the applicant and his family. The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Housing has received applications via its own website, and work is currently ongoing to complete the procedures for allocating housing support to beneficiaries in line with the relevant priorities. Women, it should be noted, are able to benefit from housing support programmes on an equal footing with men, either as individual family members or as heads of household. In the latter case, the regulations accord them higher priority than men in order to ensure that they receive appropriate housing support for their families.

128. Efforts are being made in the context of the *Sakani* programme – which was launched in 2017 – to enable Saudi families to own their first home. Online services are provided via

the *Sakani* website and app which, being linked with all competent authorities, contributed to the continuity of operations even during the COVID-19 pandemic and helped citizens acquire appropriate housing, in accordance with their desires and their economic capabilities. As a result of these efforts, the rate of citizens' home ownership rose from 47 per cent in 2016 to 60 per cent in 2020. Royal Order No. A/84, dated 14 Safar A.H. 1442 (1 October A.D. 2020), exempts real estate transactions from value added tax (at 15 per cent) and imposes another tax – known as the “real estate transfer tax” – on real estate transactions, at 5 per cent of the value of the property. The State bears the cost of the real estate transfer tax, up to SRI 1 million, on the purchase price of a citizen's first home.

129. Foreign workers also enjoy the right to housing and are provided with housing units by the companies for which they work or with a cash allowance, which is part of their wages and is stipulated in their contract of employment. The obligation to provide suitable housing for domestic workers is explicitly envisioned in the Regulations Governing Domestic Workers and other Similar Categories of Worker, promulgated by Council of Ministers Decree No. 310, dated 7 Ramadan A.H. 1434 (15 July A.D. 2013). For his part, the Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and Housing has issued a decree requiring companies to provide accommodation for their workers, in line with conditions and standards annexed to the decree and published on the website of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development. The decree envisages penalties for companies violating the requirement for employers to provide decent accommodation for migrant workers. The competent authorities, notably the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development undertake to ensure that companies and employers duly provide accommodation to their foreign workforce, including domestic workers. A similar role is also played by supervisory bodies such as the Human Rights Commission and the National Society for Human Rights. Recently, in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, a committee with eight members drawn from government agencies was formed to look into the housing situation of migrant workers and to limit the spread of the virus. The committee focused its efforts on reviewing the housing conditions of foreign workers and on taking legal measures to address any violations observed.

(f) Right to public health services, medical care, social security and social services

130. Article 31 of the Basic Law of Governance requires the State to concern itself with public health and to provide health care to all citizens and their families in case of emergency, illness, disability or old age. To fulfil this obligation, a legal and institutional framework has been created intended to respect, protect and fulfil the right to health. The Health Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M.11, dated 23 Rabi' I A.H. 1423 (3 June A.D. 2002), aims to ensure that comprehensive and integrated health care is available to the entire population in a fair and accessible manner. The Cooperative Health Insurance Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/10, dated 1 Jumada I A.H. 1420 (12 August A.D. 1999), aims to provide and regulate health care for all residents of the country, Saudis working in the private sector and all individuals who are under a contract of employment, irrespective of the form of remuneration they receive, as stipulated in Council of Ministers Decree No. 206, dated 15 Sha'ban A.H. 1423 (21 October A.D. 2002). For its part, Council of Ministers Decree No. 167, dated 12 Rajab A.H. 1421 (9 October A.D. 2000), served to promulgate regulations governing the expenses incurred by Saudi patients and their carers who have been authorized to receive treatment outside their area of residence. The regulations envisage the disbursement of daily allowances to both patients and carers throughout the period of treatment, if they fulfil the requisite conditions. The Health Professions Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/59, dated 4 Dhu al-Qa'dah A.H. 1426 (4 December A.D. 2005), defines the statutory framework within which the profession is to be exercised and the duties of health-care professionals, including that of conducting themselves so as to serve the interests of individuals and society while respecting people's right to life, well-being and dignity.⁴⁰

131. During the period covered by the report, the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Rights and Responsibilities of HIV/AIDS Sufferers Act was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/41. The objectives of the Act, as set forth in articles 2 and 3, are to classify AIDS as an infectious

⁴⁰ Paragraph 28 of the concluding observations.

disease and to preserve the rights of people living with AIDS and their contacts while ensuring that they receive care and rehabilitation and are able to continue in education and work. Under the Act, the health authorities are tasked with providing health care, counselling and psychological support to sufferers, while respecting their rights. The National Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (*Weqaya*) – established under Council of Ministers Decree No. 200, dated 19 Jumada II A.H. 1434 (29 April A.D. 2013) – works to combat infectious diseases and other maladies, to prevent them from spreading and to promote public health. For its part, the National Centre for Mental Health – established under Council of Ministers Decree No. 685, dated 27 Dhu al-Qa'dah A.H. 1440 (29 July A.D. 2019) – seeks to promote national mental-health programmes, create a better life for members of society, foster positive participation and support the groups most vulnerable to mental disorders. The Saudi Centre for Patient Well-Being, established in 2017, constitutes a national point of reference for all matters related to the well-being of patients and the reduction of harmful medical errors. The Centres will work on developing a national patient well-being strategy that is consistent with initiatives under the national programme to transform the health sector.

