



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under
article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms
of Discrimination against Women**

Third periodic report of States parties

Bahrain



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I. Introduction

Overview of the Kingdom of Bahrain's first and second reports

1. In compliance with article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Kingdom of Bahrain submitted its first and second reports to the CEDAW Committee (document CEDAW/C/BHR/2). Bahrain further submitted its responses to the list of issues raised by the Committee prior to discussion of the report (CEDAW/C/BHR/Q/2/Add.1 and CEDAW/C/BHR/Q/2, respectively).

2. The Committee discussed the Kingdom's two reports on 30 October 2008 (CEDAW/C/SR.860 and CEDAW/C/SR.861) and adopted its concluding observations (CEDAW/C/BHR/CO.2) on 14 November 2008.

3. The Committee requested that the Kingdom of Bahrain submit, within two years, information in writing on the steps taken to implement the recommendations in paragraph 30, on nationality, and paragraph 38, on family relations. Bahrain submitted its response to the said two concluding observations on 12 November 2010 and these were discussed by the Committee at its forty-eighth session in January-February 2011.

Mechanism and methodology of preparing the Kingdom of Bahrain's third report

4. In compliance with article 18 of CEDAW, Bahrain hereby submits its third report.

5. The Supreme Council for Women (SCW), the official national mechanism concerned with women in the Kingdom of Bahrain, produced the third official periodic report on implementation of CEDAW in partnership with the national team formed by SCW, with members representing ministries, official organizations and the National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR).

6. In preparing the third report, SCW was keen to consult the relevant official bodies to obtain the necessary data and discuss with them the difficulties and challenges they face, as well as current and future measures to address these challenges. Furthermore, SCW was keen to consult and coordinate with NIHR and to liaise with the legislature, the Bahrain Women's Union (BWU) and other women's and professional civil society organizations to seek their opinion on any matters or observations concerning the third report which SCW might take into consideration.

7. The report was prepared in line with a methodology which takes into account the guidelines for the drafting of reports formulated by the CEDAW Committee and the Committee's concluding observations following its discussion of the Kingdom of Bahrain's first and second reports. The concluding observations have been addressed by linking them to the corresponding CEDAW articles. Some of the key topics dealt with in several of the concluding observations represent a suitable introduction to the discussion on monitoring implementation of CEDAW.

8. Guidance has been sought from the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the third goal, on gender equality, in addition to relevant reports, including the

human development reports published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

9. The report reviews each article of CEDAW, the basic measures taken within its framework and the achievements, challenges and future measures relevant to each article. As far as possible, we have sought to be brief, in order to comply with the stipulated length for reports.

10. Part II of the report contains some brief general information about the Kingdom of Bahrain. We hope that the core document containing basic information about the Kingdom will shortly be ready for dispatch to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) and submission to the bodies supervising human rights conventions.

11. Part III contains a general overview, pointing out the key frameworks adopted when implementing the commitments of the Kingdom of Bahrain stipulated by the Convention.

12. Whenever the report mentions “the Convention”, the intended reference is to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; whenever it mentions “the Committee”, the intended reference is to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and whenever it mentions “the Council”, the intended reference is to the Supreme Council for Women.

II. Basic information

13. This part contains basic information on the Kingdom of Bahrain, providing a brief explanation of the social, economic, political and legal framework in which the rights stipulated by the Convention are applied.

A. Land and population

14. Located in the middle of the Arabian Gulf, to the east of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and north of the State of Qatar, approximately midway between the Straits of Hormuz and the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab waterway, the Kingdom of Bahrain has been and continues to be an important international commercial centre, serving as a key link between East and West. The Kingdom of Bahrain comprises an archipelago of 40 islands, with a total area of 760.45 km². Bahrain Island, which includes the capital, Manama, is the largest of these islands; with an area of 612.64 km²; it represents 80.56 per cent of the total area of the country. The Hawar islands, another main group of islands in the Kingdom of Bahrain, are located 25 km south of Bahrain Island and have a total area of approximately 52.1 km². Bahrain is part of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), founded in 1981.

