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## **National report submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21\***

**Kuwait**

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



## **I. Introduction**

1. Kuwait hereby submits its fourth national report to the universal periodic review mechanism, in accordance with the general guidelines of the Human Rights Council and the guidelines for drafting reports for the universal periodic review mechanism.
2. Following the submission of its third national report to the universal periodic review mechanism in January 2020, at the 35th session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Kuwait received 302 recommendations, of which it fully accepted 230, partially accepted 6 and took note of 12. It rejected recommendations that were not in line with its value system or that required the establishment of specific prerequisites in its legislative, political and social structure.
3. This report is submitted in fulfilment of the State's obligations in the areas of promoting and protecting human rights, proactive engagement with civil society institutions, and providing information on the State's efforts to follow up implementation of accepted recommendations, which is an important step towards progress in promoting human rights.

## **II. Methodology for following up on the review and process for preparing the report**

### **A. Methodology for following up on the review**

4. Since the adoption of its third national report, the State of Kuwait has been working to implement the results of the review. Implementation of the recommendations has been followed up by the Standing National Committee for the Preparation of Reports and Follow-up on the Implementation of Recommendations Related to Human Rights, which is made up of representatives of various relevant government agencies. It held a specialized workshop with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in March 2022 and January 2024 as part of implementation of the New Kuwait 2035 national development plan and its vital pillars in various fields and sectors, which have the ultimate goal of promoting human rights.

### **B. Report preparation and consultation process**

5. The Standing National Committee for the Preparation of Reports and Follow-up on the Implementation of Recommendations Related to Human Rights conducted a consultative process that brought in the National Human Rights Office (a national institution), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics, and representatives of scientific institutions in the course of preparing this report.

## **III. Normative and institutional developments relating to the promotion and protection of human rights**

### **A. National laws, legislation and regulations issued during the review period**

- Decree-Law No. 116 (2024) amending certain provisions of Amiri Decree No. 15 (1959) concerning the Kuwaiti Nationality Act
- Decree-Law No. 114 (2024) concerning residency for foreign nationals
- Decree Law No. 93 (2024) amending certain penal provisions, including a definition of torture and the imposition a harsher penalty commensurate with its seriousness
- Act No. 120 (2023) on elections for members of the National Assembly, which established the General Elections Commission

- The 2023 amendment to Act, No. 14 (1973) on the Constitutional Court
- Act No. 118 (2023) on the establishment of city or residential area construction companies
- Act No. 1 (2023) concerning prevention of conflict of interest
- Act No. 1 (2021) amending certain provisions of Act No. 17 (1960) enacting the Code of Criminal Procedure, abolishing preventive detention for persons who exercise their right to express their opinion
- Act No. 71 (2020) concerning the Bankruptcy Act
- Act No. 70 (2020) on practice of the medical profession and allied professions, patients' rights, and health facilities
- Act No. 16 (2020) on protection from domestic violence, with implementing regulations adopted by Decision No. 904 (2023)
- Act No. 11 (2020) amending certain provisions of Act No. 17 (1960) enacting the Code of Criminal Procedure, which makes possible review of final criminal judgments
- Decision No. 22 (2022) revising the implementing regulations for Act No. 68 (2015) on domestic workers, which provides for increased legal safeguards for domestic workers
- Ministerial Decision No. 177 (2021) concerning prohibition of hiring discrimination in the private sector and of sexual harassment in the workplace
- Decree No. 44/A (2021) issuing the implementing regulations for Act No. 12 (2011) on public assistance.

## **B. National mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights**

- A standing national committee for implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security was created in 2003.
- A committee called the national task force on raising indicators related to women in Kuwait was created in 2023.
- A national committee for protection from domestic violence was created in 2023, with members from several government agencies and civil society organizations.
- A commission on women and business affairs was created in 2021. It launched the Kuwaiti Leaders for Change platform, which provides a comprehensive database of Kuwaiti women who might be nominated for leadership positions.

## **C. Developments with regard to governmental human rights agencies**

- A special prosecutor's office was assigned to international cooperation and human rights in June 2024.
- A special prosecutor's office in the capital was assigned to combating trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling in April 2024.
- Two protection centres to receive and follow up reports of domestic violence were created in 2021 and 2024. A hotline for domestic violence reports and counselling was launched in 2024.
- In July 2024, child protection centres were set up with the goals of protecting and rehabilitating children from all types of violence, monitoring cases of violence, and referring them to the competent authority.
- In 2024, the National Environment Strategy 2035 was set forth, in collaboration with the West Asia Office of the United Nations Environment Programme.

- In 2022, the Carbon Reduction Strategy 2050 was set forth, in implementation of a voluntary commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- The third medium-term development plan for the years 2020–2021 and 2024–2025 has been set forth. It includes nine development programmes, with the goal of improving the ranking of Kuwait in all international indicators.
- In 2021 a commission on women and business was created, as part of promoting Sustainable Development Goal 5.
- In September 2021, the Sahel application was launched as part of the vision to digitize government services according to a strong infrastructure. The programme started with 121 services. By September 2024, that had increased to over 400 services, with over 60 million services and e-transactions conducted. An English version was launched in October 2024.

## **IV. Kuwait's regional and international human rights commitments**

### **A. Reports submitted and discussions taken part in by Kuwait**

6. In 2024 Kuwait submitted its fourth national progress report on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, coinciding with the Beijing+30 review.
7. In connection with its membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2024–2026, Kuwait submitted a set of voluntary commitments, at the national and international levels, and is working hard to implement these commitments on the ground.
8. In 2023, Kuwait submitted its second voluntary review measuring progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and showing how it relates to the Government's action programmes, the New Kuwait Vision 2035, and annual and medium-term national plans.
9. In 2020, Kuwait submitted its fourth periodic national report on implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and discussed it with the relevant committee in 2023.
10. In 2023, Kuwait submitted a report on its follow-up of the concluding observations issued by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the third periodic report of the Kuwait on the Convention.
11. In 2020, Kuwait submitted its combined third to sixth periodic reports on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and discussed them before the committee in 2022.
12. In 2021, Kuwait submitted its sixth periodic national report on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and discussed it before with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2024.
13. In 2020, Kuwait submitted its fourth periodic national report on implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and discussed it before the relevant committee in 2024.

### **B. Cooperation by Kuwait with Human Rights Council special procedures**

14. The State of Kuwait is committed to strengthening cooperation with the Human Rights Council, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the special procedures mechanisms. Visit requests have been agreed to, and a number of visits were made to Kuwait, as follows:

(a) Kuwait agreed to a request by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences to conduct a visit to the State in September 2025.

(b) Kuwait is currently coordinating visit dates for the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights; and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants.

(c) In November 2018, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities made a visit.

(d) In 2023, the Special Rapporteur on the right to development made a visit at the invitation of the State.

(e) In 2023, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences made a visit.

(f) In 2023, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar made a visit.