132. Advances related to the right to health include the establishment and development of primary health care centres in all regions of the country. As of December 2022, there were 2,131 health centres distributed over various provinces, governorates and villages. There has been a trend to transform hospitals and health centres into government-run companies in order to enhance their efficiency and productivity, in accordance with the country's "Vision 2030". In addition, a number of strategies have been rolled out that are designed to improve health care. These include a primary health-care strategy (2010–2020) the first objective of which is to improve child health, maternal health, reproductive health and the health of persons with disabilities. Another of the strategies is a national strategy for reproductive health, which includes health-care interventions targeting adolescents and focusing on reproductive education, physiological changes in adolescents of both sexes and diseases transmitted through wrongful sexual acts. Medical rehabilitation services in the country have been boosted and the Ministry of Health has activated a telephone number (937) via which it delivers a body of services, notably receiving and examining reports about patients then taking the appropriate action and having doctors on hand 24 hours a day to provide medical consultations. In order to ensure that health facilities are evenly distributed across all regions and to enable all citizens to obtain the requisite health care, the medical authorities are acting to ensure that hospital projects are fairly and evenly distributed and that they provide services of different levels, from primary and secondary care (delivered via centralized public hospitals) to specialized services. In this way, each region has a central hospital with its own specialized departments, in addition to "medical cities" that provide specialized tertiary care and are distributed across all the main regions of the country.

133. The Ministry of Health guarantees free health-care coverage for citizens as well as for residents on individual sponsorship arrangements or who have contracts with the State. Other categories of residents are covered by cooperative health insurance. Persons who have violated residency laws receive emergency and life-saving health care in State-run hospitals affiliated with the Ministry of Health. In addition to this, certain services are made available in places of detention, as required and in coordination with the Ministry of the Interior. In line with State directives, the Ministry also provides basic health-care services free of charge, on an equal footing with citizens, to refugees and to persons displaced by conflict. Furthermore, the Ministry provides basic immunizations for children and runs free seasonal vaccination campaigns for residents and citizens alike. The percentage of non-citizens who received appointments for COVID-19 tests in primary health-care centres and in testing centres, is consistent with the country's demographic make-up.

134. During the course of 2017, thanks to the efforts of 9,300 medical staff operating in health-care centres, a population health survey was launched that targeted around 50,000 families in different parts of the country. The purpose of the exercise was to create an accurate database on the country's health situation. In 2019, the second round of the World Health Survey took place using standards endorsed by the World Health Organization (WHO), the aim being to fill gaps in health-care indicators, particularly the sustainable development indicators and the 100 core health indicators. Several initiatives have been launched in relation to Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals. They include a new national channel for health-care services for pregnant women, a national drug prevention project

(*Nibras*), 36 new hospitals and 2 “medical cities” with a 11,300-bed capacity and a prioritization initiative to facilitate access to health care for target groups such as persons with disabilities, persons over 60, patients in home care and other cases approved by a special medical committee.

135. Among the strategic objectives the Ministry has set itself in the national programme to transform the health sector is that of facilitating access to health services. This is defined as easing access to health-care services for citizens and residents at appropriate times and locations, and is to be achieved by focusing on four areas:

- Expanding the overall availability of hospital beds and medical staff;
- Achieving an appropriate geographical distribution in terms of the distance between health-care providers;
- Ensuring timely access to relevant health services;
- Ensuring the affordability of health care for individuals.

136. Part of the objective of facilitating access to health services is an initiative to develop the quality and prompt delivery of intensive and emergency care. This includes increasing the availability of intensive care beds throughout the country by equipping additional beds and making them available at intensive care departments in centres run by the Ministry of Health. Action has also been taken to improve systems and processes and to train staff. In addition, the initiative envisages improvements to accident and emergency departments throughout the country, which are to be expanded and provided with extra beds. Under the operational part of the initiative, nine intensive care departments have been opened in nine hospitals in different regions while, under the capital investment part, seven projects to build or expand intensive care departments have been completed while work is still ongoing on other projects in different regions.

137. The maternal mortality rate stood at 11.9 per 100,000 live births in 2018, with 99.7 percent of births being supervised by health care professionals in 2017 and 99.4 per cent in 2018. The mortality rate for children under 5 stood at 8.9 per 1,000 live births in 2017 and at 8.5 per 1,000 live births in 2018. The neonatal mortality rate stood at 5 per 1,000 live births in 2017 and at 3.6 per 1,000 live births in 2018. New HIV infections per 1,000 of the uninfected population stood at 0.034 in 2016, 0.034 in 2017 and 0.033 in 2018. Death rates from suicide were 1.6 per 100,000 in 2017 and in 2018. As concerns expenditure on health, the percentage of the population with health expenditures that were significant in comparison to total household expenditure or total income were as follows: in 2013, 1.73 per cent were spending more than 10 per cent on health care and 0.6 per cent were spending more than 25 per cent; in 2018 1.31 per cent were spending more than 10 per cent on health care and 0.58 per cent were spending more than 25 per cent.