Population indicators

15. According to the 2010 census, the total population of the Kingdom of Bahrain is 1,234,571, of whom 568,399 are Bahrainis and 666,172 non-Bahrainis. This is an increase of 89.8 per cent over the 2001 census, as per the schedule below:

<i>Bahraini</i>			<i>Non-Bahraini</i>			<i>Total</i>		
<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Both</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Both</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Both</i>
2001 Census (figures and percentages)								
204 623	201 044	405 667	169 026	75 911	244 937	373 649	276 955	650 604
50.44	49.56	100.00	69.01	30.99	100.00	57.43	42.57	100.00
2010 Census (figures and percentages)								
287 239	281 160	568 399	481 175	184 997	666 172	768 414	466 157	1 234 571
50.53	49.47	100.00	72.23	27.77	100.00	62.24	37.76	100.00

Source: Central Informatics Organisation (CIO).

According to the 2010 census, the rate of population growth of Bahrainis is 3.82 per cent and of non-Bahrainis, 11.77 per cent, as per the schedule below:

<i>Population growth rate by nationality (1991-2010)</i>			
	<i>Bahraini</i>	<i>Non-Bahraini</i>	<i>Total</i>
1991-2001	2.5	3.1	2.7
2001-2010	3.8	11.7	7.3

Source: CIO.

16. Other population indicators (source: CIO and Ministry of Health):

- Average life expectancy at birth was 74.3 years for men and 77.5 years for women in 2009.
- The under-five mortality rate fell to 8.6 per 1,000 live births in 2009, compared with 11.7 in 1999.
- The stillbirth rate was 5.3 per 1,000 births and the miscarriage rate was 100.1 per 1,000 live births in 2009.
- The rate of maternal mortality during pregnancy, delivery and confinement fell to 17 per 100,000 live births in 2009.
- The overall fertility rate of Bahraini women in the 15-49 age group was 2.8 in 2009.

Language and religion

17. Arabic is the official language of the country. Article 2 of the Constitution stipulates: "The religion of the State is Islam. The Islamic sharia is a principal source for legislation. The official language is Arabic". English is widely used in most businesses. The 2010 census indicates that the relative distribution of population by religion is as follows:

<i>Religion</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Muslim	70.21
Other	29.78

Source: CIO.

Social and economic indicators

18. The Kingdom of Bahrain adopts the free market system. The national currency is the Bahraini dinar (BHD). In April 2000, the Economic Development Board (ECB) was formed. The main tasks of ECB include formulating and overseeing Bahrain's future economic development strategy and creating a suitable environment to attract direct investment to the country. The role of ECB consists in providing leadership by uniting the efforts of the relevant governmental bodies with a unifying vision and formulating key strategies for growth.

19. If we trace the economic development achieved by the Kingdom of Bahrain in 2007 and 2008 by means of rates of GDP growth at constant prices — an indicator for measuring economic growth at national level — we find high rates of GDP growth of 8.4 per cent and 6.3 per cent, respectively. There is no doubt that these high rates are the consequence of the effective role played by the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain in implementing the fiscal policies and guidelines formulated over the last few years to channel financial resources into the economy and diversify sources of income.

20. The years 2007 and 2008 were marked by high levels of average per capita share of GDP, rising from BHD 6,206 at current prices in 2006 to BHD 7,527 in 2008, a growth rate of 21 per cent, placing Bahrain in the ranks of the high-income countries. Bahrain has witnessed a series of changes and developments over the last few years, since the State raised the banner of development of the Bahraini citizen as a dimension of its economic and social development strategy. This is the origin of the State's focus on human resource development and increased human productivity and creative capacity, which are the principal factors helping to accelerate the development process.

21. The State has adopted a social development policy that is, in essence, designed to promote human development and advancement and unleash human potential by investing in various areas of social development to provide radical treatment for social problems, as well as investing in areas of social protection, such as care and rehabilitation.

B. The basic constitutional and legal structure

22. After assuming power in 1999, His Majesty King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa held a series of meetings with various national popular groupings and civil sectors in the country, which resulted in the formulation of a document, entitled the "National Action Charter" (NAC). This was approved by a majority of 98.4 per cent of all sections of the Bahraini people in a general referendum held in 2001. NAC gives concrete expression to a framework for a political, economic and social reform project and its adoption has resulted in significant political, constitutional and legal changes and the holding of free parliamentary elections. NAC is relevant to women by virtue of its affirmation of women's basic rights and freedoms.

The Constitution

23. Bahrain became independent in 1971 and the Constitution was promulgated on 6 December 1977. To achieve the goals for which NAC was adopted in 2001 and to carry out the popular will, evident from the approval given to the principles embraced by NAC, the Constitution of Bahrain was amended on 14 February 2002,

reflecting the political, economic and legal developments in Bahraini society and the start of a new era in the country's history.

