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Iran (Islamic Republic of)

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I. Methodology and consultation process

1. The Islamic Republic of Iran's 2nd cycle UPR report has been compiled on the basis of recommendations that were accepted in the 1st Cycle and on the basis of Resolution (A/HRC/RES/16/21) and Decision (A/HRC/DEC/17/119).

2. Following the 1st Cycle's recommendations, the High Council for Human Rights of the Judiciary – as the national coordinator to follow up UPR recommendations – categorized the recommendations thematically and handed them out to relevant governmental organizations for implementation. Additionally, since September 2013 the High Council for Human Rights corresponded with different organizations, to submit their implementation reports. Following the receipt of written responses, a special committee composed of representatives of relevant institutions and organizations reviewed performances and prepared the present report. It should also be noted that the drafting committee has consulted civil society actors and the present report has taken note of the views of civil society representatives as such.

II. Policies, new laws and mechanisms

A. General policies

3. In order to protect the rights of the people, the Supreme Leader has communicated the following general policies in 2014:

- General Policies of the Fifth Development Plan including paragraph 12 on the need to fulfill the legal and religious rights of women and paragraph 38 on the Protection of legitimate freedoms and the protection of the nation's fundamental rights;
- General Health Policy including paragraph 2/1 on awareness raising of the people about people's social rights and responsibilities;
- General Population Policy including paragraph 6 on improving life expectancy and prevention of environmental pollution.

B. New laws

Islamic Penal Code

4. The new Islamic Penal Code (IPC) was drafted in 2013 to re-examine and amend the regulations of the old one. Drafters of the new code have considered the critiques and recommendations of legal experts on the articles of the previous law. In comparison, the form and substance of the new Code is more comprehensive. Such concepts as mitigation, suspended prosecution, postponement of sentencing, alternative sentences, parole, pardon, juvenile justice and criminal responsibility of legal entities have been incorporated into the new code.

The new Criminal Procedure Law

5. The new criminal procedure law was adopted in 2014 to facilitate demands for justice. The main concepts contained in the new law include: protection of the rights of the victim and society – besides those of the accused (article 1), prohibition of prolonged trials and guarantee of judicial independence (article 3), the need for victim and witness – in addition to the accused and other relevant parties – to be informed of the charges and have

immediate access to an attorney (articles 5 and 6), need to respect citizens' rights by all judiciary officials, court officers and others involved in the prosecution – along with appropriate penal sanctions (article 7), prohibition of disclosure of any and all private information and identity of victim, witnesses and other informed sources (article 40), questioning of women and children to be conducted by female court officers (article 42), official recognition of participation by human rights NGOs in various stages of criminal prosecution. In this context, article 66 of the law states: “NGOs whose statutes concentrate on children, women or juvenile protection or the infirm – as well as those with physical and mental disabilities, environmental conservation, natural resources, cultural heritage, public health and civic rights can approach the court to indict offenders. They are also allowed to be present in all stages of prosecution to adduce and object to the verdicts of judicial officials.”

Organizational and procedural law of the Court of Administrative Justice (2011)

6. To implement article 173 of the Constitution – dealing with complaints of people on the conduct of government agents, offices and regulations as well as vindication of their rights – the above law, consisting of 124 articles and 39 paragraphs was passed in 2011. Maximum five years suspension from government services and payment of reparations, perform as its sanctions.

Law on protection of children and adolescents without parental care or negligent parents

7. Care for children and adolescents without parents to meet their material and psychological needs is provided in accordance with the regulations of this law. In addition, bills on “Juvenile Justice” and “Child Protection” have been drafted to further protect the rights of the child.

8. Other recently adopted laws and regulations include:

- Law on Provision of Staples for Vulnerable Sections of Society (2013);
- Family Protection Law (2012);
- Law on Elimination of Administrative Barriers to Provision of Social Services for Construction Workers (2012);
- Law on Observance of Educational Fairness in Enrolment of Students for Graduate and Specialized Courses (2010);
- Additional Law to the Organization and Protection of Construction and Supply of Housing Act (2009);
- Consumer Protection Act (2009);
- Improved Transparency of the Bureaucratic System and Anti-Corruption Act (2011);
- Judiciary Statute on Methods of Monitoring Police Detention Centers (2011).

Draft Charter of Citizens' Rights (2014)

9. Based on the demand of the President, the Citizens' Rights Charter has been drafted with the contribution of scholars and prominent members of the society to promote and protect the people's rights. The draft was later made available on a specific website for public consultation. The Charter will be completed and finalized following collection and incorporation of different points of view.

C. New mechanisms

Establishment of the Office of Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs

10. In June 2013, “the Office of Advisor to the President on Women and Family Affairs” was promoted to the “Office of Vice-President on Women and Family Affairs”. According to article 230 of the “Fifth Development Plan”, the Government is obliged to work to strengthen the foundation of family, promote status of women and secure the legal and religious rights of women in all fields. To do so, it must draft and pass the “Comprehensive Plan for the Promotion of Women and Family Issues”.

Appointment of President’s Special Assistant for Ethnic Groups and Religious Minorities

11. To promote participation by all ethnic groups and religious minorities and to provide greater protection for their rights, the President has appointed a special assistant to act under his direct supervision.

Designation of National Focal Point for the Convention on the Rights of the Child

12. To promote and protect the rights of the child, a national CRC focal point has been established. After the approval of its administrative bylaws, the focal point has been active since 2011.

Establishment of Department on Supervising Courts and Offices of the Public Prosecutor

13. Consistent with article 161 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court is tasked with supervising the proper implementation of laws in courtrooms. To this end, a department has been established to monitor courts activities. Inspection teams attached to the department and composed of Supreme Court Judges, inspect courts across the country and file periodic reports. Additionally, as part of its mandate, the office of the prosecutor general is tasked with supervising the proper execution of laws and coordinating the activity of all public prosecutor offices. For this purpose, the “National Public Prosecutor’s Office Supervision Department” was established in 2010.

III. Implementation of first UPR cycle recommendations

A. Procedures and national human rights mechanisms to promote and protect human rights.

1. Education, capacity building, promotion of economic, social and cultural rights and protection of human rights (recommendations 5, 7, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 61, 81, 82, 84).