138. The State has engaged in humanitarian and relief work within the health sector at both the regional and international levels, providing aid and assistance in various forms. As of December 2020, the value of the aid given to health-care programmes by Saudi Arabia amounted to \$7,158,077,116. Aid and assistance delivered via the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre – covering 441 projects and two donations – amounted to \$982,676,236.

139. As concerns the right to social insurance and social security, the Basic Law of Governance (arts. 10, 21, 22 and 27) stipulates that the State is to act to reinforce family ties; to ensure the welfare of individual family members; to create conditions where their talents and abilities can thrive; to ensure that the zakat is collected and legitimately disbursed; to pursue socioeconomic development that is well and fairly planned; to guarantee the rights of citizens and their families in the event of emergency, sickness, disability or old age; to support the social security system; and to encourage institutions and individuals to contribute to charity. Through the provision of social welfare, the State aims to ensure that all members of Saudi society are involved in comprehensive development programmes. It does this by transforming social security beneficiaries from recipients of assistance to self-reliant and productive members of society, thanks to production programmes and the provision of cash and in-kind assistance to persons on low incomes. A monthly pension is paid to social security beneficiaries, who include the following categories: orphans, persons unable to work,

older persons, women without a provider (divorced women, widows, widows with children, unmarried women), families where the provider is absent and families without a provider. Other groups, who do not fulfil the requirements for Saudi nationality, are also eligible: families consisting of a Saudi mother and a non-Saudi father, foreign women married to a Saudi or divorced from a Saudi with whom they have children, persons with disabilities over the age of 18 who hold a mobility card and widows with children.

140. The new Social Security Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/32, dated 4 Rabi' II A.H. 1442, envisages measures and means to address instances of poverty in society and to guarantee a basic income sufficient to meet the fundamental needs of beneficiaries, to which end a minimum allowance has been set. The Act also includes provision for other appropriate assistance in the form of social support and protection that takes particular account of the most needy and deserving categories, the eventual aim being to enable beneficiaries to achieve financial independence and become productive members of society. To this end, training has been offered and mechanisms have been put in place to assist beneficiaries in the event of crises and disasters. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development is cooperating with the Ministry of Economy and Planning on a plan to revise the Social Security Act, which will contribute to reducing poverty, to building the capacity to manage economic crises and to boosting economic growth through appropriate legislation and regulations.

141. Social security allocations have been increased, with the maximum annual amount being raised from SRI 16,200 to SRI 60,000. At the same time, social security support programmes have been expanded and boosted, notably: a "productive families" programme, a "furniture and fittings" programme, a "cash assistance for food" programme, a "discount purchase card" programme, a "utilities bill subsidy" programme and a "home renovation" programme for social security beneficiaries. SRI 3.5 billion have been earmarked for this purpose. Support has also been provided for assistance programmes for needy students by the Ministry of Education. These include a "winter and summer clothing and school satchel" programme, a programme to pay the fees for academic achievement tests and support for the Takaful Charity Foundation. SRI 476 million have been earmarked for this purpose annually. In addition, SRI 2,000 is allocated each month to jobseekers in the public and private sectors and a minimum wage of SRI 3,000 per month has been adopted for Saudi workers of all categories, as part of the *Nitaqat* programme. Specialized assistance programmes have also been launched to help needy families set up their own small business, at a total cost of SRI 2 billion.

142. The "productive families" programme, launched at a cost of SRI 1.5 billion, is intended to help families by giving them a capital investment to acquire equipment, raw materials and other items necessary to start their own activity. Another initiative is the "citizen's account" programme, which is intended to address the potential impact of the economic reforms being rolled out in the context of the country's "Vision 2030" and involves the disbursement of cash sums to middle- or low-income citizens. Independent women account for 55 per cent of all independent beneficiaries, while female heads of household account for 7 per cent of all heads of household and women account for 25 per cent of the beneficiaries of the programme.

143. Royal Order No. A/86, dated 18 Rabi' I A.H. 1439 (5 January A.H. 2018), envisages a monthly cost-of-living allowance of SRI 1,000 for citizens who are civil servants or military personnel, for a period of one year. The Order also includes provision for a monthly cost-of-living allowance of SRI 500 for citizens who are recipients of a retirement pension, to be disbursed by the Public Pension Agency; for citizens who are social insurance beneficiaries, to be disbursed by the General Organization for Social Insurance and for citizens who are beneficiaries of social security, also for a period of one year. Furthermore, the Order envisages a 10-per-cent increase in grants for citizens of both sexes who are students, for a period of one year, while the State is to bear the cost of VAT for citizens who are beneficiaries of private health services and private education.