24. The Constitution stipulates that the Kingdom of Bahrain is a fully sovereign, independent Arab State and the regime is that of a hereditary constitutional monarchy. Article 1, paragraph (e) further stipulates: "Citizens, both men and women, are entitled to participate in public affairs and shall enjoy political rights, including the right to vote and to stand for elections, in accordance with this Constitution and the conditions and principles laid down by law".

25. The Constitution stipulates that the system of governance in the Kingdom of Bahrain is democratic, with sovereignty residing in the hands of the people, the source of all powers. The system of governance is based on the principle of the separation of the legislative, executive and judicial authorities, while maintaining cooperation between them in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

The King

26. The King is Head of State, and its nominal representative. The King safeguards the legitimacy of the Government and sovereignty of the Constitution and the law.

Legislative authority

27. Legislative authority is vested in the King and the National Assembly, in accordance with the Constitution. The National Assembly consists of two chambers, the Consultative (Shura) Council and the Chamber of Deputies, in accordance with the constitutional amendments of 2002, under which Bahrain changed from a unicameral to a bicameral system, in respect of the formation of the National Assembly. The Consultative Council consists of 40 members, appointed by Royal Decree with the objective of benefiting from their expertise in various spheres. The Consultative Council has responsibility for the legislative function, alongside the Chamber of Deputies, but does not enjoy any powers of oversight. The Chamber of Deputies consists of 40 members, elected by direct, secret general ballot for a term of four years. The Chamber of Deputies exercises oversight of the actions of the executive through multiple channels, the main ones being questioning, cross-examination, formation of committees of inquiry and formation of committees to look into citizens' complaints.

Executive authority

28. Executive authority is vested in the King, the Prime Minister and ministers. The executive formulates and implements the general policy of the State, supervises the Government apparatus and looks after interests of State. The Constitution defines the duties, powers and responsibilities of the King, Prime Minister and ministers.

29. In addition to the above, municipal councils, whose members are elected, play an important role in public life. Within the parameters of the State's general policy and development plans, the municipal council is responsible for providing municipal services within its area of jurisdiction. Municipal councils have a term of four Gregorian years.

Judicial authority

30. The Constitution stipulates the independence of the judiciary. The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) oversees the work of the courts and the agencies assisting the courts. The law establishes courts of various degrees and types, the functions and jurisdiction of which it makes clear. The impartiality of the judiciary and the equality of all before it are stressed. The Constitution affirms that no person or authority is permitted to interfere with the course of justice. The office of the public prosecutor is a branch of the judiciary.

31. Jurisdiction in the Kingdom of Bahrain is divided between:

- Civil courts, which are competent to hear all civil, criminal and commercial issues; in 2005, a chamber was established to hear administrative cases. The civil courts are competent to hear personal status issues of non-Muslims, who are subject to their own laws.
- Sharia courts, which are competent to hear personal status issues of Muslims; the sharia courts consist of two chambers — a Sunni chamber and a Jaafari (shiite) chamber.

32. The Constitution provides for the creation of the Constitutional Court, with jurisdiction to review the constitutionality of laws and statutes. This court is an independent judicial body.

C. The general framework for the strengthening and protection of human rights

33. NAC, the Constitution and relevant legislation guarantee the legal protection of human rights in general and of women's rights in particular. NAC stipulates the principle of the equality of all citizens. It stipulates their equality before the law and in respect of the acquisition of rights and assumption of duties. There is no discrimination between citizens on grounds of sex, origin, language, religion or creed. Women's political rights are also guaranteed, particularly the right to vote and the right to stand for election, as well as their right to education and property and to run businesses and engage in economic activity.

34. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain guarantees respect for human rights, in keeping with the lofty values and sublime humanitarian principles contained in NAC. Chapter 2 of the Constitution contains the basic constituents of society, while chapter 3 contains those public rights and duties which ensure well being, progress, stability and prosperity for the homeland and citizens. Article 4 stipulates: "... equality ... and equality of opportunity for citizens are pillars of society guaranteed by the State". Article 5 (b) stipulates: "The State guarantees reconciling the duties of women towards the family with their work in society, and their equality with men in political, social, cultural, and economic life without violating the provisions of sharia law".

35. The right to litigate is an essential right and fundamental principle stipulated by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain, which guarantees this right to all men and women equally, without discrimination on grounds of ethnicity, gender or religion. The State guarantees legal aid under terms defined by law.