14. Steps taken for promotion and protection of human rights include:

- As part of the implementation of the “National Document on the Fundamental Transformation of the Education System” and the “National Curriculum Program”; issues such as citizens’ rights, humanitarian obligations and rights, minority rights, family rights and environmental rights have been included in the curriculum and new text books. Additionally, to motivate learners to regularly participate in its literacy classes, the Literacy Movement, alongside teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, have started to teach life skills including family and child rights;

- Joint educational plans with international organizations, including “Friendship Schools Project”, “Child Friendly Schools”, “UNESCO Associated Schools Project” and “ISESCO Associated Schools Project” have been implemented;
- Working groups on family education have been established to explore nurturing, economic, religious and citizen’s rights;
- Numerous measures have been taken to train government officials on human rights, including:
 - Organizing a number of technical meetings by the judiciary’s High Council for Human Rights – in collaboration with judiciary, administrative and academic officials – to increase the knowledge of judges and court officers about human rights issues (2011–2013);
 - Organization of 191 human rights and citizens’ rights training courses for 4302 government officials; as well as for 925 judges (2012), 382 employees, 440 court officers and 1740 members of arbitration councils (2013);
 - Expansion of “129” call center to better respond to legal inquiries by members of the public and subsequently increase awareness of citizens’ rights;
 - Poster campaigns on human rights in prisons and penal facilities;
 - Human rights training for 707 prison counselors on citizens’ rights, juvenile justice and rehabilitation of delinquents;
 - Inclusion of a lesson on “Citizens’ Rights” in police text books;
 - Provision of human rights material and resources to improve existing police officer training;
 - Establishment of a research field on citizen’s rights in the Legal and Parliamentary Department of the Police.

15. Iran defended its second periodic report on ICESCR in May 2013.

2. National Human Rights Institution and National Strategic Action Plan (recommendations 10, 11, 12, 20, 23)

16. The High Council for Human Rights is working on a bill for the establishment of the National Human Rights Institution. Once the text is finalized, it will be submitted for legislation. Additionally, the Government continues to work on the National Strategic Action Plan on Human Rights. In this context, the Government also has prepared the draft Charter of Citizens’ Rights, which has drawn on the principles of the Constitution as well as the regulations contained in the “Protection of Legal Freedoms and Citizens’ Rights Act”, other existing laws and applicable international rules.

3. Support for Non-governmental organizations (recommendation 59)

17. The Government has taken extensive efforts to build up NGOs. In this context, the administrative statute on the establishment and functioning of NGOs has been passed to facilitate the setting up of such organizations. To date, more than 17,000 permits have been issued for NGOs across the Country. Meanwhile, in the past four years, 10 Iranian NGOs have obtained ECOSOC “consultative status”.

B. Civil and political rights

1. Democratic elections (recommendations 109, 110, 113, 114, 115)

18. In the past 35 years, 32 widely participated elections have been held in the Country. In the run up to 2009 presidential election in which around 40 million Iranians (more than 85 percent of eligible voters) cast their votes, election campaigns for supporters of different candidates were facilitated and the national radio and television network organized debates in which the candidates have exchanged their views.

19. After the Elections, despite the presence of the candidates' election observers at polling stations, lenience by officials and adequate opportunities given to representatives of the candidates to express their views, establishment of a committee by the Guardian Council composed of the representatives of the candidates, and a recount of the votes cast in a certain number of ballot boxes; gatherings were formed which were incited to riot by certain persons. Using different means – including fire arms – individuals endangered the safety of citizens and injured a number of them. They also attacked and set fire to banks, holy sites and public and private buildings, destroyed public and private property and disrupted public order. Police took action to protect citizens and restore social order and security. Arrests were made, however after preliminary investigations; most individuals in custody were released with the exception of cases wherein irrefutable evidence existed – for example arrested while committing an offense – connecting those in custody directly to attacks and bodily injury of members of public and destruction and setting fire to public and private property. After completion of preliminary investigations, said individuals were indicted and their cases were sent to court for hearing. Trials were public and attended by lawyers of the accused and witnesses at the scene of the crime. After completion of various stages of a fair trial, courts took legal decisions to acquit some and to pardon others after they had served a portion of their sentences.

20. Following official inquiries, the conduct of state officials and court officers, suspected of mistreatment and torture was investigated – including Kahrizak Dossier in which offenders were sentenced to prison, payment of reparation and dismissal from government service – and necessary steps were taken to compensate the victims.

21. On 14 June 2013, the 11th presidential elections were held, during which 72/8 percent of those eligible to vote participated in a democratic fashion. Like previous elections, the elections demonstrated the fact that the wide participation of the nation in the political process and the safekeeping of their vote in the Country is an indelible principle of this flourishing religious democracy.

2. Fundamentl freedoms, including freedom of political parties and association, freedom of thought and religion, freedom of speech and the media (recommendations 9, 46, 47, 48, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 103, 120, 121, 122, 123)

22. Consistent with articles 26 and 27 of the Constitution and in accordance with articles of the law on “Activity of Political Parties, Guilds and Religious Minorities” to date more than 230 political parties, 400 guilds and 60 religious minority associations have been issued with permits. Additionally, in Note to article 6 of the “Political Parties’ Code” and its administrative statute, legal requirements for the organization of gatherings and rallies have been stipulated. For example, in 2012 around 150 gatherings and rallies were held.

23. Article 131 of the “Labor Law”, consistent with article 26 of the Constitution, recognizes the right to establish associations and guilds. Similarly, paragraph E of article 73 of the 5th Development Plan highlights the legal right of workers’ and employers’ unions to engage in union protests. As a result, the Bylaw for the Management and Organization of Workers’ Union Protests has been formulated.

24. At present, 126 specialized associations are working to promote the interests of different communities. From 2009 to 2013, more than 115 permits were issued for the establishment of guilds with an additional 280 other permits renewed.

25. In accordance with the aforementioned principles, freedom of expression has been officially recognized. Other relevant and existing laws have been passed with the most important being the law on “the Freedom of Dissemination and Access to Information” (2009).

26. To implement article 46 of the 5th National Development Plan – which calls for the establishment and development of national information network to provide citizens with high-speed internet access; the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology is designing and installing the necessary infrastructures. Unfortunately, because of the imposition of illegal sanctions against the country, the expansion of the network is sluggish. Undeterred, the Ministry has now opted to use mostly what is domestically available to fulfill the 5th Plans’ goal.

27. To best practice article 24 of the Constitution (freedom of expression), article 608 of the Islamic Penal Code has foreseen punishment only for individuals who use freedom of expression to slander. Similarly, the Press Law endorses freedom of expression and constructive criticism; providing such expression and criticism does not turn into slander, mockery, defamation, libel and violation of the public and private rights of individuals. The aforementioned constraints correspond to articles 18 and 19 of the ICCPR.

28. To best practice article 25 of the Constitution (protection of citizens’ correspondence) and in observance of article 17 of the ICCPR, the Islamic Penal Code – in article 582 – has addressed the need for the protection of correspondence, communications and telephone conversations of citizens; further stating that government employees and agents who violate such rights are subject to punishment.

29. Any social activity that requires establishment of political parties, associations or societies, must first correspond to regulations contained in the law on the “Activity of Political Parties, Associations, Societies, Guilds, Islamic or Recognized Religious Minority Associations” and secure permits from the above law’s Article 10 Commission. Therefore, no group will be outside legal protection, as long as they respect and observe the relevant regulations.