(g) Measures taken to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic

144. The numerous measures taken to combat the COVID-19 pandemic followed two parallel channels; on the one hand: limiting the spread of the disease and providing high-

quality health care to those infected and, on the other, addressing the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic. All measures taken by the State incorporated a human rights-based approach, a fact that emerges clearly from the focus on equality and non-discrimination, and the effective insistence on the interdependency, interrelation and indivisibility of human rights as recognized in the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Indeed, action was taken to protect other rights affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the right to education, the right to work, the right to social security and social protection, etc. Information concerning those measures is given at several points in the present report, depending upon the subject. Below is an overview of the measures taken by the State in the context of the right to health, social security and social protection:

- Temporarily preventing citizens and residents from travelling into or out of the country;
- Arranging shelter for citizens stranded abroad and providing them with protective and medical care, living allowances and psychological support;
- Suspending religious, social and cultural gatherings and events, schooling and workplace attendance;
- Closing markets and shopping centres, except chemists and food markets, while providing food, medicines, protective equipment and consumer goods;
- Applying home quarantine measures and isolating cities and regions;
- Taking precautionary measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus in prisons, detention centres and care institutions;
- Providing free and high-quality health care to all persons, without exception;
- Providing direct support equivalent to the minimum wage to workers of both sexes who, while not dependent on any enterprise, are registered with the Public Transport Authority and involved in passenger transport activities, whose work was suspended as a result of the preventive measures;
- In December 2020, Saudi Arabia announced that it would start providing vaccinations against COVID-19, free of charge to all citizens and residents without discrimination. Numerous sites across national territory were allocated for the delivery of this service, while anti-COVID vaccinations were also offered to patients in their own homes throughout the country, thanks to a home health-care programme. This served to preserve the health and safety of all members of the community and to limit the spread of the virus.

145. Under Council of Ministers Decree No. 168, dated 10 Rabi' I A.H. 1442 (27 October A.D. 2020), a sum of SRI 500,000 is to be paid out to families of persons working in the State-run or private health sector who have died of COVID-19, whether civilian or military, Saudi or non-Saudi.

146. The Ministry of Health conducts round-the-clock monitoring on the number of persons infected with COVID-19, for which purpose it has developed a smart database in which infected persons are disaggregated by age, sex, and nationality. In cooperation with other stakeholders – notably the Ministry of Information – the Ministry of Health launched an intensive awareness-raising campaign using spoken, written and visual media materials in all the languages spoken in the country, in addition to sign language and augmentative and alternative communication. The campaign drew attention to the perils of the COVID-19 pandemic and optimal prevention methodologies, and it included a map, updated in real time, of the spread of the disease to the different cities and regions of the country. In addition, a press conference on the subject was held on a daily basis. The broadcasts included material specifically directed at families, mothers and children.

147. A directive was issued by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques on 6 Sha'ban A.H. 1441 (30 March A.D. 2020) under which citizens, residents, and persons who have violated residency laws, who are infected or suspected of being infected with the COVID-19 virus, are to receive treatment free of charge. Persons not in possession of Saudi nationality were thus able to access health services and, by October 2020, around 7.5 million persons had

availed themselves of one or more forms of health care, including laboratory analysis, medical examination or hospitalization. Moreover, emergency departments in State-run and private hospitals take in critical cases, regardless of any other considerations.

148. During the COVID-19 pandemic, subsidies continued to be deposited into social security accounts, which are used to provide cash and in-kind assistance to beneficiaries of both sexes on an equal footing. There has, moreover, been no decrease with respect to the amounts deposited in the past. A decree emanating from the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development stated that no social security beneficiary was to be abandoned during the crisis and, in fact, more than SRI 2 billion was disbursed to beneficiaries.

149. On a separate front, proactive measures were taken for the purpose of immunizing the private sector – where so many women and girls work – against the negative effects of the crisis. These measures included a programme worth SRI 50 billion, launched by the Saudi Central Bank, to support and finance small and medium-sized enterprises so as to help the private sector play its role in promoting economic growth and supporting government efforts to combat COVID-19. In addition to this, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development allocated SRI 17.3 billion in government support to help private companies bolster economic growth and preserve jobs, as part of efforts to mitigate the impact of the precautionary measures taken against the pandemic.

150. Electricity bills for consumers in the commercial, industrial and agricultural sectors have been reduced. The 30-per-cent reduction lasted for two months in 2020 (April and May), with the possibility of extension if necessary. Subscribers in the industrial and commercial sectors could choose the option of paying 50 per cent of their monthly electricity bill for the months of April, May and June, on condition that the outstanding dues were collected in instalments over a period of six months, beginning in January 2021, with the possibility of postponement if necessary. In addition, direct support equivalent to the minimum wage was provided to workers of both sexes who, while not dependent on any enterprise, are registered with the Public Transport Authority and involved in passenger transport activities, whose work was suspended as a result of the preventive measures.

151. Measures taken to eliminate violence against women were not greatly affected by the pandemic or the precautionary measures taken to contain it. Remedies continued to be available, notably via the Human Rights Commission and a centre for receiving reports of violence, which is part of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development and which operates 24 hours a day. Both those bodies conduct oversight and receive reports about instances of violence against women then take the requisite legal steps under the Protection against Abuse Act or, if the victim is under 18, the Child Protection Act. Specialized staff of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development establish contact with victims of violence, monitor their situation and provide them with counselling, assistance and other social services. These services – which are provided by the competent authorities, such as social protection units or departments, or the police – can be delivered remotely or, if the situation requires, onsite, while strictly adhering to safety directives. Measures were also taken to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection in protection shelters.