36. In addition to NAC, the Constitution and relevant legislation, Bahrain has acceded to many international conventions on human rights.

37. Consistent with the Constitution and NAC, and the wish to ensure the rights of women, the Supreme Council for Women (SCW) was established in 2001. The President of SCW is Her Royal Highness Princess Sabika bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, consort of His Majesty King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa. SCW exercises its mandate pursuant to Emiri Decree No. 44 (2002), as amended by Royal Decree No. 36 (2004).

38. In affirmation of the importance which the Kingdom of Bahrain attaches to human rights in their totality, Decree No. 60 (2011) was promulgated, renaming and reorganising the Ministry of Social Development as the Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development. The Minister of Social Development is to be known as the Minister of Human Rights and Social Development.

39. It is worth noting that the National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR) was established by Royal Decree No. 46 (2009) to foster, develop, protect, consolidate the values of and spread awareness of human rights and to contribute to ensuring that human rights are exercised. It is also worth noting the founding of the Bahrain Institute for Political Development (BIPD) in 2005 to spread the culture of democracy and to consolidate further the concept of sound democratic principles.

III. General overview

40. The Kingdom of Bahrain committed to CEDAW on the basis of a firm belief in the principle of equality between men and women and that such equality is an indivisible part of respect for human rights in their fullest sense: political, economic, social and cultural. This commitment finds its firm foundation in NAC, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the educational progress of Bahraini women since 1928, His Majesty's reform project, which commenced in 1999, and Government policies and programmes.

41. SCW is keen for there to be a clear vision and strategic plans for achieving equality between men and women and for coordination and collaboration between State authorities and civil society in this regard.

42. The commitment to CEDAW and cooperation and dialogue with the Committee constitutes an important and useful basis for assessing the situation of women and evaluating achievements on the ground and the challenges which need to be addressed with resolve, transparency and candour.

43. Bahrain's first two reports were submitted to the Committee within the above framework and the country's third report is submitted on the same basis. In this general overview of the changing situation of women in the Kingdom of Bahrain, we are concerned to draw attention to the key frameworks adopted to monitor implementation of the country's commitments under the Convention. These frameworks may be summarised as follows:

A. Sustainable development based on respect for human rights, including the rights of women

44. In respect of its development efforts, the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain aims for development gains to be channelled and apportioned in line with criteria of social justice and respect for human rights. This was reflected in the Government statement delivered by His Royal Highness the Prime Minister at the

opening of the third legislative term of the National Assembly on 14 December 2010, setting out the Government action programme for 2011-2014, which contained the following: “The Kingdom has been able to improve the standard of living of citizens, raise per capita income and increase the size of the Bahraini workforce by 40 per cent, in addition to increasing real wages for Bahrainis by 25 per cent, expanding education, health and housing and developing service projects and infrastructure. As a result, the Kingdom ranks highly at both Arab and international levels in terms of human and social development indicators ... Bahraini women have become key partners in all aspects of development and their level of participation in the workforce, economic, social and cultural activity and all spheres of life has increased. We shall take it upon ourselves to continue the efforts to empower women economically, politically and socially by means of a number of mechanisms and measures, including incorporating the needs of women in development and fostering the role of SCW.”

45. The State budget law for fiscal years 2011-2012 contains a number of key allocations of direct and indirect relevance to human rights, designed to ensure a balanced increase in the standard of living of all citizens. Total allocations in the two years came to BHD 1,524.9 million and included:

- Direct budget support of BHD 2.7 million to the Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development and NIHR for human rights-related activities;
- Provision of financial support for programmes directly related to women, social care and those with special needs, including BHD 3.8 million to the Royal Charity Organisation (RCO) and BHD 8.2 million for special needs programmes;
- Allocation of BHD 500,000 to the Alimony Fund, a fund safeguarding the dignity of divorced women in cases where court rulings on alimony have not been implemented or where payment has been delayed. The amount of the alimony determined by the court is paid directly to the former wife by the executing court (in sharia cases) then reclaimed from the former husband, against whom judgement was made.

46. ECB formulated the Bahrain Economic Vision 2030, focusing on the homeland and the citizen. To implement the vision, a National Economic Strategy was formulated for the six years from 2009 to 2014, along three strategic themes: the Government strategy, the social strategy and the economic strategy. The National Economic Strategy includes, inter alia, measures relating to women and will be implemented by the competent authorities, under the supervision of ECB. SCW and civil associations will be involved in coordinating implementation of the National Economic Strategy.