15. The State has helped to empower Kuwaiti women to occupy important international positions. Rola Dashti is chief of the Economic Commission for Western Asia. Rehab Boresli was elected to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and was appointed Second Vice President of the Arab Organization for Persons with Disabilities for the 2025–2028 term. Ambassador Nabeela Al-Mulla was elected to the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters and the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

### **C. Cooperation by Kuwait with regional and international organizations, including United Nations agencies**

16. Cabinet Decision No. 439 (2021) was issued instructing government agencies to submit nominations for various committees, bodies and international and regional organizations, in both national and personal capacities, with curriculum vitae attached, to ensure competence and compatibility with international standards.

17. Kuwait has made voluntary contributions in support of international efforts in the humanitarian and development sectors to a number of different United Nations agencies, programmes and funds, including the following:

(a) A voluntary contribution of \$500,000 to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;

(b) A voluntary contribution of \$10,000 to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture;

(c) A voluntary contribution of \$1 million to the emergency fund;

(d) Annual support of \$2 million for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

18. In addition to allocating a portion of donations approved by the Cabinet for countries in need after the February 2023 earthquake in Turkey and Syria, funds were allocated to United Nations organizations as follows:

(a) \$8 million to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF);

(b) \$8 million to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

(c) \$11 million for the World Food Programme;

(d) \$8 million to the World Health Organization (WHO);

(e) \$5 million to the International Organization for Migration (IOM);

- (f) \$3 million to the United Nations Development Programme;
- (g) \$5 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

19. The foreign policy of Kuwait is based on it serving as a hub for humanitarian work through assistance initiatives in cooperation with international and United Nations organizations, especially in disasters. That includes urgent relief assistance delivered by air and sea. Government, civil society and the private sector all take part. Kuwait cooperates with concerned or surrounding countries to coordinate aid delivery mechanisms. It has signed agreements to support humanitarian and development projects for the poorest countries, and to support countries hosting displaced persons and refugees. That includes the following:

- (a) Support for 330 families in Sudan, 6,472 families in Yemen and 763 families in Iraq;
- (b) Support for Syrian refugees in Jordan, 62,000 Malian refugees in Mauritania, and refugee children in Lebanon;
- (c) Support for 220 students in Yemen, 200 students in Pakistan, 200 students in Afghanistan, 3,600 Rohingya students, and 1,788 refugee students in Egypt;
- (d) Provision of 40 university scholarships in Africa.

20. Relief efforts for the Sudan for the 2023–2024 period included 25 planeloads carrying 280 tons of medical, food and shelter supplies, and a ship carrying 150 tons of medical and food supplies. The total aid for humanitarian and charitable organizations came to \$7,471,121.28 through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and \$5,023,764.79 through exchanges and banks. Since December 2024, aid for Syria has included 140 tons flown on 8 emergency relief planes, and Kuwaiti humanitarian and charitable organizations provided about \$2,616,647.55 through exchanges and banks. In the Gaza Strip, since October 2023, humanitarian shipments carrying shelter, relief, medical and food supplies have been provided through Egypt and Jordan. They have included three ships carrying 3,750 tons, 50 planes carrying 1,300 tons, and 144 trucks passing through land crossings. Three ships carrying 380 tons of food, sanitation and shelter supplies passed through the Cyprus maritime corridor. In addition, three medical teams were sent from the Kuwait Red Crescent Society and the Kuwait Society for Relief, and donations of \$11,622,622 were provided through popular joint campaigns.

21. As of January 2025, 148 developing countries had received grants from the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and 29 countries had benefited from technical assistance, with a grand total of 411 grants allocated the following geographical regions:

- (a) 29 to Central Asian and European States;
- (b) 15 to South American and Caribbean States;
- (c) 19 to Eastern and Southern Asian and Pacific States;
- (d) 108 to Arab States;
- (e) 21 to West, Central, South and East African States;
- (f) 105 to international organizations;
- (g) 71 technical assistance grants that included a loan.

22. The State of Kuwait places emphasis on strengthening cooperation through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms to comply with domestic and international human rights laws. That includes the following: sharing terrorism data; supporting law enforcement agencies and empowering them to conduct criminal investigations and bring terrorists to justice; urging States to take back and repatriate their nationals (foreign terrorist fighters or civilians, including women and children in conflict zones); and urging rehabilitation, reintegration and fair trial for those who have committed terrorist or humanitarian crimes. Kuwait provides assistance to States to help families of foreign terrorist fighters (women and children) transit back to their States of origin. We note in passing that Kuwait was ranked first in the Arab world in the 2024 Peace Index report of the Institute for Economics and Peace. It had been ranked second in 2022 and 2023.

## **D. Regional and international human rights commitments of Kuwait**

23. In November 2024, His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, God protect him, in the presence of His Highness Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, God protect him, presided over fourth high-level conference on “Strengthening International Counter-Terrorism Cooperation and Building Agile Border Security Mechanisms – The Kuwait Phase of the Dushanbe Process”, held in Kuwait.

24. In February 2024, His Excellency Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, Minister for Foreign Affairs, sponsored the regional conference on “Arab Women, Peace and Security: Challenges Facing Women in the Arab States Region” with the theme: “Stop the War on Gaza ... Today, and Not Tomorrow”, organized by the Kuwait Union of Women’s Associations.

25. In September 2024, His Excellency Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, Minister for Foreign Affairs, sponsored an event entitled “Women in War – Palestine”, organized by the Intisar Foundation, a civil society organization in Kuwait, which drew attention to the suffering of persons affected by the conflict and war in the State of Palestine.

## **V. Promotion and protection of the human rights of specific groups**

### **A. Women’s empowerment, gender equality, promotion of women’s rights and protection from domestic violence, including child protection**

#### **1. Empowerment of women**

26. Kuwaiti women receive attention and care to ensure their social, economic and political rights. Suitable legislative and institutional conditions and mechanisms have been provided, in addition to support for their pivotal role in building the family and society. Women are an equal partner with men in the development and prosperity of society, based on the Constitution of the State of Kuwait and in realization of Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality. Kuwait continuously develops its legislative system to adapt to developments and global changes to ensure that women enjoy more rights.

27. Women have the right to choose the work they do. They may not have particular types of work imposed on them. Women are equal to men in engaging in the commercial and investment activities of their own choosing. They are guaranteed the rights to care for themselves and administer their property in accordance with the 1984 Code of Personal Status, which provides that Kuwaiti women enjoy financial independence from their husbands and families and may not be compelled to do anything that violates that.

28. The State of Kuwait seeks to empower women in all sectors and provide a safe environment for them to carry out their legal and societal responsibilities, prohibit discrimination in private sector employment, and encourage them to enter the private sector. Decision No. 177 (2021) prohibits employment discrimination in the private sector and prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace.

29. The State of Kuwait attaches great importance to supporting women in taking on administrative and leadership positions. Large numbers of women have joined the diplomatic, judicial, military and public prosecutor corps. They work in the State’s economic and development sectors and have risen to ministerial positions. Three women hold ministerial positions in the current Government, based on Decree 73 (2024). In 2023, two women were appointed, four in 2022, and one in 2021 and 2022. As for elected bodies, there were no female candidates for the National Assembly in 2020. Two women were successful in the 2022 elections, and one of them retained her seat in both the 2023 and 2024 elections. In a historic first for the municipal council, four women were appointed engineers for the 13th legislative term (2022–2026).