(h) Right to education and training

152. According to articles 13 and 30 of the Basic Law of Governance, the purpose of education is to imbue young people with knowledge and skills and to prepare them to be constructive members of society. The State, moreover, is to provide public education and to combat illiteracy. In fact, Council of Ministers Decree No. 139, dated 26 Rabi' II A.H. (14 June A.D. 2004), stipulates that education in Saudi Arabia is compulsory for persons between the ages of 6 and 15, while efforts to eradicate illiteracy are conducted within the framework of the Adult Education and Literacy Act, which was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/22, dated 9 Jumada II A.H. 1392 (20 July A.D. 1972) and which states, in article 2, that its goal is to eradicate illiteracy among all citizens. On the subject of free education, article 233 of the country's education policy, promulgated under Council of Ministers Decree No. 779, dated 16–17 Ramadan A.H. 1389 (26–27 November A.D. 1969), states that education of all kinds and all levels is to be free of charge. All persons enjoy the right to education, on an equal footing, and no national law contains any provision that

prevents the enjoyment of that right by endorsing discrimination on grounds of race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin.⁴¹

153. The national “Vision 2030” seeks to bridge the gap between higher education outputs and labour market requirements, to develop public education, direct students towards appropriate career and vocational choices and provide opportunities for retraining and flexibility in moving between different educational options. The goal is to have at least five Saudi universities in the list of the 200 top universities worldwide by A.H. 1452 (A.D. 2030). This is to be achieved by creating advanced educational curricula that focus on fundamental abilities as well as on skills development and character building; at the same time, the role of teachers is to be promoted and re-evaluated, and a comprehensive database is to be set up to monitor students’ academic progress from the early to the advanced levels of their education. One of the programmes being rolled out under the “Vision 2030” is a “national transformation” programme that contains a body of initiatives intended to respect and protect the right to education for all. One of the initiatives involves the creation of an educational infrastructure that accommodates the children of migrants, which is to be achieved by expanding international schools and universities and enabling them to deliver high-quality education to migrant children by obtaining the requisite international accreditations, increasing educational options and facilitating admission procedures.

154. The focus on education within the framework of the country’s “Vision 2030” has led to a series of rapid developments and reforms. These include providing educational opportunities for all persons; promoting equality of opportunity; maintaining free education; consolidating equality in the field of education; developing school curricula; monitoring the performance of teachers; supervising schools, school buildings and equipment; developing tools for measurement and evaluation; running educational counselling and guidance programmes; attending to the needs of people with visual, auditory or intellectual disabilities or autism; and making the enrolment of students with disabilities mandatory. In 2020, the budget of the Ministry of Education amounted to more than SRI 140 billion.

155. According to statistical estimates, the literacy rate among persons aged 15 and over stood at 96.29 per cent in 2018, with the gender gap being 6 percentage points in favour of males. In 2019, the adjusted net enrolment rate in primary education was 97.97 per cent of all students while, in the same year, the completion rate for primary education stood at 92 per cent. By 2020, that figure stood at 99.5 per cent. Also in 2019, the adjusted net enrolment rate in middle-school education was 93.02 per cent of all students while, by 2020, it had reached 98.38 per cent. The completion rate for middle-school education stood at 83 per cent in 2019 and at 93.13 per cent in 2020. In 2019, the adjusted net enrolment rate in secondary education was 87.74 per cent of students in the secondary-education age group while, by 2020, it had reached 94.9 per cent. The completion rate for secondary education stood at 67 per cent in 2019 and at 98 per cent in 2020. In 2019, the overall enrolment rate in higher education among Saudi students was 69 per cent while by 2020 it had reached 70.63 per cent. Students spend an estimated 16.4 years in education.

156. In 2017, participation rates in formal preschool education (one year prior to the official age for enrolment in primary education) stood at 35.8 per cent for males and 38.6 per cent for females while, in 2018, those figures stood at 31.9 per cent and 40.4 per cent, respectively. In 2018, schools had access to utilities, as follows: electricity, 100 per cent; infrastructure and materials for persons with disabilities, 80 per cent; potable water, 100 per cent; basic handwashing facilities, 100 per cent.

157. As of the end of 2020, there were 29 State-run universities in the country and 54 private universities and colleges. In 2019, the number of students of both sexes in higher education stood at 1,641,692 and in general education at 6,397,641, while the number of those studying abroad reached 100,585.

158. In order to enable female students to participate in physical education, the Ministry of Education has launched a physical education initiative aimed at improving the health of

⁴¹ Paragraph 28 of the concluding observations.

female students by encouraging communal sporting activities, especially among female students, at all educational levels.

159. The Ministry has also launched a “lifelong learning” initiative (*Istidama*). This is a national development project targeting adults of both sexes aged between 15 and 50 that aims to eradicate illiteracy and enable individuals to benefit from different learning and training opportunities.