47. ECB, in collaboration with various organizations, has made great progress in implementing programmes for citizens' empowerment, including the empowerment of women. These organizations include the Bahrain Development Bank and its industrial incubator programmes. The foundations for the empowerment of Bahraini employees have been put in place by the Labour Fund (Tamkeen), set up in 2006 to implement reforms in the spheres of training and human development, the labour market and economic systems.

B. The Supreme Council for Women

48. Since its inception, SCW has, at all times, striven within its mandate to advance the status of Bahraini women and affirm their position and effective participation within official State and civil society organizations. SCW continues to cooperate with the Arab Women Organization (AWO) and the United Nations, particularly UNDP, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Industrial Development Organization and the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND).

49. In collaboration with all the relevant bodies, SCW has taken part in activities to empower women in many political, economic, social and cultural fields. Examples include:

- Direct and indirect efforts to boost the empowerment of women in decision-making positions, in addition to recommending amendments to legislation and laws pertaining to women, and involvement in projects and programmes to empower women economically;
- Organization of a number of training courses and workshops, in collaboration with local and overseas bodies, to raise awareness of subjects such as CEDAW, domestic violence and the incorporation of women's needs;
- Inauguration of three investment projects for women in the fields of communications, fashion and photography, with support from the Labour Fund (Tamkeen) and in partnership with civil society organizations.

50. The Women's Support Centre at the SCW General Secretariat is an important mechanism for dealing with the situation and problems of women. It seeks to monitor the needs of women in the Kingdom of Bahrain, receiving complaints from Bahraini women and non-Bahraini women married to Bahrainis and having custody of Bahraini children. It operates within the framework of the SCW mandate and in coordination with the competent bodies. The Centre received 1,313 complaints in 2010 and 472 in the first half of 2011. The Centre monitors many issues. The most vital issues with which it is currently engaged are the granting of Bahraini nationality to the children of a Bahraini mother married to a non-Bahraini and the entitlement of women with custody of children to housing services and social assistance from the Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development. The Centre collaborates with a number of bodies providing services and treatment to Bahraini women and their children, including the Batelco Care Centre for Family Violence Cases and the social centres attached to the Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development, the Dar al-Aman shelter, family guidance centres and RCO. The Centre has recently set up a marriage counselling service to provide guidance and advice.

51. Within its mandate and in furtherance of its role, SCW organized the first national conference of Bahraini women (8-10 November 2010). The conference was designed to raise awareness of and provide information on the concept of incorporating women's needs into the development process, and how to plan and analyse for the implementation of ministry plans and programmes on this basis, in preparation for the publication of a comprehensive national plan, in collaboration with all State authorities, for the incorporation of women's needs into public plans and budgets. The conference concluded by adopting the model for the incorporation of women's needs into the development process and the recommendation to create

equal opportunity units in all ministries and form a national committee to monitor implementation of the national model on how to incorporate women's needs into the Government action programme.

52. In connection with the above, His Majesty King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa issued Royal Decree No. 14 (2011), creating and regulating a national committee to monitor and implement the national model on how to incorporate women's needs into the Government action programme. Chaired by Her Royal Highness Princess Sabika bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, President of SCW, the committee consists of the Vice-President of SCW, the General Secretary of SCW, the Minister of Human Rights and Social Development, the Chief Executive Officer of ECB, the chairperson of the Consultative Council committee for women and children's affairs and the President of the Bahrain Women's Union (BWU). The committee will be a national monitoring instrument, giving strong support to efforts to convert the concept of incorporation into a tangible reality, observing the needs of women and men equally in the development process.

53. During the fourth term of its existence (2011-2013), SCW continued its high-level efforts to promote several issues of direct relevance to women's needs. The most important of these was the executive plan to put into practice the outputs of the first national conference of Bahraini women on the incorporation of women's needs into sustainable development programmes. This received the blessing of His Majesty the King, who issued royal directives to the Cabinet to take the necessary executive measures to foster the role of SCW in this respect.

54. In a similar vein, the Government action plan for legislative session 2010-2014 includes, for the first time, clearly stated trajectories and responsibilities designed to maintain efforts to empower women economically, politically and socially through a number of mechanisms and measures, including the incorporation of women's needs in development and fostering the role of SCW.