30. Kuwaiti women play a pivotal role in the State’s development and advancement. They make up over half the population at 51 per cent. Kuwaiti women have made significant

progress in taking part in economic activity and the labour market. Kuwaiti women represent 58 per cent of the total national workforce. Their share in private sector jobs is 48 per cent. We note that in 2024, women sat on the boards of directors of five Kuwaiti banks. There are 123 women prosecutors in the Office of the Public Prosecutor. Eight women judges were appointed in 2020. As of 2024 there were a total of 20 women judges. In 2024, four women directors of specialized and partial prosecutions were appointed for the first time.

31. The State of Kuwait has promoted the role of women in civil society institutions by supporting women's associations and encouraging women's participation in volunteer work. That has led to an increase in the number of women heading civil society associations, where they represent 25.8 per cent. Women make up 51.8 per cent of the boards of directors of civil society associations, as opposed to 19.9 per cent of the total number of civil society association staff.

32. The State of Kuwait continues to enact laws to empower women, in keeping with constitutional provisions that guarantee protection of human rights and enshrine the principles of equality, anti-racism and non-discrimination. The State of Kuwait has ratified most major human rights conventions, which become part of the domestic legal system under article 70 of the Constitution. They include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Kuwait has enacted national legislation and laws to promote women's empowerment in various fields. Act No. 123 (2023) concerning the electoral commission guarantees full equality between women and men in voting and standing for the National Assembly. The Government's action programme has a directive for 30 per cent of leadership positions to be assigned to women. There is no gender discrimination in access to public office, promotion or training under the Civil Service Act. Decision 177 (2021) prohibiting private sector employment discrimination also affirms this principle.

## **2. Promoting women's rights and gender equality**

33. Kuwait has incorporated Sustainable Development Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls in the State's Vision 2035, which includes the following three initiatives:

- (a) Combating violence against women and violence against children;
- (b) Creating an environment conducive to women's entrepreneurship;
- (c) Encouraging appointment of women to leadership positions, with a budget of \$2.5 million allocated for training programmes and plans in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) during the 2017–2021 period as part of the joint framework plan.

34. In cooperation with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Kuwait has held a number of training courses, workshops, and joint programmes to empower women and raise international indicators on women. On 22–23 April 2024, an introductory workshop was held on Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. On 24–25 April, a workshop was held on implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

35. Kuwaiti women enjoy free health and education services, in line with the State's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 4, which is reflected in the New Kuwait 2035 development vision. Kuwait is developing a number of comprehensive healthcare programmes for women. It has introduced a women's and maternal health programme into its primary health care system. It also has a reproductive health programme that provides diagnostic, therapeutic and preventive services. There are annual training programmes for staff and the female public, and awareness events have been held for women on breast cancer, cervical cancer and mental health. Services are available in all health districts through hospital gynaecology and obstetrics departments. Healthcare is provided to pregnant women through regular doctor visits, where they receive advice on nutrition and breastfeeding, and psychological counselling and support – especially for postpartum



depression. There are also physical therapy programmes to restore strength and flexibility after surgery.

36. The State of Kuwait has implemented a number of programmes and projects aimed at promoting women's rights and empowering women economically by providing financial assistance to help widows, divorced women, housewives, and women married to non-Kuwaitis meet their living needs. Training and vocational courses are held to help women join the labour market and achieve financial independence.

37. Ministry of Social Affairs Decision No. 44/A (2021) concerning implementing regulations for Act No. 12 (2011) on public assistance added provisions to help alleviate suffering for Kuwaiti women and non-Kuwaiti women with Kuwaiti children. Article 6 provides that that income shall not be deducted from assistance for working mothers, whether Kuwaiti or non-Kuwaiti, residing with beneficiary (Kuwaiti) children who are not beneficiaries of assistance under the provisions of Decree No. 23 (2013). The State of Kuwait is committed to enshrining the principle of justice in the distribution of wealth for the social welfare society. The project on ensuring social safety net fairness (April 2024–March 2029) aims to make the social safety net more efficient and just with a model that ensures fair wealth distribution while better targeting eligible groups and reducing waste of financial resources through enhancing human capital and administrative efficiency. Achievements include developing a system of indicators to assess performance and establish a specialized administrative entity.

### **3. Protection from domestic violence, including child protection**

38. The State of Kuwait believes in the importance of providing women with protection from domestic violence. A shelter for victims of domestic violence was opened in 2021. The State has established two centres to receive reports of domestic violence. In 2024, it set up a dedicated hotline receive reports and provide counselling on domestic violence. It also established a child protection centre in 2024.

39. A national system for reporting domestic violence was established to facilitate reporting procedures. Community awareness is being raised, especially through school curricula. In addition, the chief advocate general issued a circular in July 2024 allowing victims to request an order of protection from the abuser for herself or family members while the case is under investigation. At later stages, mechanisms rooted in human rights principles are used to ensure that members of the judiciary deal with vulnerable groups according to their needs. That includes children, women victims of violence, people with disabilities, the elderly, and trafficking victims. Judicial procedures are made more flexible for them, with closed hearings, confidential hearing rooms, and free translation and language services for those with language obstacles.

40. Kuwait attaches great importance to the rights of children. It seeks to improve and enhance their life circumstances and guarantees all their rights in accordance with the Constitution and national law. Article 9 of the Constitution stipulates that the family, which derives its strength from religion, morality and patriotism, is the cornerstone of society and that the law shall protect the legal status of the family, strengthen its bonds and values, and protect mothers and children. Article 10 of the Constitution stipulates that the State is to ensure the welfare of young people and protect them from exploitation and from moral, physical and spiritual neglect. Article 3 of Act No. 21 (2015) on the Rights of the Child stipulates that children are to enjoy all fundamental rights, including the right to life, survival and development in a close-knit and supportive family and the right to various measures to protect them from any form of violence, harm, or physical or psychological abuse, neglect or negligence. Article 40 stipulates that all children are entitled to an education and may not be deprived thereof. A child's education is the responsibility of his or her guardian, whether a father, mother, custodian or trustee, in accordance with the provisions of the Personal Status Act and his or her best interest. Certain laws contain provisions protecting the rights of the child and guaranteeing a decent and sound upbringing.

41. "Healthy child" clinics have been expanded in all health regions, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 3 on good health and well-being, Goal 4 on quality education and Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. Services have been provided to

91 per cent of children between the ages of 6 and 12. A health service for adolescents, which encompasses diagnostic, therapeutic, preventive and rehabilitative services, the monitoring of psychological and physical development and consultations with parents, has been introduced. To strengthen the role of the family in society, Kuwait introduced a media strategy for the period 2021–2023 on the prohibition and prevention of child exploitation in media.