160. Action was taken to ensure the continuity of schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic by offering students multiple alternative ways to access education, including the *Madrasati* platform and the 23 *Ain* educational channels. In partnership with civil society organizations, needy families were supplied with computers and SIM cards, while mobile units served to guide users in the use of the platform.

161. The State has engaged in humanitarian and relief work within the education sector at both the regional and international levels, providing aid and assistance to help crisis-afflicted educational institutions and programmes continue to operate. As of March 2021, the value of the aid given to the education sector by Saudi Arabia amounted to \$7,255,174,676. Also as of March 2021, aid and assistance delivered via the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre amounted to \$270,529,007.

(i) Right to participate equally in cultural activities

162. In accordance with article 29 of the Basic Law of Governance, the State concerns itself with literature and culture, and, at the same time, remains determined to protect intellectual property rights without discrimination between rights holders. Under Royal Decree No. (M/45), dated 19 Jumada I A.H. 1428, Saudi Arabia acceded to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which seeks to preserve and respect the cultural heritage of different groups and to raise awareness about the importance and mutual appreciation of such heritage. The King Abdulaziz Complex for Endowment Libraries – which was established under Council of Ministers Decree No. 398, dated 15 Ramadan A.H. 1437 (20 June 2016 AD) – aims to preserve endowment libraries and make them available to the public. The Complex also holds seminars and workshops on the importance libraries have for communities and individuals.

163. The State has organized 27 cultural initiatives to support community involvement in cultural activities, without discrimination. These initiatives include a translation programme that aims to create a lively cultural environment through the translation of books and other works, thereby facilitating the exchange of knowledge between all groups in society. There is also a cultural programme for children, a programme to develop public libraries and a “books for all” initiative. Work is currently under way to create a fund for cultural development, which is to be used to support and empower talented individuals and promote their participation in various cultural fields.

(j) Right of access to any location or facility intended for use by the general public, such as transport, hotels, restaurants, cafes, theatres and parks

164. No national law contains any discriminatory restrictions regarding access to public areas on grounds of race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin. This includes public transport, which is a public service that is operated by State institutions and private companies in accordance with the relevant rules and without discrimination between users. In this regard, several laws and regulations were amended in 2018 to enable women to enter sports and entertainment facilities and to attend cultural events, on an equal footing with men.

Article 6

165. Under national law, all persons have an equal and guaranteed right to go before national courts and other competent State institutions to seek redress, reparation, compensation and, if necessary, assistance for any damages resulting from the commission of an offence, including racial discrimination. In fact, under article 8 of the Basic Law, governance in Saudi Arabia is to be based on justice and equality, while article 47 stipulates that all citizens and residents have an equal right to take legal action. The means of redress that are open to all persons in the event of any violation of their human rights are explained

in section IV, in part I of the present report. Courts in Saudi Arabia operate at multiple levels, in accordance with the Statutes of the Judiciary. According to article 9 of those Statutes, the court system is made up of the High Court, courts of appeal and courts of first instance, which include ordinary courts, criminal courts, personal status courts, commercial courts and labour tribunals, while the Board of Grievances (the administrative judiciary) includes the High Administrative Court, administrative courts of appeal and ordinary administrative courts.⁴²

166. The courts admit the principle of aggravating circumstances, which can depend upon who perpetrated the offence, upon the person against whom it was perpetrated as well as upon the motives of the crime and the circumstances in which it was committed. This includes racist motivations as, under the country's legal system, prosecutors can request a more severe penalty against an accused person if the crime in question was racially motivated, a principle that was confirmed in a circular issued by the Chief Prosecutor in December 2013. The same position is reflected in several legal principles, including the principle whereby penalties under sharia law are to be augmented or decreased with a view to averting evil and achieving the best interests of society, the principle whereby *ta'zir* penalties are to reflect the gravity of the offence, the principle whereby "crimes against blood or honour are to attract more severe penalties" and the principle whereby "the penalty must be commensurate with the gravity or levity of the circumstances of the case".

167. The Convention can be invoked before national courts because, when Saudi Arabia acceded to the Convention, it became part of national law. Thus, the provisions of the Convention that are binding upon the State can be used as a basis for legal action before the courts. Moreover, members of the Public Prosecution Service are required to invoke the Convention when preparing indictments, as per a circular issued by the Chief Prosecutor in October 2015, which states that human rights treaties are to be referenced in bills of indictment and memorandums of charges.⁴³

168. Moreover, any person claiming to have suffered racial discrimination has the right to initiate and pursue criminal proceedings before the competent court, in accordance with article 16 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, while the Public Prosecution Service also has the right to investigate and bring a criminal case if it deems that doing so serves the public interest, as per article 17 of the Code. For its part, the Human Rights Commission receives human rights-related complaints, including complaints of racial discrimination, and takes the necessary legal action. This is in addition to the role played by civil society organizations, such as the National Society for Human Rights, which also receives human rights-related complaints, including complaints of racial discrimination, then refers them to the competent authorities for action to be taken.⁴⁴

169. During the period covered by the present report, the Human Rights Commission received five complaints relating to racial discrimination, hate speech and racism, and took the requisite legal action, either by informing the Public Prosecution Service or by communicating with the competent authorities for them to take due action.⁴⁵

170. The table below shows the number of cases initiated by the Public Prosecution Service involving racism, hate speech and inciting enmity, including the number of cases referred to the competent courts, between 2016 and October 2020.