30. In accordance with article 10 of the Press Law, a board – composed of 7 members that include a judge chosen by the Head of the Judiciary, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance or his fully authorized representative, an MP chosen by the Parliament, a university professor appointed by the Minister for Higher Education, an editor in chief chosen by the press industry, a seminary professor chosen by the city of Ghom’s High Seminary Council and a member of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution as chosen by the Council itself – supervises the operation of publications, news agencies and news websites. The composition of the board is an indication of guarantees incorporated into the law to prevent Government pressuring the media. Nevertheless, the media can approach courts to contest verdicts issued by the board.

31. At present, 6100 publications have been registered including 214 newspapers and 813 weeklies. Thirty percent of publications are distributed locally (provincial city, province or a number of neighboring provinces). Out of this number, 1000 publications (amounting to 17 percent of the total publications) are published – some in local languages and dialects – in border regions. Sanctions for the observance of the rights of the media have been foreseen and incorporated in the press law. Article 4 of the law states “No Government or non-governmental official has the right to gag the media or pressure them to publish an article or seek to control them.”

32. The number of newspapers banned in this particular period – either by the Press Supervisory Board or the prosecutors’ office – for violating the press law was four. So far, the cases of three have gone to court and initial verdicts have either been quashed or in place of banning, lighter punishments have been meted out. In accordance with article 168 of the Constitution – and to be more attentive to the rights of the press in performing their professional duty – press cases are tried in the presence of a jury.

3. Administration of justice

a. *An effective, independent and impartial judicial system (recommendations 42, 46, 103, 107)*

33. According to article 156 of the Constitution, the judiciary is independent. Also consistent with articles 164 and 166, the independence of judicial authorities is sanctioned by law. At the same time, judges are required to issue substantiated verdicts. Additionally, standard laws, including "Criminal Procedure" and "Civil Procedure" and supervisory laws, guarantee the independence of judges and lawyers in all stages of trial – from preliminary investigation to the appeal process.

34. The judiciary is impartial and cannot be influenced by other powers. Protected by chapter 11 of the Constitution and with the cooperation of primary to senior judiciary officials and their respective organizations, the judiciary works to administer the rules and regulations of standard laws, which in turn have become laws through a democratic process.

35. The Judiciary has taken many measures to improve its performance and put stronger guarantees in place to assure its independence, *inter alia*:

- Reinforcement of legal and judicial departments;
- Establishment of the policy department to help better coordination and monitor the level of service to citizens;
- Establishment of Crime Prevention Department;
- Establishment of the Cultural Department to promote public awareness of legal issues;
- Establishment of ICT department to facilitate cyber space access by citizens to judiciary officials;
- Extra on job specialized training and refresher courses for judges;
- Establishment of free legal counseling helpline (129) to answer the legal questions of citizens.

36. Fair prosecution has been stressed in the Constitution as well as in the Criminal Procedure Code and other standard laws. In all stages of prosecution, including detection, investigation and implementation of sentence – irrespective of race, religion, gender or ethnicity – fairness is of paramount importance. Additionally, principles such as presumption of innocence and legality of crime and punishment have been discussed in article 37 of the Constitution and articles 2 and 12 of the Islamic Penal Code. Accordingly, in the eyes of the law no one is guilty unless proven otherwise by a competent court.

b. *Prisoners and those arrested (recommendations 43, 44, 105, 108, 109, 110, 111)*

37. Sanctions guaranteeing respect for the rights of individuals who have been arrested – including proper treatment, right to defense, right to assistance by counsel and legal expert – have been incorporated into “Protection of Legal Freedoms and Citizens’ Rights Act” and other existing laws. According to article one of the Act, arrests must be made without the

uses of force and with a specific and clearly worded writ of arrest that has not been influenced by personal considerations or misuse of positions of power. Also, the Head of the Judiciary is required to appoint a board to supervise the correct implementation of the above regulations and task other relevant organizations to cooperate with the board and report on the results of such cooperation. Also, to guarantee the highest level of supervision – in accordance with administrative instructions of paragraph 15 of the citizens’ rights law – “provincial supervision and inspection boards” have been setup.

38. The 2013 Islamic Penal Code has included “diversion program” by incorporating helpful legal concepts such as delayed sentencing, mitigation and waiver of punishment, semi-open prisons, alternative sentencing – especially for punishments, as well as preventive and corrective measures, for children and juveniles – and reduced prison sentence on payment of restitution. Article 58 of the Code details the conditions for parole as well. Additionally, the 2013 “Classification of Prisoners and Reduction of the Penal Population Directive” guarantee that no one remains in custody more than allotted by law.

39. Aside from these legal developments, in 2012 the Head of the Judiciary communicated a Statute on Methods of Monitoring Police Detention Centers. Also, to further provide for the rights of prisoners, the “Prisons Organization” has now eased the issue of furloughs, parole, ad hoc and general pardons, access to attorney – and meeting with him/her in prison –, family visitation, access to vocational training centers and employment.

40. To respect the rights of persons in custody and prisoners, the police have taken the following steps too:

- Establishment of a Commission on the Citizen’s Rights of the Accused;
- Development and communication of a directive on the protection of the legal and citizens’ rights of the accused and supervising its correct implementation;
- Renovation of holding facilities and constant work to bring such facilities up to standard around the country;
- Standardization and improvement of the conduct of wardens and correctional officers;
- Review, supervision and control of the conduct of judiciary units attached to police station;
- Improving the 197 helpline to better help the public to monitor police conduct.

c. *Torture prohibition guarantee (recommendations 4, 41, 42, 104, 105, 106, 112, 113, 116)*

41. The laws of Iran repudiate all forms of torture. To guarantee prevention of torture, the following laws and regulations describe how infractions are dealt with:

- Articles 32, 38 and 39 of the Constitution;
- Article 169 of the Islamic Penal Code;
- Paragraphs 1, 6, 7, 9 and 10 of the single article law on “Protection of Legal Freedoms and Citizens’ Rights”;
- Article 169 of the administrative statute of state prisons and security and corrective measures organization.

42. With the establishment of the central supervisory board for the protection of citizens’ rights in the capital and similar boards in the provinces, practical steps have been taken to deal with possible infractions. Additionally, inspection teams are sent out to various offices to scrutinize reports and deal with possible offenders.

43. The conduct of state officials and agents suspected of mistreatment and torture, are investigated and the result of such investigations are scrutinized by competent boards.

44. According to articles 578 and 587 of the Islamic Penal Code, judiciary and non-judiciary officials and agents who resort to physical and corporal abuse to obtain a confession, aside from Ghesas (retribution) or payment of Dieh (blood money), will be given a prison sentence of 6 months to a maximum of 5 years and dismissed from government service. As supervisory instruments and steps have increased in recent years, a considerable drop in the number of complaints lodged at inspection boards is recorded.

d. Prohibition of extrajudicial and arbitrary arrests (recommendations 105 and 116)

45. The passing of the “Protection of Legal Freedoms and Citizens’ Rights Act” as well as other state laws and regulations, guarantee prohibition of arbitrary arrests. All judiciary officials have been directed to only make arrests with writs of arrest and within the confines of the relevant laws and regulations. They must also refrain from making any illegal arrest or exercising personal judgment or misuse their position of power at time of arrests.