42. The State, in line with the Anti-Domestic Violence Act (No. 16 of 2020), has adopted training programmes for staff of family protection centres that incorporate international psychosocial standards and that are aimed at developing skills and fostering efficacy in dealing with domestic violence cases. The Child Protection Office monitors and follows up on cases of abuse and neglect against children and takes the necessary measures. The Office, out of its belief in the importance of capacity-building for professionals who deal with various types of cases, held 94 training courses for some 2,000 participants during the period 2014–2022. In 2024, in cooperation with WHO and relevant authorities (such as primary health care and the school health department), it organized a training workshop on the health system's response to violence against children. In collaboration with Kuwait University, it formed a research team to follow up on the implementation of the Parenting for Lifelong Health programme for children aged 2 to 9. The team's objective is to develop and strengthen tools for monitoring, evaluation and research and to evaluate outcomes at the primary and secondary levels before, during and after the programme, to assess its impact. It also evaluates positive parenting methods, negative childhood behaviours and parental stress levels before and after the programme.

43. The Office has launched a complaint website and a telephone hotline to keep children safe from violence and exploitation. Along with civil society organizations in Kuwait, it has taken part in awareness campaigns aimed at spreading community awareness of the role of the Office and of Act No. 21 (2015).

44. The communities department at the Ministry of the Interior, which receives complaints related to children's rights, handled 1,373 such complaints during the period 2020–2024 (273 complaints in 2020, 221 in 2021, 279 in 2022, 322 in 2023 and 223 as at October 2024).

## **B. Welfare of older persons**

45. Kuwait guarantees the right of older persons to health care as well as comprehensive and integrated health services, in line with Goal 3. Ministry of Health clinics for older persons in all health regions provide treatment, prevention and rehabilitation services. In addition, home visits for older persons have been expanded. The Department of Geriatric Health and geriatric hospital units develop healthcare programmes and employ multidisciplinary teams to conduct comprehensive medical assessments.

46. The Ministry of Social Affairs has introduced several programmes and services aimed at providing support, healthcare and psychosocial care for older persons, which include mobile services, home visits and remote medical services via videoconference medical consultations. An information bank has been launched to support the development of services for older persons. In addition, monthly support payments and financial assistance are provided to improve the quality of life of older persons and help them to live independently and with dignity.

## **C. Rights of persons with disabilities**

47. Kuwait takes pains to ensure a decent life and a healthy environment for persons with disabilities. The State takes care to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities in accordance with Act No. 8 (2010), which regulates all matters relating to the lives of persons with disabilities and their ability to enjoy their civil, political and cultural rights on an equal basis with others, without discrimination, as set out in the Constitution.

48. In accordance with Cabinet decision 305 (2024), Kuwait has launched the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Award for Creativity of Persons with Disabilities.

49. A special national project for policy development and implementation, part of the New Kuwait Vision 2035, seeks to raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, disability inclusion, sustainable services, disability reduction, medical rehabilitation, education and vocational training services.

50. Kuwait has formed a committee, headed by the General Fire Brigade and composed of representatives from government agencies, to develop an emergency plan and measures that include a specific plan for persons with disabilities in care facilities. Ministerial decisions are issued to update the requirements, technical specifications and international standards required for shelters, while taking into account civil defence measures and the rights of persons with disabilities.

51. Kuwait provides educational and rehabilitation support for persons with disabilities to ensure that they receive quality inclusive education from kindergarten through university. It also provides support through rehabilitation centres and facilities accredited by the Public Authority for Disability Affairs. A sum of 1 million Kuwaiti dinars (approximately \$3,200,000) has been allocated for persons with disabilities for the fiscal year 2023/24. These centres accept male and female students and have the following enrolment:

- (a) 213,290 persons at 38 schools;
- (b) 1,682 persons at 31 special nurseries;
- (c) 2,284 persons at 11 rehabilitation facilities;
- (d) 336 persons at two evening centres (remedial classes for public school students with learning disabilities).

52. The Public Authority for Disability Affairs works with the Human Construction Society on the “Partners in recruitment” campaign, which provides specific training. The campaign brings together 16 concerned parties and institutions from the public sector, the private sector and banking. Six recruitment campaigns have been held, with the highest recruitment rates reached during the most recent. In cooperation with Kuwait University and the General Authority for Applied Education, a training programme was held during that campaign for the position of assistant laboratory technician. The first cohort was composed of 29 trainees, 65.5 per cent of whom were hired. The fifth cohort was composed of 100 trainees, all of whom were hired. There has also been collaboration with Oman so that the campaign and training programme can be implemented in that country.

53. In 2024, the Help Them to Thrive campaign was launched, which is focused on children with disabilities, at-risk children and children with developmental delays. The urgent need for care, guidance and counselling lies at the core of the work of early intervention centres for children in general. There are psychiatric clinics at 48 primary healthcare centres that provide integrated pharmacological treatment and psychotherapy. Cases are treated with the utmost confidentiality.

54. Kuwait attaches importance to social security and independent living for all, including persons with disabilities. It provides easy-to-access housing grants to persons with disabilities and their families and, for the fiscal year 2023/24, has allocated a budget of 104 million Kuwaiti dinars (equivalent to \$330,000,000) for those with proven disabilities. The State provides prosthetics. Procedures for the supply of 292 hearing aids to persons with hearing impairments have been finalized. During the fiscal year 2023/24, 294 wheelchairs were delivered to beneficiaries at a cost of 1,700,000 Kuwaiti dinars (\$5,500,000).

55. Kuwait takes part in international and regional events through membership in committees with other States or international organizations, such as the meetings of the Intersessional Group of Experts on Disability of ESCWA, with the aim of exchanging experiences and leveraging experiences and best practices to support, protect and empower persons with disabilities. The future strategy of the Public Authority for Disability Affairs is focused on integration in the areas of medical care, education, recreation and sports, areas that are included in the national development plan. In order to achieve integration, facilities

are evaluated for compliance with the Kuwaiti building code and engineering solutions are developed for the renovation of said facilities.

## **D. Rights of migrant workers and combating trafficking in persons**

56. Kuwait guarantees the rights of foreign workers in line with Goal 5 on gender equality, Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth and Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

57. In 2023, the Public Authority for Manpower launched new electronic services to facilitate the domestic worker complaint submission and dispute resolution processes and organized training courses for investigators and inspectors to enable them to identify cases of violence against domestic workers. In 2024, 3,343 women were residents at shelters for migrant workers.

58. The Public Authority for Manpower applies the Labour Act (No. 6 of 2010) to all workers without discrimination, which provides for the submission, investigation and resolution of complaints submitted by workers. Inspections have been carried out at workplaces and recruitment offices to ensure that the Act is enforced. In 2024, 22,402 inspections were carried out.

59. In the event that trafficking in persons is suspected, the worker in question is relocated to a special shelter and full legal protection is provided. The employer is summoned and investigated. If the case is proven to involve trafficking in persons, it is referred to the courts. All levels of litigation are free of charge and exempt from fees. Humanitarian services, such as healthcare, recreation and food, are provided until such time as the worker obtains his or her rights.