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of cases</i>	<i>No. of cases referred to court</i>
2016	21	14
2017	16	12
2018	25	20
2019	35	26
2020	21	14
Total	118	86

⁴² Paragraphs 22 (a) and 28 of the concluding observations.

⁴³ Paragraph 16 (a) of the concluding observations.

⁴⁴ Paragraph 22 (a) of the concluding observations.

⁴⁵ Paragraph 16 (a) of the concluding observations.

171. Between 2016 and October 2020 the Public Prosecution Service investigated 118 cases involving racism and hate speech. Of these, it referred 86 to the competent courts. For their part, the courts handed down rulings relating to racism and hate speech, as detailed in the table below.⁴⁶

<i>Total number of cases related to racism and hate between 2016 and 2020</i>	<i>322 cases</i>
Cases leading to a conviction	235 cases
Cases not leading to a conviction	87 cases

172. One notable achievement during the reporting period was the issuance of Royal Order No. A/240, dated 22 Ramadan A.H. 1438 (16 June A.D. 2017), under which the name of the “Public Investigation and Prosecution Department” was changed to “Public Prosecution Service”. The Service was likewise granted complete independence in the exercise of its duties and was made directly answerable to the King. The Order also envisaged the creation of specialized courts with a view to the unification of existing judicial bodies. Thus, commercial courts, labour tribunals and personal status courts were established in various governorates and regions of the country. At the same time, specialized chambers were set up inside existing ordinary courts and specialized appeals chambers were opened in several cities. Criminal proceedings were transferred entirely from the administrative judiciary (the Board of Grievances) to the ordinary courts, a move that has consolidated the jurisdiction of the criminal courts. Council of Ministers Decree No. 289, dated 4 Rajab A.H. 1437 (11 April A.D. 2016) endorsed new statutes for the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, defining the jurisdiction of the Committee and establishing procedures whereby it is to exercise its mandate in coordination with law enforcement agencies.

173. The Regulations Governing Appeal Procedures – issued pursuant to Decree No. 2818 of the Minister of Justice, dated 26 Rajab A.H. 1439 (11 Rabi’ II A.D. 2018) – constitute a development in the field of justice as they give a precise and in-depth overview of appeal proceedings. In 2018, the Minister of Justice and the Head of the Supreme Council of the Judiciary issued a circular regarding procedures for submitting pleadings before the courts of appeal. The Ministry of Justice’s judicial training centre – which was created under Council of Ministers Decree No. 162, dated 24 Rabi’ II A.H. 1435 (24/ February A.D. 2014) – has run 12 training programmes for a total of 683 beneficiaries, including judges, prosecutors and lawyers. The training covered, inter alia, the provisions of the human rights treaties to which Saudi Arabia is a party, including the Convention, audiovisual recordings of proceedings at the Riyadh criminal court (in the light of the principle that trials should be public) and procedures to facilitate the submission of pleadings.⁴⁷

174. The annual training programme for public security personnel includes courses intended to promote a culture of human rights and its application in security work, including the prohibition of racial discrimination. Around 720 trainees in 38 training courses, benefit from the initiative each year.⁴⁸

175. National law guarantees redress for victims of human rights violations, including crimes of racial discrimination, as the Code of Criminal Procedure grants victims, their lawyers or their heirs the right to pursue criminal proceedings. Under the Code, moreover, victims of a crime may already claim their rights while the case in question is still being investigated, or during the trial. In addition to this, Royal Decree No. 43 of 1958 stipulates that persons convicted of an offence are to disburse due compensation to persons who have suffered harm.

⁴⁶ Paragraph 16 (a) of the concluding observations.

⁴⁷ Paragraph 38 of the concluding observations.

⁴⁸ Paragraph 38 of the concluding observations.

Article 7⁴⁹

176. The Human Rights Commission and civil society organizations, in cooperation with government bodies, notably from the judiciary, work to disseminate human rights culture and to raise awareness through an ongoing programme of seminars, workshops and training courses, which serve to draw attention to the Convention and to discuss optimal ways to consolidate it and implement it on the ground, in line with the country's obligations. These initiatives are targeted at judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officials and other stakeholders, including representatives of civil society institutions. Training programmes have also been run within the framework of a 2012 memorandum of understanding between the Saudi Human Rights Commission and OHCHR. In all, 50 programmes have been rolled out, including programmes to introduce the human rights treaties to which Saudi Arabia is a party, among them the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The judicial training centre also offers training on the human rights treaties to which the country is a party.