46. In accordance with paragraph 10 of the aforementioned Act, those who ignore protocols and regulations and resort to wrongful methods in discharging their duties, will be severely reprimanded. In this context, aside from previously mentioned supervision by the Head of Judiciary – through nationwide supervisory boards for the protection of citizens’ rights – real or legal entities can approach the central or provincial offices of the above boards, to either report a forced disappearance or arbitrary arrest or file a complaint. Such reports and complaints are earnestly and fastidiously investigated.

e. Islamic Penal Code (recommendation 8)

47. Apostasy, witchcraft and blasphemy are not criminalized in Iran’s penal laws.

C Economic, social and cultural rights

1. Right to health (recommendations 63, 64, 65, 66, 86)

48. Article 29 of the Constitution states that health services coverage – including treatment and medical care – is a universal right. To this end, paragraph A of article 38 of the Fifth Development Plan (2011–2015), which encapsulates the article, has been drafted, approved and communicated. From the beginning of June 2014 the “Health Insurance Plan” has been made available to anyone who does not have basic health insurance. To date, more than 5 million people have signed up for the plan. Additionally, the Health System Reform Plan is now being implemented in more than 560 public hospitals to dramatically reduce the patient’s share of hospital costs.

49. As part of the ongoing efforts to improve healthcare, the malnourished expectant and nursing mothers – in the framework of “Healthy Mothers Program” run by the nationwide health network – are given free nutritious food baskets.

50. The “Children’s Nutrition Program” is being implemented with the help of relevant organizations. The Program has now expanded its food basket plan, to cover 60,000 children instead of the original number of 47,000. Similarly, the number of nutrition counseling centers has increased from the original 80 in 2009 to 150 centers in 2013. Reports now show that as a result of the program, children’s nutrition has improved by 40 percent.

51. Consistent with article 194 of the Fifth National Development Plan on the expansion of health services in rural areas, 96 percent of the rural population is now serviced by the

health network. To achieve this number, 18,000 rural health clinics and 2500 treatment centers have been constructed and equipped.

2. Right to education (recommendations 22, 70, 72, 73, 74, 75)

52. The issue of education has been addressed by article 30 of the Constitution as well as the 20 Year National Development Vision plan and articles 7, 8, 15, 16, 19 of the Fifth National Development Plan.

53. The education of illiterate individuals above the age of 10 has been reassigned to the Literacy Movement Organization. In addition, publication of 450 easy-to-read books for new readers as well as the signing of 18 ongoing agreements with government and NGOs have all come together to help increase the literacy of the target population to 92.4 percent.

54. Public and private higher education centers offer day and night and regular and semi-regular attended open, scientific applied and modular courses as well as E-Courses to provide citizens with a wide variety of higher education choices.

55. According to article 8 of the “Comprehensive Law on Protection and Support for the Handicapped”, eligible handicapped individuals can enroll in the Islamic Azad University or public universities without paying tuition fees.

56. Services and courses offered to the visually challenged include the following: computer classes – using standard software and software designed for the visually challenged, software lending library, handicraft classes, alternative perception skills classes, and Braille alphabet classes, literacy classes for adult visually challenged illiterates, preschool services, educational assistance and graduate education.

3. Right to Social Security (recommendations 15, 62)

57. Paragraph A of article 38 of the Fifth Development Plan has been devised to help implement article 29 of the Constitution on universal health insurance. According to this law, the Government must create the necessary conditions to provide applicants with health insurance.

58. The Social Security Organization (SSO), as the main social care mechanism, plays an important role in the sustainability of the society and preservation and protection of the country’s productive resources. The SSO’s most important duty is to make the following payments: pension, disability pension, stipends to survivors of the deceased, unemployment insurance benefits, paramedical equipment and marriage and burial benefits, as well as sick and maternity pay.

59. In 2009 the number of people insured and receiving stipends from the organization was 30,675,472. By the end of December 2013, this number rose to 38 million. Other social services organizations affiliated to the SSO are insuring an additional 30 million citizens. In the current year and in keeping with the Fifth Development Plan, around 6 million citizens who do not have basic health insurance will be covered by the Health Insurance Organization.

4. Right to housing (recommendation 49)

60. According to article 30 of the Constitution, one of the most important duties of the Government is to provide appropriate housing for all citizens. Therefore, the urban and rural housing policies and programs are devised and implemented for all sections of society without any prejudice against minorities. Similarly, banking facilities to buy, construct and repair housing is given to citizens without racial, ethnic and religious discrimination. An example would be the construction of 166,365 units in Khuzestan, 95,435 units in

Kermanshah, 71,482 units in Sistan and Baluchistan, and 37,684 urban and rural units in Ilam province.

61. The “Maskan-e-Mehr” (benevolent housing) program has been exclusively conceived to provide cheap housing to low-income families in less developed provinces. To date 2,500,000 housing units have been constructed under this program and by the end of March 2014, nearly 50 percent of these units had been distributed; with the rest nearing completion. Also, to help more citizens become homeowners; in February 2013 home loans and facilities were increased by 40 percent.

5. Cultural rights

a. *The nation’s historic and cultural heritage (Recommendations 76, 95)*

62. To date, 16 historical and cultural heritage sites and 10 intangible heritage elements have been inscribed in the world heritage list. Also in the period in question, 103 natural heritage sites, 13979 historic and cultural sites and 1070 intangible elements have been nationally registered.

63. Furthermore, to protect the cultural heritage of minorities, the “Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization” has formed the “Holy Shrines and Religions Buildings” Committee” to help coordinate efforts to restore prayer chapels and holy sites of religious minorities. The committee also assists with the restoration and preservation of mausoleums that have been registered in the national cultural heritage list. It is worth mentioning that to date the committee has restored scores of Christian, Jewish, Assyrian and Zoroastrian sites.

b. *Dialogue among cultures, religions and civilizations (recommendations 77, 78, 91, 92, 93, 94, 96)*

64. Numerous initiatives have been taken to expand cultural cooperation and to promote dialogue between religions, civilizations and cultures, including:

- The International Conference on Dialogue among Religions and Cultures in Asia (2010);
- Religious meeting between representatives of the Center for Dialogue among Religions and Kuwait council on Islamic and Christian relations of (2011);
- Specialized Meeting on Religious Communities and the Challenge of Secularism; Iran Institute for *Hikmat* and Philosophical Research (2011);
- Specialized Meeting on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Theocratic and Secular Societies (Ghom University 2011);
- Tehran Religious Meeting, between the Center for Interfaith Dialogue and the College of Buddhist Studies and Sri Lanka’s Kelaniya University (2011);
- Third round of religious meetings between the Center for Interfaith Dialogue and the Council of Swiss Bishops (2010);
- Seventh round of religious meetings between the Center for Interfaith Dialogue and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (2010);
- The World Council of Churches’ conference on Islam and Christianity (2010);
- Conference on Peace and Coexistence (2010);
- Meeting between a group of Lebanese professors and directors of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (2010);

- Scientific interfaith symposium on “Dialogue Between Islam and Christianity” (2010);
- Seminar with representatives of the Assyrians community on “Cooperation of Faiths to Promote Peace and Coexistence in Different Communities” (2010);
- Technical workshop on the “Role of Women in Religious Dialogue” (2010);
- 17th meeting of the Committee for Coordination of Islamic Proselytization – OIC (2010);
- Technical Meeting on Islam and Interfaith Dialogue (2010);
- 4th Round of Islam and Orthodox Armenian Christianity Dialogue – the Center for Interfaith Dialogue and the Lebanese Arminian Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia (2010).

6. Right to development

a. *Millennium Development Goals (recommendation 6, 14, 66, 80)*

65. Iran has drafted the Fifth Development Plan to serve the ideals of progress and social justice and to compliment the 20 Year National Development Vision Plan. According to article 213 of the Plan, administrative organizations must submit annual reports on their previous year’s performance – on items related to the plan – to the Planning and Strategic Supervision Department of the President’s Office. In turn, the Department submits these performance reports to the President. When presenting the annual budget to the Parliament, the President is also required to present an amalgamated report and brief the MPs in an open parliamentary session.

66. The MDGs have been included in different Five Year Development plans. Iran has successfully provided basic services – such as health, education and electricity – to its citizens; improved its human development indicators; expanded social services and advanced women’s education and health. Iran is one of the first countries to have either reached its MDGs before 2015 or fast working towards them. Iran’s success in implementing MDGs is mentioned in the UN Development Group’s 2013 Report. Also, according to the 2013 Human Development Report, Iran’s human development index has reached 0.724; placing Iran in the high development bracket (rating 76 out of 187).

67. Cognizant of the developmental concerns shared by developing countries, Iran has worked to encourage greater collaboration between these countries so as to bring greater welfare and prosperity to the people of developing countries. To this end, it has actively participated regional and trans-regional organizations, including the ECO, D8 and OIC. Iran has also become more involved in international decision making and is providing more technical assistance to developing countries.

b. *Education, health and social services in rural areas (recommendations 65, 71)*

68. According to articles 3, 29 and 43 of the Constitution, the Government must provide universal free educational facilities and health services to all citizens. To help fulfill this duty, article 194 of the Fifth National Development Plan has concentrated on rural development.

69. The following steps have been taken accordingly:

- Organization of mobile medical clinics to visit remote rural communities and perform free surgeries and other medical services;
- Providing clean potable water for 33,500 villages.

70. Construction of 63500 rural schools, presently more than 95 percent of the rural population has access to appropriate educational space.

71. Consistent with article 194 of the Fifth Development Plan, the Rural, Nomadic and Farmers Social Insurance Fund has been consolidated. To date, around 1,100,000 persons has been covered by the Fund. Other supplementary insurance funds are also providing supplementary cover to rural families.

c. *Poverty reduction (recommendations 67, 68, 69, 100)*

72. To reach poverty eradication goals, the National Strategic Policy documents have been formulated including Administrative Plans to Manage Drought, Agricultural Development Plan, the Comprehensive Housing Plan, the Comprehensive Women's Rights Protection and Empowerment Program, Reduction of Unemployment, the Intersectoral Poverty Reduction and Targeted Subsidies Document, Social Security Umbrella Statute, Community Based National Empowerment Program and the Rural Social Insurance Fund.

73. National plans and programs have been also executed to fight against poverty including: establishment of women and children's Shelters, nutrition program for impoverished pregnant women and women headed households and financial support and nutrition program for disadvantaged children.

7. Economic sanctions and their repercussions (recommendation 101)

74. Imposition of sanctions against the citizens of a state, run contrary to all international human rights norms and regulations and adversely affect the most basic rights of its citizens. Such sanctions disrupt the fulfillment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially articles 22 through 26 and violate the spirit of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The sanctions further challenge the principles of international law, the letter and spirit of the Charter (especially chapter one on objectives and principles) and other international human rights instruments. Therefore, such sanctions are not legitimate and cannot be justified.

8. Narcotics (recommendation 99)

75. Iran's neighboring countries are the largest producer of traditional narcotics in the world. This fact has given planning to combat the smuggling of narcotics, a strategic urgency. The country has taken effective steps to combat drugs; but the physical and nonphysical toll is high. To date, more than 3700 police and military officers have laid down their lives in the line of duty; with more than 12,000 injured. Each year, Iran spends hundreds of millions of dollars to combat drug smugglers and the transit of narcotics. Huge budgets are also spent on prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of addicts.

76. According to UNODC, globally, more than 80 percent of seizures are made by the Islamic Republic of Iran. As numerous UNODC reports confirm and as stated by the Executive Director of UNODC and the Deputy Director General of the UN, Iran is now the standard-bearer of the global fight against narcotics.

D. Protection of vulnerable groups

1. Women's rights (recommendations 7, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 45, 60, 64)

77. Iran has tirelessly worked to advance women's rights. Extensive measures have been taken to improve women's health and education, fight poverty, create jobs, provide security and fight violence against them and help increase the presence of women in the political,

social and cultural life. In this regard, during the recent years, a number of institutions have been established and measures taken to help advancement of women's rights, including:

Mechanisms for the advancement of women's rights

- Promoting the status of the Center for Women and Family from an advisory body to Vice-President office;
- Creation of women's affairs advisory offices in all ministries and government organizations;
- Expansion of the role of the Family, Women and the Youth Commission – and also the Women's Faction – in the Parliament;
- Expansion of the role played by Women's Socio-Cultural Council; affiliated to the Cultural Revolution Council;
- Enhancement of the Judiciary's Office for Protection of Women and Children;
- Establishment of the position of female advisor in the family court – as required by the 2012 Family Protection Law;
- Enhancement of the role played by women's police.