60. Kuwait works with other countries to combat the crime of trafficking in persons. The Standing National Committee on the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants conducts regional and international visits to various countries to exchange ideas, perspectives, experiences and best practices.

61. The third goal of the national action plan (2023–2028) of the National Committee concerns the development of the legal framework governing the offence of trafficking in persons and the establishment of judicial measures to enable the reporting of offences. Electronic reporting of trafficking offences was launched on the website of the Public Prosecutor in October 2024.

62. Cabinet decision No. 261/2018 mandates the implementation of the national strategy on combating trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. The strategy is based on the three axes of prevention, protection and domestic, regional and international partnership-building and cooperation. The national referral system is a notable example of the attention paid to victims. It provides guidance and sets out specific stages, namely, identification of victims, prosecution of perpetrators and voluntary return and reintegration. Many national authorities are obliged to implement the strategy, depending on jurisdiction. National focal points have been appointed by the concerned authorities to facilitate access to information and to review progress on the implementation of the system.

63. The National Committee has developed a national action plan for the period 2023–2028, which has four main objectives that encompass strategic priorities:

- (a) Objective 1 concerns prevention, which involves improving competence and capacity-building, raising awareness of risks and countering fraudulent job opportunities;
- (b) Objective 2 concerns improving the effectiveness of protection providers and giving direct support and assistance to victims;
- (c) Objective 3 relates to prosecution, namely, developing the legal framework for offences of trafficking in persons and creating judicial mechanisms to enable reporting;
- (d) Objective 4 concerns cross-cutting issues, including data, research and studies; the fostering of goal-directed international cooperation; and promoting consultation.

64. The National Standing Committee coordinates with concerned parties, such as the Ministry of Health (to provide medical personnel at shelters) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (to provide psychological counselling for trafficking victims). It also coordinates with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs to present lectures regarding the rejection by Islamic law of acts of trafficking in persons. The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs held 26 lectures at mosques in Kuwaiti governorates in March and April 2024.

65. In 2024, the Ministry of the Interior opened an office at Kuwait International Airport Terminal 1 and had almost completed another office at Kuwait Airways Terminal 4.

66. The Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with IOM in Kuwait, held a comprehensive training course on the role of security officers in countering trafficking in persons in November 2024 for officers from various relevant departments. The course was part of an ongoing series aimed at enhancing efforts to counter trafficking in persons and develop the skills of law enforcement officers.

67. The Committee also took part in the following regional and international meetings and conferences:

(a) The government forum on combating trafficking in persons, held in Qatar on 16 and 17 May 2023;

(b) The fifth session of the Government Forum for Combating Human Trafficking in the Middle East, under the theme “Countering trafficking in persons through legislation and procedure”, held on 17 April 2024 in Muscat;

(c) Symposium on strengthening cooperation in countering trafficking in persons, held on 24 April 2024 in Riyadh;

(d) Visit by an official delegation of representatives of the Committee’s member entities to Washington, D.C. from 10 to 13 June 2024, within the framework of cooperation between the Department of Human Rights Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Department of State of the United States of America.

(e) Delegation visit to Bahrain to learn from its experiences in countering trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants in May 2024;

(f) Conference organized by the Cairo regional office of IOM in cooperation with the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons of Egypt under the theme “Exploring effective methods of addressing trafficking in children”;

(g) “Promising initiatives and best practices”, held on 1 August 2024 in Cairo.

(h) The 2024 Vienna Conference on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, held virtually in partnership with IOM and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on 17 October 2024 in Vienna.

68. The Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons of the United States of America visited Kuwait from 3 to 5 November 2024 as part of her tour. She met with members of the National Committee, public interest associations, civil society organizations and representatives of foreign embassies accredited to Kuwait and made a field visit to the migrant workers’ shelter for men, which is expected to open soon.

69. The National Committee presented a report on its achievements and its requirements for the next phase to the Cabinet meeting held on 22 October 2024. The Committee’s delegation was headed by the Minister of Justice, the then-Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and members of the Committee representing the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice. The Cabinet decided to request that the Committee provide it with a quarterly report on the latest developments and challenges facing the Committee’s work so that the Cabinet can address them.

70. The Public Prosecutor issued decision No. 25 (2024) amending the name of the Capital Prosecution to the Capital Prosecution and Combating Trafficking in Persons and Migrant Smuggling.

71. In December 2023, the Ministry of Justice signed a declaration of intent agreement with the regional representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf to further strengthen future partnership frameworks between the two parties with respect to countering trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants. The Ministry also signed a memorandum of understanding with UNODC for the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council in July 2024 concerning the exchange of technical and advisory opinions and consultation on international experiences related to anti-trafficking strategies.

## **E. Unlawful residents**

72. Kuwait notes that it employs the term “unlawful residents”; the term “stateless” is not used in its legal system. Unlawful residents are treated on an equal footing with Kuwaitis in terms of access to facilities and privileges in all humanitarian and social domains. All persons have the right to obtain civil documents. In 2023, 1,558 birth certificates, 281 death certificates, 728 marriage contracts, 502 divorce contracts, 56 marital reinstatements, 12,946 official notifications and 241 inheritance records were issued.

73. In 2023, 79,963 review cards were issued to registered individuals and 5,752 health insurance cards to non-registered individuals so that they could take advantage of free education and treatment services.

74. In 2023, 3,507 unlawful residents were hired by the public sector, 441 by the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and approximately 970 by cooperatives. Approximately 5,036 unlawful residents were soldiers or professionals of the Ministry of Defence.

75. Students who are unlawful residents are enrolled in public schools free of charge. During the 2023/24 academic year, 35,758 students were enrolled. The governmental Charitable Fund for Education covers their tuition and textbook costs at private schools, which, during the 2023/24 academic year, amounted to 6,921,500 Kuwaiti dinars (approximately \$2,700,000).

## **VI. Dissemination of a culture of human rights**

76. Kuwait attaches great importance to the promotion of human rights as part of its New Kuwait 2035 development vision. The plan includes a project on strengthening the role and efforts of Kuwait in the field of human rights, which includes the holding of annual seminars and courses on human rights in Kuwait. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has included courses on international human rights law and international humanitarian law in the programmes of the Saud al-Nasser al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute to train individuals for the diplomatic and consular corps. The Ministry has also held the following events:

(a) Workshop on the plan for the implementation of international human rights mechanism recommendations, held from 8–10 March 2022, in cooperation with OHCHR;

(b) Panel discussion on follow-up of the implementation of the recommendations issued by United Nations human rights committees, presented by OHCHR to the Committee on International Reporting on 12 March 2023;

(c) High-level regional workshop for human rights officials at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, held on 13 and 14 March 2023;

(d) Workshop on follow-up to recommendations made by United Nations treaty body experts to facilitate reporting, held in cooperation with OHCHR from 28–31 January 2024;

(e) “Role of diplomats in identifying, protecting and assisting victims of trafficking in persons”, held in cooperation with UNODC on 6 and 7 February 2024;