55. Pursuant to the foregoing, SCW has prepared its executive plan for monitoring implementation of the Government action programme targeting women. This plan contains full details of the initiatives designed to achieve the anticipated goals and performance indicators. The plan was submitted to the Cabinet, which directed that gradual implementation be commenced by fostering liaison and collaboration with several of the service ministries which have a direct relevance to women's needs. The most important elements of the plan deal with issues relating to legislation, the incorporation of women's needs in development, employment, nationality, housing, sharia jurisdiction and the Alimony Fund.

56. In the same context, SCW recently carried out a restructuring of its General Secretariat. SCW is currently updating and developing the National Strategy for the Advancement of Bahraini Women in line with the country's results-focused Excellence Programme and the impact on women in particular and society in general of the programmes and projects which have already been implemented.

C. International reports relevant to the situation of women

57. The Kingdom of Bahrain is keen to engage with international reports relevant to the situation of women. These include the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Declaration and the Human Development

Report. These reports provide a glimpse of the achievements and challenges in the area of the strengthening of gender equality and empowerment of women.

58. By way of example, achievements include:

- The country's 2010 report on the Millennium Development Goals indicated that the Kingdom of Bahrain's successful experience in empowering women stems from a set of interrelated elements, the most significant of which are:
 - The presence of a clear political will at the highest levels for the empowerment of women and the closing of the gender gap at all levels. This is apparent in institutional and legislative measures, most notably the way in which SCW was formed, the role with which it is charged and the influence it enjoys with governmental and non-governmental bodies alike.
 - Continuity and gradualism in respect of the measures and interventions taken to achieve goals, such that there are no policy or programme interruptions or reversals, thus producing more positive results than isolated, one-off interventions.
 - The National Strategy for the Advancement of Bahraini Women, action programmes and spin-off projects cover all areas and levels, as is clear from the themes of the plan and the national commitment to following up all the themes of the Beijing Platform for Action without exception, including, inter alia, sensitive issues such as violence against women and political participation.
- Being ranked 39th by the 2010 *Human Development Report*, which is high in comparison with many countries, shows that Bahrain is a country with a very high level of human development;
- A report entitled, *Human Development Achievements in the Kingdom of Bahrain: A Ten Year Review*, compiled by the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (February 2010) notes: "Bahrain's human development index (HDI) and gender development index (GDI) are identical in 2009 (0.895). This means that in terms of human development, there is no gender discrimination in Bahrain."

D. Cooperation with the CEDAW Committee: achievements, challenges and future measures

59. The Kingdom of Bahrain's first and second reports to the CEDAW Committee, as well its third report, draw attention to the country's main achievements in implementing its commitments in the field of gender equality and status of women. Nevertheless, all the relevant bodies, at the forefront of which is SCW, continue their efforts to monitor challenges on the ground and put forward policies and programmes designed to address these challenges. These efforts include, for example:

- Continuing collaboration with decision makers in ministries and governmental organizations in incorporating the National Strategy for the Advancement of Bahraini Women into their programmes, and coordination with the competent ministries to motivate them to incorporate the gender dimension into programmes and budgets;

- Urging the Ministry of Finance, in coordination with the relevant bodies, to incorporate women's needs into the State general budget;
- Building the capacities of non-governmental organizations and civil associations and fostering their societal role in spreading awareness of the concepts and methodologies of gender;
- Urging the Central Informatics Organisation (CIO) to compile national indicators and statistics responding to the needs of women, with a view to employing clear and precise indicators to evaluate the position of women.
- Continuing research into Bahraini women's issues, evaluation of women's situation and proposal of policies and solutions to support the advancement of women.

60. There is no doubt that the continuing dialogue between the Committee and the Kingdom of Bahrain represents a key source of support to be made use of in boosting achievements and confronting challenges.

IV. Monitoring implementation of CEDAW articles

A. Introduction

61. It is appropriate to precede the discussion on monitoring implementation of CEDAW by drawing attention to the dissemination of information on the Convention and by making general reference to reservations, the national machinery for the advancement of women and the human rights conventions to which Bahrain has acceded, and to do so in connection with several of the Committee's concluding observations. Any concluding observations not mentioned here will be addressed when discussing implementation of the relevant CEDAW articles.