Improving the status of women before the law

78. the most important steps taken include:

- The Law on Organization and Support for Home-Based Businesses Act (2010);
- The Act to Amend Articles 1 and 7 of the Women's Part-time Employment Act (2010);
- Formulation of draft Bill on Protection of Women against Violence (2011);
- Adoption of the Family Protection Act (2012). Issues that pertain to the protection of women's rights in the above act, include:
 - Increasing the competencies of the Family Court from 13 to 18 instances and formation of new competencies – including gender reassignment and surrogacy;
 - Creation of the engagement unit to hear engagement claims and damages to women, resulting from broken engagements;
 - Provisions to help mothers collect child support;
 - Creation of Family Counseling Centers in courts, to offer counseling to couples seeking divorce;
 - Uniformity of survivor (deceased person's spouse and children) pension laws, in all retirement funds;
 - Payment of the deceased employees' salary and pension to the spouse – even if she remarries.
- The new " Rules of Criminal Procedure" is specially attentive to the rights of women, including:
 - Questioning of women by female officers (article 42);
 - Providing NGOs that work with women and children, the possibility to approach courts to indict offenders. Additionally, the above NGOs are now allowed to be present in all stages of prosecution (article 66);

- Creation of "Victim's Fund" in the Ministry of Justice to help crime victims – including female victims of violence.

Practical improvement of the situation of women

Education

79. According to UNESCO's 2012 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, Iran ranks amongst the world's six most successful countries in educational gender parity. Women's literacy rates in the 2009–2010 period increased from 97.1 to 97.7 percent. Similarly, for the period 2011–2012, the number of female university students studying in public universities, increased to 56 percent.

Health

80. Iran has worked to improve women's health in four levels: a) the family, b) rural and urban health centers, c) specialized hospitals and d) university hospitals.

81. The health network, through 17,000 "Health Houses" and 2400 Rural Health Centers, 2200 Urban Health Centers and 30,000 health workers, is providing direct "primary healthcare" access to 100 percent of the urban population and more than 95 percent of the rural population.

82. In 2011, the AIDS Prevention and Control Committee created the "Women's Positive Club" as well as counseling, care and treatment centers for vulnerable women and their families including wives of inmates and narcotic users contracted with HIV.

Combating violence against women

83. the most important steps taken in recent years, to combat violence against women include:

- Implementation of the Program of Prevention of Social Ills and Combating Immorality and Cruelty against Women (2012);
- Organization of exhibitions, workshops, conferences and scientific meetings for women and girls -- to increase awareness of social threats and provide strategies to deal with them as well as awareness campaigns on AIDS, hepatitis, psychological disorders and diseases more common in women;
- Sponsorship of research efforts to discover the reasons and contributing factors behind violence against women and formulate prevention and restoration strategies;
- Implementation of the "Prevention Women's Social Vulnerabilities Program", through holding 224 workshops in 2010;
- "Joint Operation to Elevate the Society"; a police program aiming to eradicate violence and attacks against women and deal with perpetrators.

Participation of women in economic and social affairs

84. The most important steps taken to empower women include:

- Creation of "Women's Employment Foundation" (2010);
- Sponsorship of groups working to help women headed household;
- Entrepreneurship and self-employment facilities for women;
- Plans to create the "Comprehensive Women's Empowerment Unit".

Women's Political participation

85. The most important political activities of women in recent years include:

- Membership in the Parliament;
- An upsurge in the number of female members in City and Rural Councils to 6093 (2013);
- Appointment to important and high Government offices that include 3 Vice-President Offices.

Combating trafficking of women and girls

86. Iran is working closely and effectively with INTERPOL, to combat trafficking in women. The "Act to Combat Human Trafficking" was drafted and passed following Iran's accession to the "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children". In the above Act, provisions have been made for the rights of women and children and punishments devised for those who engage in these crimes.

2. Children's rights (recommendations 7, 22, 35, 36, 39, 40, 45)

87. Consistent with article 21 of the Constitution, the Government has responsibility to comprehensively – and within Islamic parameters – guarantee the rights of women and protect children. To fulfill this task, the Government has used article 230 of the Fifth National Development Plan to work with relevant organizations and formulate – and later pass – the Comprehensive Family Development Plan.

88. Since 2009 following steps were taken to promote the rights of children:

- Approval of the Islamic Penal Code in 2013 (articles 88 to 95 pertain to children's rights);
- Approval of the "Protection of Family Rights Act" in 2013 (article 45 pertains to respect for the higher interests of children);
- Formulation of the "National Document on Children and Adolescents" to correspond with legislation by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution (2013);
- Approval of the "Protection for Children and Adolescents without Parental Care or with Abusive Parents Act" (2013);
- Expansion of "Street Children's Unit" operations (2013);
- Creation of "National Children's Rights Focal Point Coordination Council" and its scientific and executive working groups (2011);
- Creation of "National Focal Point for Convention on the Rights of the Child" and the passing of its statute (2011). Some of the steps taken by the National Focal Point include:
 - Signing a five year memorandum with UNICEF's office in Tehran;
 - Organization of the best judicial verdict competition – requiring contestant judges to cite the CRC in their verdicts and mete out alternative sentences that incorporate the higher interests of children;
 - Beta-testing of the Data Bank and Children's Rights Electronic Referral Management System;

- Organizing numerous workshops on CRC, in collaboration with civil society institutions and UNICEF (2013);
- Creation of intersectional coordination workgroup – in collaboration with UNICEF – on prevention of violence against children (2013);
- Collaboration with the Iranian radio and television network to produce children’s awareness raising programs;
- Establishment of the Department of Children’s Rights in *Shaheed-Beheshti* University which is offering master’s degrees (from February 2013) in “children’s rights”.

89. It must be highlighted that child who commit crimes is not held criminally responsible. Rather, the law has put emphasis on education, and with the authorization of juvenile courts, this important task is entrusted to guardians of the child, and when necessary, juvenile rehabilitation centers, so that once adolescents return to society, they can resume their ordinary lives.

90. In deference to Islamic and humanitarian ideals, the judiciary exercises leniency when dealing with underage offenders. This includes referral of such cases to the juvenile court and use of alternative sentencing. According to existing procedure, even after the court’s verdict has been finalized and affirmed by the Supreme Court, extensive efforts are made by the “Reconciliation Commission” to plead with victims to reconsider – including owners of the blood (i.e. victim’s immediate family).

91. Pornography has a devastating effect on public, family and individual decency and modesty and is criminalized by the legal systems of many countries. Iranian penal law, including article 640 of the “Islamic Penal Code”, has addressed the issue.

92. Iran has joined the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. The “Children and Adolescent Protection Bill”, which is before the Parliament for deliberation, has also decisively addressed the issue of pornography and prevention of sexual slavery and prohibition of the selling and purchase of children and has foreseen legal punishments for offenders.

93. The 2009 “Cyber-Crimes Act” has addressed the issue in its chapter four on crimes against public decency and good morals. The Cyber Police is also tasked with fighting pornography. Additionally, the “IT and Digital Media Center for the Wellbeing of Children” has been established to fight the production of child pornography.