(f) Capacity-building for a group of experts of the Standing National Committee on the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants, held in cooperation with UNODC in March 2024;

(g) Introductory workshop on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, held in cooperation with ESCWA on 22 and 23 April 2024;

(h) Workshop on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, held in collaboration with ESCWA on 24 and 25 April 2024;

(i) Training workshop to enhance the competence of the members of the Standing National Committee for the Preparation of Reports and Follow-up on the Implementation of Recommendations Related to Human Rights when discussing reports related to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, held in cooperation with OHCHR from 5–7 May 2024;

(j) Workshop on enhancing the competence of the members of the Standing National Committee for discussion of the national report on the Convention against Torture, held in cooperation with OHCHR on 16 and 17 September 2024;

(k) Workshop on enhancing the competence of the members of the Standing National Committee with respect to the drafting of the country's report to the universal periodic review, held in cooperation with OHCHR on 18 and 19 September 2024;

(l) Fiftieth conference on "Local and regional initiatives for the protection of human rights: problems and solutions", held in cooperation with Kuwait University on 13 and 14 October 2024;

(m) Regional training course entitled "Interaction with international human rights mechanisms", held from 18–21 November 2024 in cooperation with the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region for stakeholders of Gulf Cooperation Council countries;

(n) Workshop entitled "Kuwait and the rights of persons with disabilities", led by member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Rehab Boresly, and held on 9 and 10 December 2024.

77. The Ministry of the Interior has increased the number of human rights programmes and activities offered to police and military personnel. From 2021 to 2024, 11 training courses were held on the following topics: training and qualifying national staff on countering trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants; human rights in the context of security practices; electronic investigation of criminal cases of trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants; helping first responders to identify, protect and assist victims of trafficking in persons; and humanitarian requirements in prisons. In addition, a workshop was held on humanitarian requirements for prison inmates (human rights norms, humanitarian requirements and procedures and responsibilities when dealing with inmates) and human rights in prisons (the notion of human rights for prison inmates; procedures for preserving the freedoms of prison inmates). Joint cooperation between the Ministry of the Interior and the Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa of OHCHR resulted in the creation of a programme on training cooperation in the sphere of human rights. The first training sessions for middle-ranking officers were held in November 2024 on human rights and law enforcement.

78. Over the past four years (2020–2024), the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies held the following 11 training courses in the field of human rights:

(a) A course on human rights attended by 69 legal researchers from the nineteenth cohort;

(b) A course introducing humanitarian law and its relationship to human rights, attended by 58 legal researchers from the twentieth cohort;

(c) A course on offences of trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants pursuant to Act No. 91 (2013), attended by 28 members of the Office of the Public Prosecutor;

- (d) A course on offences of trafficking in persons, attended by 58 legal researchers from the twentieth cohort;
- (e) A course on the offences of trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, attended by 20 members of the Office of the Public Prosecutor;
- (f) A course on the offences of trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, attended by 22 members of the Office of the Public Prosecutor;
- (g) A course on the effective role of national agencies in the protection and promotion of human rights, attended by nine persons, including attorneys and judges of the plenary court;
- (h) A course on offences of trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, attended by 22 members of the Office of the Public Prosecutor;
- (i) A course on the national referral system and United Nations instruments and national law, attended by 10 members of the Office of the Public Prosecutor;
- (j) A course on combating trafficking in persons, attended by 16 attorneys and judges of the plenary court;
- (k) A course on human rights, attended by 103 legal researchers from the twenty-second cohort.

79. The Ministry of Social Affairs has held training programmes to raise awareness of human rights (legal specialization). In addition, a programme was organized by the Human Resources Development Centre and training courses were given by the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies.

80. In 2023 and 2024, the Ministry of Justice held seven introductory courses and training courses on the Domestic Violence Act at the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies.

81. From August 2022 to June 2024, the Public Authority for Manpower carried out campaigns to raise awareness of the prohibition on employment of persons under the age of 15. The Authority also carried out a campaign to raise awareness of laws on workers' rights and safe and healthy workplaces. In cooperation with diplomatic missions accredited to Kuwait, a special campaign was launched to raise awareness of the rights and duties of expatriate workers, which involved media announcements in eight languages targeted at domestic workers and private sector workers. An annual campaign, translated into five languages, raises awareness of the decision to prohibit workers from working outdoors between the hours of 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. daily during the summer (1 June to 31 August).

82. The Public Authority for Manpower attaches great attention to the development of human resources by offering courses and workshops on job functions. A course was held for 75 employees on preventing trafficking in persons and on how to proactively identify and interact with victims.

83. World Day for Safety and Health at Work is celebrated on 28 April every year. In April 2024, an exhibition was installed on the margins of the event to raise awareness of work tools related to health and safety.

84. In 2024, in connection with the celebration of International Children's Day, the Child Protection Office organized an awareness campaign entitled The Safety of Our Children, which was aimed at spreading a culture of children's rights.

85. The Ministry of the Interior has enrolled its employees in training courses on applying human rights principles in prisons and has conducted reciprocal visits with several Arab and Gulf Cooperation Council countries to learn about their most recent human rights programmes.

86. Civil society organizations, in particular women's associations such as the Women's Cultural and Social Society, offer lectures and seminars to promote women's rights and raise women's awareness of social issues. The Girls for Girls programme, developed by the Society in 2020, is aimed at equipping girls and women with the skills necessary for public leadership roles. The programme, which was established in 2021 as a summer club for girls



at Harvard University, is aimed at creating a promising future generation of young women and promoting a culture of civic and community engagement.

87. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has held celebrations of international days, such as International Day of Women in Diplomacy, in June 2024. It held a workshop entitled “Kuwait and the rights of persons with disabilities” on International Day of Persons with Disabilities. It took part in the annual commemoration of the adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights of the Cooperation Council by the Arab States of the Gulf and celebrated Human Rights Day in December 2024.

88. Kuwait celebrates Kuwaiti Women’s Day on 16 May each year to mark the day in 2005 on which women gained the political rights to run for and vote in elections. Many organizations in Kuwait hold celebrations on that day to honour and recognize of the pioneering role played by women in strengthening and shaping society and in achieving progress and prosperity for Kuwait. On 16 May 2024, for example, the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation held a celebration on Kuwaiti Women’s Day on the theme “Women of Kuwait”, and the Ministry of Social Affairs sponsored a conference highlighting the role of Kuwaiti women, entitled “Kuwait on the path to sustainability”. On 12 and 13 May 2024, as part of Women’s Day celebrations, the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development launched a platform, Kuwaiti Women Leaders for Change, a comprehensive database of Kuwaiti women leaders and their achievements that can be accessed by all.

89. In the period 2023–2024, the Ministry of Information took the initiative of broadcasting 62 radio and 43 television programmes on key issues such as domestic violence, children’s rights and gender equality. In addition, 57 short clips were disseminated through various media to promote human rights and the proper treatment of children and women. Eight specialized courses were offered for media professionals on how to cover domestic violence in a professional and ethical manner. Investments are being made in technology and digital platforms, including interactive publications aimed at children, so that human rights concepts are presented in a simple, innovative and engaging way.