B. Dissemination of information on CEDAW and the concluding observations of the Committee

62. The dissemination of information on CEDAW is a fundamental matter, because of the respect it is due, and because it will be used as a basis for pleading in court and adopted as a guide for formulating policies and programmes and monitoring implementation thereof in order to ascertain that goals have been achieved.

63. Reference was made previously to the efforts of the Kingdom of Bahrain to disseminate the Convention by publishing it, in Arabic, in the Official Gazette, which is available to all members of the public, civil society organizations and the official and private media. Moreover, all legislation, conventions, treaties, statutes, royal decrees, regulations and decisions are posted on the Government website, where they are updated regularly and can be perused by anyone.

64. As noted previously, SCW circulated the concluding observations of the Committee on Bahrain's first and second reports to all relevant ministries, civil society organizations and the legislature, for implementation of concluding observations Nos. 10 and 11.

65. Official and civil efforts to disseminate information on CEDAW have been combined with a range of SCW activities in this regard, including workshops, training courses, teacher training, round tables, printed materials, and radio and

television. Specific groups of young male and female lawyers, executives, members of the legislature and staff of civil associations attended and were given a greater understanding of CEDAW.

66. The media has spread awareness of human rights by dealing with human rights cases and giving coverage to events relating to Bahraini women's affairs, including the activities of societies and organizations active in the field of women's rights.

67. Furthermore, many civil organizations in the Kingdom of Bahrain have organized workshops and seminars on the Convention, providing information on the rights of women contained therein and how to foster these.

68. As regards concluding observations Nos. 15 and 44 concerning the continued provision of information on CEDAW and dissemination of the Committee's concluding observations:

- SCW continues to provide information on CEDAW and shed light on the role of women in Bahraini society, their achievements and the obstacles they may face.
- Information on international human rights conventions, including CEDAW, occupies a prominent place in the training of judges and lawyers, in terms of the substance of such conventions and the importance of making use of them in their work. By way of example, the Institute of Judicial Studies, which is attached to the Ministry of Justice and which organizes courses for staff in the judiciary and the legal profession, held 11 courses in 2009 and 2010. These included courses relating to international humanitarian law, respect for human rights, human rights and responsibilities, the human rights of women, milestones in Arab judicial rulings, strategies and approaches for combating domestic violence and confronting human trafficking.

69. Also in connection with the dissemination of information on CEDAW and the work of the Committee, the Committee's concluding observations pursuant to the discussion of Bahrain's first and second reports were disseminated and made known. For example, SCW has undertaken the following actions:

- Circulated the concluding observations to official bodies for information, requesting that these bodies monitor implementation thereof, as far as they relate to their scope of work;
- Organized a number of courses for the national team concerned with monitoring implementation of the Kingdom of Bahrain's commitments under CEDAW. These courses were attended by representatives from all Government bodies, including the Legislation and Legal Opinion Commission and female members of the Consultative Council and Chamber of Deputies, with the objective of studying and monitoring implementation of the concluding observations in coordination with the legislature, the executive branch and civil society. Courses have dealt, inter alia, with affirming the responsibilities of team members for informing their agencies about the Committee's concluding observations and relevant documents, including the Committee's general recommendations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly. Courses have also covered the ongoing monitoring, together with the relevant bodies, of implementation of the concluding observations;

- Liaised with civil society organizations, particularly women's associations and committees, to disseminate information on CEDAW and the concluding observations and discuss issues relating to CEDAW;
- Liaised with various media to provide information on SCW activities, women's issues and the Committee's concluding observations:
 - From 29 to 31 October 2008, local newspapers published a review of the Committee's discussion of Bahrain's first and second reports, then published the Committee's concluding observations;
 - On 11 November 2008, Bahrain TV broadcast a discussion programme with several representatives of civil society on the Committee's discussion of Bahrain's first and second reports.

C. General reference to reservations

70. As regards reservations, the subject of No. 17 of the Committee's concluding observations, in which the Committee urges Bahrain to intensify its efforts to take all the necessary steps to withdraw its reservations to the Convention, it will be noticed that the report, in reviewing the relevant articles of the Convention, deals with the scope and nature of these reservations, together with the future measures currently being studied with regard thereto.