177. Several educational and training programmes have been run, in addition to workshops, lectures and online audiovisual awareness-raising campaigns covering various human rights-related topics, including the elimination of racial discrimination. The involvement in these initiatives of several important figures from civil society has had a positive effect and helped to achieve the desired outcomes. Educational institutions throughout the country are also involved in disseminating a human rights culture, as human rights concepts have been incorporated into school curricula at various levels as well as into several universities, and a number of research chairs have been established that focus on human rights-related subject areas. The General Authority for Entertainment and the General Sports Authority help to spread human rights culture through the events and activities they organize, while human rights awareness is also raised via celebrations to mark international days, such as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (21 March). Such occasions include a wide range and variety of activities intended to draw attention to human rights, the seriousness of rights violations and potential means of redress, reparation and assistance.

178. On 14 December 2017, the Human Rights Commission signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Education. The memorandum includes, inter alia, provision for the launch of an online educational portal for human rights under the name "My country protects my rights" which seeks to make students aware of their rights and to disseminate a human rights culture, including values of equality and tolerance and the rejection of racial discrimination.

179. The King Abdulaziz Centre for National Dialogue works constantly to promote tolerance and coexistence, holding meetings in which various groups within society are able to come together. In 2017, the Centre held 226 training courses attended by 6,315 persons; it also launched 213 programmes focusing on dialogue and tolerance. In particular, the Centre has run the *Naseej* programme, which aims to consolidate the values of peace and coexistence within society, constructing a solid and cohesive community base by moulding a generation to understand the importance of coexistence for its present and its future. Among the aims of the programme, which has benefited 39,170 persons, are that of developing national sentiment among members of society and promoting community coexistence. For its part, the National Dialogue Academy also runs programmes intended for all sectors of society, with enrolment open to all persons without discrimination. More than 1,000 persons from all categories of both sexes have received training, including 118 imams and preachers who were trained in communication and dialogue skills and in how to disseminate the spirit and values of tolerance and equality. In addition, 450 religious teachers and scholars were trained in values of equality and non-hatred, while athletes were taught dialogue skills in the sporting arena as part of an initiative entitled "Our teams do not divide us". Numerous workshops have also been run, including 10 workshops held across the country in which more than 400 specialists reviewed the content of textbooks in the light of values of tolerance, justice and equality, and the rejection of hatred and intolerance. A workshop entitled "Adapting textbooks to prevent violent extremism" was organized with the United Nations Educational,

⁴⁹ Paragraphs (16 (b) and (c), 22 (b), 26 and 38 of the concluding observations.

Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and attended by representatives from 14 Arab States and 114 experts. Also in cooperation with UNESCO, another workshop was organized under the title “The media and other cultures”. Other workshops focused on creating a national strategy for childhood and on drawing up a road map for women’s employment. Projects and initiatives launched by the Centre include training modules to promote equality in rights and duties between men and women. Other modules were explicitly intended for persons with special needs, such as a module on communication using Braille, in which 145 imams and preachers of both sexes were also trained. More than 5,200 male and female trainees followed courses on public dialogue and communication. Weekly meetings – “Dialogue with a consultant” – were held on subjects related to the promotion of equality and the advancement of human rights. The Centre has also been involved in other projects, such as an “ambassadors of humanitarian dialogue” project, in cooperation with Alwaleed Philanthropies, which involved training for 800 students of both sexes; the *Tebyan* anti-extremism project, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, which involved training for 2,000 students of both sexes; an “ambassadors of moderation” project, in cooperation with Taibah University, which involved training for more than 6,000 students of both sexes; the *Hawar* student debating competition, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, with more than 460 participants of both sexes; a “dialogue between generations” project in which more than 200 persons took part; and the “We are the children of planet Earth” project, intended to instil values of moderation, coexistence and mutual acceptance into children aged between 8 and 15. Lastly, in cooperation with UNESCO, 215 persons were trained and prepared for dialogue in the area of childhood.

180. The quarterly magazine *Al-Hiwar* is one of the Centre’s channels of communication and part of its ongoing efforts to make its message and goals known. In this way, it contributes to and consolidates a culture of dialogue across the world of ideas while, at the same time, serving the public interest, promoting moderation and coexistence and preserving national unity. Via a series of columns, the magazine seeks to throw the spotlight on the battle against racism, hatred and extremism. These include columns on the role of writers in consolidating values of moderation, tolerance and coexistence, on the rejection of violence and aesthetic and cultural illiteracy and on diversity and coexistence in the country.

181. The creation of the Global Centre for Combating Extremist Ideology (*Etidal*), on 24 Sha’ban A.H. 1438 (20 May A.D. 2017), was an important institutional development in the fight against extremism. In cooperation with States and with other organizations, the Centre monitors and analyses extremist ideology with a view to countering and preventing it.

182. On a regular basis, the Human Rights Commission publishes the Convention or excerpts therefrom. It also publishes the national reports of Saudi Arabia under the Convention and the Committee’s concluding observations thereon. Its purpose in doing so is to make the Convention and the Committee’s observations and recommendations as widely known as possible.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Paragraph 47 of the concluding observations.