## **VII. Freedom of expression and safety of journalists and human rights defenders**

90. The Constitution of Kuwait guarantees the right to freedom of expression. Article 36 provides that “freedom of opinion and scientific research is guaranteed. All persons have the right to express or publish their opinions verbally, in writing, or otherwise, subject to the terms and conditions specified by law”. The Kuwaiti legislature strives to protect freedom of opinion and expression. Article 1 of Act No. 3 (2006) on printing and publishing explicitly states that “freedom of the press, printing and publishing is guaranteed in accordance with the provisions of this Act”. Article 15 of the same Act states that, “without prejudice to the provisions of the previous article, no newspaper licence may be revoked except pursuant to a final court ruling”. This is consistent with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression” and article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that “everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression”.

91. Accordingly, Kuwait guarantees freedom of expression and association within a legal and constitutional framework that supports constructive criticism and protects the ability of journalists and activists to cover events with freedom and transparency while safeguarding them against threats and harassment. Kuwait follows an a posteriori control policy regarding censorship, upheld in a series of court rulings, whereby the authorities intervene only in the event of legal or publication violations while complying with standards of law and justice.

92. The democratic climate in Kuwait ensures that freedom of expression may be exercised by all available means, including traditional forums and councils, newspapers, magazines, television channels, Internet sites and social media. All persons may express their opinions publicly for the purpose of exchanging ideas and opinions in accordance with article 14 of the Constitution, which states that “the State shall sponsor science, literature, and the arts and shall encourage scientific research”. There are 490 websites and electronic media licensed to publish news, events and social events.

93. The Ministry of Information attaches great importance to protecting the rights of journalists and media professionals by working with relevant public interest organizations and providing them with the necessary support and training. Three workshops were held to that end in 2023 and 2024. There are more than 90 public benefit associations in various fields such as culture, sports, the environment and women's empowerment that play a prominent social role by offering many services that enhance community development, which demonstrates that Kuwait is committed to developing civil efforts and highlighting the value of community participation.

94. Kuwait is committed to the rule of law at the national and international levels. Rule of law is a cornerstone of human rights, equality of persons before the law and fair application of the law by an independent judiciary that complies with international human rights standards and norms.

95. The Kuwaiti legislature has endeavoured to ensure that every person, whether citizen or resident, is free to access justice. The right and freedom of litigation are legal and social guarantees enshrined in the Constitution. Article 166 thereof states that the right to recourse is guaranteed, and that the law shall set out the procedures and conditions necessary for the exercise of that right. The Kuwaiti judiciary is entirely impartial, neutral and independent.

96. The Ministry of Information enforces laws relating to print, publishing and audiovisual media to ensure that journalists are protected from threats and harassment while carrying out their duties, with strict application of penalties for violators.

97. Media censorship in Kuwait is a posteriori, whereby private media outlets and social media platforms have freedom to publish and freedom of expression without prior interference. The draft of the new media law has also been discussed with stakeholders in feedback sessions. The draft law is aimed at promoting responsible and prudent freedom of the press while providing additional guarantees to protect the rights of journalists and human rights defenders.

98. The Ministry of Information strategy for the period 2021–2026 is aimed at fostering sustainable and influential media that promotes family values and women's rights. It is based on the principles of transparency and community participation, and is aimed at developing media infrastructure that keeps pace with technological developments.

99. The Ministry of Information, in cooperation with relevant public interest associations, held seven different courses in 2023 and 2024 in order to promote professional principles and inform participants of mechanisms for dealing with threats and harassment. Media campaigns and public seminars have been held on building a democratic society in which human rights are prioritized.

100. In 2023 and 2024, Kuwait participated in international and regional events aimed at promoting the media and freedom of expression.

101. Kuwait believes in strengthening the vital role played by private media in support of education, socialization and the development of patriotism. To date, Kuwait has granted licences to the following private Kuwaiti television and radio stations and foreign media bureaus:

- (a) Six private Kuwaiti satellite channels;
- (b) Five private Kuwaiti radio stations;
- (c) Five foreign broadcasters.

102. The forty-seventh edition of the International Book Fair, held in 2024, brought together 570 national and foreign publishing houses. A total of 211,331 foreign publications were featured.

## VIII. Human Rights Council

### A. Right to housing

103. Kuwait believes that housing is a fundamental human right and is committed to providing it to all citizens in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities. Many steps have been taken to promote this right, including the development of new housing projects to meet growing demand, such as the South Saad al-Abdullah City project, Mutla' Housing City, South Sabah al-Ahmad City, South Abdullah Mubarak suburb, West Abdullah Mubarak suburb, South Khaytan project and the low-cost housing project.

104. The Public Authority for Housing Welfare is responsible for providing decent housing for citizens by means of housing vouchers, full-service housing projects and financial support for citizens building their own homes. The Authority also strives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals at its housing projects by designing environmentally friendly "smart cities", establishing waste recycling systems, setting up electric vehicle charging stations and installing new cooling systems in public buildings. In October 2024, the Authority established a women's housing team, which is tasked with inventorying and inspecting properties for women, including in the Sabah al-Salim, Tayma' and Sulaybiyah housing complexes, and determining how they can be improved.

105. Kuwait has made remarkable progress when it comes to decent housing for citizens, in line with the seventh pillar of the New Kuwait Vision 2035, which concerns ensuring sustainable living conditions through environmentally sound housing and increasing renewable energy use to 15 per cent of total energy consumption. During the period 2015–2024, 73,981 housing units were allocated, and financial support was provided to citizens so that they could build their own homes. Kuwait has also fostered sustainable urban development by building residential cities with integrated facilities and services and by applying environmental standards when designing and implementing projects.

### B. Right to education

106. Kuwait guarantees the right to education for all, without discrimination. Article 13 of the Constitution stipulates that education is a cornerstone of social progress and shall be guaranteed and promoted by the State. Compulsory education is enshrined in Act No. 11 (1965), as amended by Act No. 25 (2014), which provides that the State is responsible for ensuring a period of compulsory education. Guardians are penalized for failing to comply with measures to ensure that children are able to realize their right to education.

107. Policies have been developed to provide educational opportunities for all segments of society, regardless of gender, social status or cultural background. Enrolment in night school allows many students to overcome challenges to completing compulsory education.

108. With respect to inclusive education in rural areas, Kuwait does not have rural areas per se. The State's educational strategies promote social justice and inclusive education by expanding educational infrastructure, providing incentives for teachers in new remote areas, supporting technological self-study initiatives and investing in digital education. In the 2021/22 academic year, the Ministry of Education opened two co-educational schools in a new remote area.

109. The Ministry of Education provides educational facilities for all persons with any type of disability. Such facilities are equipped with the latest digital services to facilitate the right of persons with disabilities to education.

110. In 2021, the State of Kuwait entered into a third programme on education with the Government of Qatar. It also signed a draft cooperation agreement on education with Tunisia in 2021.