3. Disability rights (recommendations 7, 36, 37, 38, 85)

94. In 2009, Iran joined the CRPD and submitted its preliminary national report in 2013. Iran has taken extensive measures which have been described in detail in the above preliminary national report. Nevertheless, some of the most important steps include:

Economic and social rights

- Reservation of 3 percent of all government posts for persons with disability;
- Availability of special interest free self-employment loans;
- Training courses for families with disabled children;
- Medical services – including prevention, treatment and financial aids;
- Establishment of nationwide specialized and type specific rehabilitation centers;
- Establishment of disability and recreational and physical activity centers and organization of educational camps;

- Prevention of disability and improvement of the health and wellbeing of disabled children including:
 - Signing the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2010);
 - National planning to prevent congenital disabilities;
 - Extensive inoculation of necessary vaccines;
 - Pregnancy supplements to prevent birth defects.

Education of less-abled students

95. The program to integrate less-abled students into the population of standard schools started in 2013. According to this program, each year, 1000 less-abled students are enrolled alongside other students into standard schools. At the moment, 40,000 less-abled students are studying in standard schools.

Promoting the rights of the persons with disabilities

96. To help realize the objectives of the “Comprehensive Protection of the Rights of the Disabled Act” and the 2012 “Comprehensive Veterans’ Services Act” a number of initiatives have been taken which include weekly radio and television programs, organization of training courses, public awareness campaigns and information for parents.

Cooperation and exchange of experience with other countries, on the rights of the disabled

97. In cooperation with the UNHCR, 2,000 disabled Afghan immigrants have been provided with rehabilitation services. Similar technical cooperation on rehabilitation programs has been offered to other parties and agreements have been signed with several countries to exchange students and award scholarships to disabled students.

4. Rights of asylum seekers (recommendation 79)

98. In the past three decades and at great cost, Iran has hosted millions of foreign asylum seekers. Today, it continues to provide extensive services to the refugee population. As a result, on numerous occasions – and reports – UNHCR has unequivocally thanked Iran for its vital role and generosity in hosting a large population of foreign refugees.

5. Minority rights (recommendations 31, 50, 51, 95, 102, 117, 118, 119)

99. Consistent with article 14 of the Constitution, the Government is required to treat non-Muslims with respect and Islamic justice and equity, and to respect their human rights.

100. The Constitution guarantees the legitimate rights and freedoms of different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic groups. According to Article 13 of the Constitution, religious minorities are free to practice their religious ceremonies and administer their personal status.

101. Whereas, minorities with a population of 200,000 have 5 representatives in the Parliament, other Iranian citizens have one representative for every 150,000 inhabitants. Furthermore, to increase the presence and participation of religious minorities in different political, social and decision making settings, numerous measures have been taken, which include:

- Representatives of religious minorities in addition to the Parliament are serving in City and Rural Councils. They also extensively exercise their freedom to establish

associations within their communities. The Government boosts the activity of these associations by allocating annual budgets and grants;

- In the cultural and social sphere, religious minority communities publish numerous periodicals, oversee various religious centers, access to public and private sporting facilities and have the possibility to organize international cultural festivals;
- Children of followers of different religions, once starting school, are given the choice to be educated in accordance with their own religious teachings or attend schools that exclusively belong to their communities and offer religious instructions and ethnic language skills. They further have the right to continue their studies in all middle and high schools and attend university and to apply for Government positions;
- In economic affairs, members of religious minorities are present, without discrimination, in all manufacturing and merchant guilds;
- Respect for religious minority rights has been incorporated into various laws. As an example it could be referred to article 554 of the new Islamic Penal Code – which is based on a State Decree by the Supreme Leader– announcing that the *Diya* (blood money) payable for the murder of members of religious minorities recognized by the Constitution will be similar in amount to that of Muslim citizens. Also, in accordance with the Single Article Act on the Personal Status of Iranians, when hearing cases on the personal status, inheritance and wills of Iranians whose religions have been officially recognized, courts must abide by the prevalent rules, regulations and traditions of those religions;
- Minorities are also active in civil society endeavors including through involving in women, children and charity NGOs.

102. In addition to earmarks in the public budget, million dollars – increased in proportion to annual inflation – are allocated to minority religions to be spent on cultural affairs, education, science and sport. Additionally, their religious places are repaired and restored by the government using public monies. Some of the more historic sites are nationally registered.

103. Consistent with articles 12 and 13 of the Constitution, the state religion is Islam and the recognized religious minorities are Zoroastrian, Jewish and Christian; accordingly the Iranian religious minorities are free to perform their religious services, personal status and religious education in accordance with their own religion.

104. Alongside the recognized religious minorities, the rights of all citizens – including the followers of the Baha'i sect – are respected. Obviously, respect for the rights of individuals as citizens, is subject to the fulfillment of their obligations and duties as members of society.

105. Based on article 23 of the Constitution investigation into a person's beliefs is prohibited and Individuals cannot be harassed or called to account for simply holding a particular belief. Therefore, contrary to political agitations no one is sent to prison for his or her beliefs.

106. According to articles 18 and 19 of the ICCPR, freedom of expression and opinion cannot be curtailed. However, exceptions to this rule are determined by the law to preserve security, order, public morals and the rights and good reputation of individuals and the Baha'i are not exempt from this provision.

107. The issue of fair trial regardless of race, religion, gender and ethnicity has been addressed in great detail by the Constitution and the Code of Criminal Procedure and other laws. This enables legally competent authorities to protect the rights of citizens and ensure

justice in detection, investigation of crimes, prosecution of offenders, issuance of verdicts, appeals and implementation of sentences.

108. Also, respect for the principle of “presumption of innocence” and “legality of crime and punishment” in the judicial system has been stressed in Article 37 of the Constitution and Articles 2 and 12 of the "Islamic Penal Code". Thus, no one is guilty, unless he or she is proven guilty in a competent court. Consequently, holding a particular belief does not lead to prosecution.

109. The Baha’i mentioned in the recommendations were tried on charges that included organization of illegal associations or groups to disrupt national security. After a fair hearing – including defense by the accused and their lawyers – the accused were sentenced to prison (with time already served deducted) by the primary court. Following an appeal, their verdict was reviewed but upheld in compliance with legal protocols. It should also be noted that the above individuals are provided with the same facilities and concessions that are given to other inmates – including health and medical care, numerous family visitations and furloughs.

E. Cooperation with international human rights bodies

1. Cooperation with UN human rights bodies (recommendations 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30)

110. In line with cooperation with UN human rights mechanisms in recent years, Iran has continuously interacted with the OHCHR at different levels – including meetings between the High Commissioner and Iranian high level officials. Additionally, the Government has extended an invitation to the High Commissioner to visit the Country and has announced its readiness for making the necessary arrangements. Subsequently, in December 2011 a preparatory delegation from the OHCHR visited Iran to meet with different Government departments and civil society and explore new avenues for human rights cooperation.

111. Iran has actively participated in the UN human rights meetings, including those of the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the Commission on the Status of Women. It also continuously interacts with the Country’s Special Rapporteur, both in Geneva and New York, and appropriately responded to his reports and correspondence and that of thematic rapporteurs.

112. The Country also interacted with ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF and other international agencies. An example would be a visit by a high ranking ILO delegation to Iran to review the implementation of Convention No. 111 on non-discrimination of employment and occupation.

2. Compliance with international obligations (recommendations 2, 3, 4)

113. Iran has actively worked to present regular reports to the UN bodies and by doing so, practically demonstrate its commitment to its international obligations. In this context, the Country:

- Defended its periodic report to the ICERD (August 2010); its third periodic report to the ICCRP (October 2011) and its second periodic report to the ICESCR (2013);
- Submitted its third periodic report to the CRC (2013) and its initial report to the ICPRD (2013).

3. Respect for International Humanitarian Law (Recommendation 1)

114. The National Committee for Humanitarian Law was established by the Council of Ministers to help “promote, develop and facilitate the implementation of humanitarian law at the national level and strengthen respect for these rights at the international level”. In this regard, all government agencies are required to collaborate with the Red Crescent Society and the decisions of the Committee are to be considered as binding. The most important actions of the Committee for the aforementioned period include:

- Training of armed forces, members of the public and different educational levels on IHL through translation and publication of books and organization of conferences and seminars at national, regional and International levels;
- Preparation and submission of proposed legislation and regulations and advisory opinions;
- Pursue the protection of all persons subject to the rules of IHL;
- Description and promotion of the state’s practices and views on IHL for national and international institutions and forums;
- Follow up and report international violations of IHL to the relevant international organizations;
- Cooperation and exchange of scientific information and research findings on IHL with domestic and international centers.

115. On November 2013, the Red Crescent Society of Iran was chosen to serve as one of the 20 members of the governing board of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

F. International initiatives for the promotion and protection of human rights (recommendations 5, 13, 87, 88, 89, 90, 94)

116. Iran has worked at different international, regional and bilateral levels, to promote human rights and strengthen its mechanisms, including:

- Submission of a resolution entitled “World against Violence and Violent Extremism (WAVE) to the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly and its adoption by consensus. Iran later offered to host an international conference, to examine practical solutions for implementing the Resolution.
- The Non- Aligned Movement (NAM) which was chaired by Iran during the past two years is a setting that the Country is working to promote human rights. Since 2006, Iran also hosts the NAM Centre for Human Rights and Cultural Diversity which has organized several academic meetings in 2011 and 2012 with the attendance of participants from more than 30 countries.
- Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is another venue for the country’s human rights activities. Iran has supported the establishment of OIC’s Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission and after its inception it has announced its readiness to cooperate constructively with the Commission. In addition, Iran has hosted a number of OIC related human rights meetings, including:
 - Third OIC Ministerial Meeting on Women (December 2012);
 - International Conference on the Chosen Women of Divine Religions (October 2011);

- International Conference on Restoration of Human Rights and the Drafting of the Covenant on the Rights of Women in Islam (October 2012).

117. Iran has always worked to utilize the existing capacity of its ongoing bilateral cooperation with various countries – in terms of human rights dialogue and technical human rights cooperation – to promote and protect human rights. In this context, ongoing bilateral human rights dialogue and technical cooperation with a number of countries including Japan, Switzerland, Russia, Norway, Denmark, Austria, South Africa and Indonesia is noteworthy.

IV. Challenges and constraints

Political approaches

118. Iran views the “Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran” and the appointment of the Special Rapporteur, as a political, discriminatory and unfair process that is based on double standards. Unfortunately, this process is being pursued by certain Western countries as a means to achieve their political wills. Such a biased approach, visibly contradicts human rights principles and norms that were drafted to promote and protect these ideals.

Sanctions

119. Economic sanctions and unilateral coercive measures against the citizens of a country lead to the formation of multiple barriers to the full enjoyment of their human rights – specially economic, social and cultural rights – and as such are inconsistent with all human rights norms and standards. The sanctions are clearly against the principles of international law, the spirit and letter of the Charter and UDHR in particular numerous articles of the ICESCR. Hence, the sanctions are not legitimate and justified. Iran highly expects that the international community unequivocally condemns these economic sanctions and unilateral coercive measures and adopts practical measures to compensate damage caused and to take immediate and effective steps to completely lift the sanctions.

Terrorism

120. Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the scourge of terrorism – which is supported by certain foreign governments – has proven to be one of the most serious intrusions on the fundamental rights of Iranian citizens – especially their right to life, peace and security. In recent years, five Iranian nuclear scientist have been assassinated – four of which were martyred. These attacks constitute a clear violation of the right to life and the country’s right to development. In addition, scores of documents exist on crimes committed against the Iranian nation by the leaders and members of the MKO terrorist group. More than 17,000 people have been assassinated by this terrorist group; nevertheless, the Group is still present and freely active in some Western countries – this, in itself, is an indication of the double standards applied to terrorism.

121. In 2013 and 2014 terrorist attacks were carried out against the border guards and a number of its cultural and diplomatic buildings in Beirut, Sana’a and Peshawar resulting in the kidnapping and martyrdom of a number of border guards, diplomats and innocent citizens.

Narcotics

122. Iran is at the forefront of the fight against drug trafficking. To prevent the transit of drugs to other countries, aside from collaborating with the UN and other countries, Iran has invested massive amount of money and pooled its resources. These efforts have come together to produce drug seizures that are equal to the combined seizures of all other countries. However, the fight against drug trafficking has been costly in terms of human lives. Occasional failure by other countries to cooperative responsibly has led to police officers being taken hostage by terrorists that are linked to traffickers. Additionally, in our surrounding region, there is an integral link between extremism and terrorism on one hand, and drug trafficking and organized crimes on the other. Thus, all countries and relevant international organizations must responsibly work together to address the problem.

Refugees

123. During the past three decades, Iran hosted around four million refugees. Providing for the refugees, particularly in recent years and because of unfair, illegal and unilateral sanctions have imposed an additional burden on the shoulder of our people. However, due to its religious beliefs and humanitarian considerations, Iran has always treated refugees with generosity and kindness. Therefore, in light of the principle of “burden sharing”, the international community should fulfill its obligations to assist the refugees and within the framework of Iran’s co-operation with UNHCR, take action to help them.

V. Final remarks

124. In the period between its first and second UPR reports, the Islamic Republic of Iran – as in the past – has worked at various international, regional and bilateral levels to promote dialogue and cooperation on human rights. However, despite Iran’s extensive efforts to further promote and protect human rights in the Country and an unwavering determination to fight terrorism and narcotics – and sheltering a considerable refugee population, notwithstanding unfair and inhumane sanctions – it has unfortunately been met with political and selective approaches. With this in mind, it is highly that expected the international community does not allow this approach to replace genuine and home-grown efforts to promote and protect human rights.