111. Human rights topics are included in various school curricula and taught via interactive activities. Training programmes are offered to teachers.

112. Every year, the Ministry of Education issues decrees making public education free for non-Kuwaiti children. A total of 534,386 students were enrolled for the academic year 2024/25, including 69,527 non-Kuwaiti students; 81.95 per cent were enrolled in public school and 18.05 per cent in private school.

113. In the framework of government partnerships, there have been schools at juvenile welfare homes since 1987. In October 2024, the Children's House school for children of unknown parentage was opened. A school offering intermediate and secondary grades was opened for women inmates of correctional institutions in 2024 and for male inmates in 2023.

114. The Ministry of Education is seeking to expand adult education and literacy centres, especially in densely populated areas and new remote areas. There are 102 such centres. The Ministry works with civil society organizations, cultural centres and the private sector in that regard to improve access to education for all.

115. Abdullah al-Salem University, established pursuant to Act No. 76 (2019), is a "fourth-generation university" whose academic programmes involve innovative scientific research. The University is a digitalization and artificial intelligence incubator for small and medium-sized enterprises in the fields of modern medicine, renewable energy and hydrocarbon energy. Its founding board of directors was formed in accordance with decree No. 182 (2021). Women make up 55 per cent of leadership positions and 40 per cent of academic positions. The University admitted its first cohort of Bachelor's students for the 2023/24 academic year and its first cohort of Master's students for the 2024/25 academic year.

116. At Kuwait University, the country's first public research university, women occupy 19 per cent of leadership positions and 49 per cent of academic positions. In the 2024/25 academic year, 15 private universities and colleges are offering various tracks in the humanities and sciences and academic degrees.

### **C. Right to a safe and clean environment**

117. In 2024, in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia, Kuwait launched the 2035 National Environmental Strategy by adopting capacity development projects and creating appropriate mechanisms on integrated waste management, combating desertification and environmental data management.

118. In 2022, Kuwait launched its 2050 low-carbon strategy in fulfilment of its voluntary commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The National Adaptation Plan, which contains medium- and long-term strategies to address climate challenges, includes a climate action risk assessment with a climate vulnerability index based on internationally recognized scientific methodologies. Kuwait issued a report on the state of the environment and its 2022 sustainable consumption and production plan. It has also launched a chemical management programme and is preparing its third national communication on climate change.

119. With regard to administrative measures, we note that, in 2022, the Environment Public Authority appointed the first 15 environment monitors to various government institutions. It has also introduced e-services on the Authority's website and the official portal Our Environment.

120. During the period 2019–2024, the Environmental Protection Fund carried out 23 projects to preserve terrestrial and marine biodiversity and supported about 12 initiatives by environment-related civil society organizations.

121. In accordance with the New Kuwait Vision 2035, which proposes to increase the amount of green space in the country, the Environmental Public Authority is seeking to raise the percentage of protected areas to 15.2 per cent of the total land area, a 1.2 per cent increase since 2016. The first phase of the first marine reserve project in the north-western Arabian Gulf for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems was completed with support from the United Nations Compensation Commission in partnership with official bodies (the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research and the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources). As a result, 20 marine and terrestrial nature reserves have been approved.

## **D. National human rights framework**

122. The National Bureau for Human Rights was established pursuant to Act No. 67 (2015) in accordance with the recommendation, accepted by Kuwait in its first universal periodic review in 2010, that it should have a national human rights institution.

123. The Bureau aims to promote and protect human rights and to disseminate and foster respect for public and private freedoms enshrined in the Constitution and the international conventions ratified by Kuwait. It is independent in the exercise of the tasks, activities and competencies stipulated by law. Its work is overseen by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

124. The Bureau is an official, independent national human rights body. It is not an administrative or governmental body in the prevailing legal sense, but rather a standing national agency concerned with human rights and freedoms. It enjoys independence in preparing reports for international human rights mechanisms and participating in regional and international meetings. Its objectives include:

- (a) Submitting opinions, recommendations proposals and reports to the competent authorities on matters relating to the promotion and protection of human rights and on matters referred to it by the National Assembly and the Cabinet;
- (b) Preparing legal and factual studies relating to the promotion and protection of human rights;
- (c) Receiving complaints; monitoring, studying and investigating human rights violations; and advising petitioners on the relevant legal procedures;
- (d) Reviewing the application of the Constitution and international conventions and treaties relating to freedoms and human rights in Kuwait; submitting recommendations to the concerned authorities on how they should be applied;
- (e) Issuing annual reports on human rights developments in Kuwait and submitting them to the National Assembly and the Cabinet;
- (f) Cooperating with United Nations bodies and national, regional and international institutions; coordinating and communicating with national institutions and NGOs concerned with the protection of human rights;
- (g) Contributing to the drafting of reports to be submitted by the State to United Nations bodies and committees and regional organizations, pursuant to its accession to international human rights conventions and treaties; responding to reports issued by NGOs and foreign entities;
- (h) Developing studies and mechanisms for education and training in order to disseminate a general culture of human rights and freedoms; countering torture and racial discrimination; and developing programmes for teaching human rights in schools, universities and the community;
- (i) Monitoring correctional centres, detention centres and care settings through periodic or unannounced field visits and issuing reports on conditions therein;
- (j) Exploring the possibility of acceding to international human rights instruments that Kuwait has not yet ratified and submitting recommendations in that regard to the concerned authorities.

## **IX. Challenges**

125. Kuwait is an attractive destination for contract labour. The country draws a very large number of foreign workers from different cultures.

126. A challenge still facing the labour market in Kuwait is that expatriate workers are not aware of their rights and duties and are not even aware of the laws and customs of Kuwait before they arrive. Kuwait is taking many practical steps to address this challenge. It has concluded bilateral memorandums of understanding on recruitment with labour-sending States. It is carrying out multilingual social media campaigns addressed at workers and

distributing leaflets to workers when they arrive at Kuwait Airport. The onus is on labour-sending countries to inform and educate their nationals working abroad.

127. Kuwait is developing a comprehensive national human rights plan and is still in the process of building capacity and capitalizing on best experiences and practices to that end.

## **X. Voluntary pledges**

- To continue national efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and Vision 2035, especially in relation to human rights.
- To continue constructive cooperation and partnerships with OHCHR.
- To submit and review periodic reports to the human rights treaty bodies in recognition of the importance of improving the human rights situation.
- To continue to support and cooperate constructively with civil society organizations in Kuwait and allow them to play the vital role of improving the human rights situation.
- To continue national efforts to promote and comprehensively realize human rights in accordance with national law.
- To draft a comprehensive national human rights plan.

## **XI. Conclusion**

128. Kuwait, in submitting its fourth report to the universal periodic review, affirms that it will continue to promote, protect and realize human rights and fundamental freedoms within the framework of national law and the State's international commitments. It will continue to achieve comprehensive development in its various dimensions, including through the dissemination of a culture of human rights. Note that some information and data relevant to the present report has not been included, in order to comply with the word limit.

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