71. It is, perhaps, appropriate to point out here that, in concluding observation No. 16, the Committee stated that, taking into account the clarification provided by the Bahraini delegation regarding the reservations and the commitment made by the State Party during its consideration at the universal periodic review mechanism, it notes the State Party's determination to withdraw its reservation to article 2, article 9, paragraph 2, article 15, paragraph 4 and article 16. The fact is, that during the universal periodic review of human rights, the Bahraini delegation explained that the relevant bodies would examine the possibility of withdrawing "some" reservations to international human rights conventions. The Kingdom's delegation expressed the same approach to the Committee concerning some of the articles of CEDAW, as long as there was no conflict with the sharia. On this basis, the Kingdom's mission in Geneva contacted the Committee secretariat to confirm what the Bahraini delegation had told the Committee. The secretariat advised that, regarding concluding observation No. 16, the Committee would include the remarks submitted by Bahrain in the report which the Committee would be presenting to the General Assembly.

D. The national mechanism for the advancement of women

72. In concluding observation No. 19, the Committee recommended that the Kingdom of Bahrain continue to support SCW and ensure its ability to carry out its mandate effectively. The Committee further recommended that SCW strengthen the bonds of cooperation with all stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations. In this regard we might draw attention to the following, by way of example:

- SCW signed an agreement of cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, under which a joint committee of SCW and the Ministry was formed to coordinate efforts relating to the incorporation of women's needs in the State budget preparation programme.

- SCW and the Ministry of Labour collaborated in implementing a number of joint programmes and projects designed to serve Bahraini women job seekers, including the organization of a female employment and training fair.

(Annex 1 contains the protocols of cooperation between SCW and domestic and foreign bodies.)

73. In addition to the above, SCW continues to cooperate and coordinate with civil society organizations in general and private organizations in particular, regarding:

- The formation of a committee of cooperation between SCW and women's associations and committees;
- A joint committee of SCW and BWU;
- The implementation of several joint programmes and activities, including collaboration in Bahraini women's day activities and in training and awareness-raising courses and workshops.

E. Ratification of additional human rights conventions

74. In concluding observation No. 45, the Committee encourages the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain to ratify the human rights treaties to which the country is not yet a party, namely, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. In addition to the fundamental human rights conventions to which the Kingdom of Bahrain has acceded, including the two international human rights covenants and the Arab Charter on Human Rights, adopted within the framework of the League of Arab States, the following will be noted:

- On 30 June 2011, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was ratified.
- The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance is currently being studied.
- On 24 March 2010, Law No. 15 (2010) was promulgated, approving the amendment of article 20, paragraph 1, of CEDAW.

V. Part I of CEDAW: articles 1-6

A. Article 1. The definition of discrimination

Measures taken

75. Following discussion of Bahrain's first and second reports, the Committee called upon the State Party to take steps to incorporate the definition of discrimination against women as contained in article 1 of the Convention into domestic legislation (concluding observation No. 13). In this regard, the following is observed:

- Following accession, the Convention became national law. Accordingly, the definition of discrimination against women as contained in article 1 of the Convention is held to be, together with reliance on constitutional provisions

and the benefit of other relevant laws, a fundamental authority for the prevention of discrimination, and the courts will be guided in their consideration of relevant cases by the definition of discrimination contained in the Convention.

- The principle of equality stipulated by the Convention has constitutional protection, too, as both NAC and the Kingdom of Bahrain's Constitution stipulate the principle of equality. Thus, article 18 of the Constitution states: "People are equal in respect of human dignity and citizens are equal before the law in public rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination among them on the basis of sex, origin, language, religion or creed."

Challenges and future measures

76. In any case, there is currently a trend towards examining the possibility of stipulating in certain pieces of legislation the definition of discrimination and the penalty for violating the principle of equality and equal opportunity among citizens on grounds of gender, origin, colour, religion, sect, creed or political opinion. This is the case with the draft private sector labour law, which is currently under consideration by the legislature.

B. Article 2. Undertakings to eliminate discrimination

Measures taken

Legislative measures

77. The relevant bodies have sought to amend the discriminatory aspects of certain legislation. This has included furthering the position of women in respect of the laws regulating retirement, as follows:

- The promulgation of Law No. 19 (2008), amending certain provisions of the law regulating retirement pensions and payments for officers and enlisted personnel of the Bahrain Defence Force and Public Security, promulgated by Legislative Decree No. 11 (1976) such that, for example, article 1 of Law No. 19 (2008) contains a replacement for articles 28 and 29 of the said law to benefit women, as mothers or granddaughters, by entitling them to a retirement pension. On the other hand, the law makes no distinction between male and female employees in respect of entitlement to a retirement pension.
- The promulgation of Law No. 2 (2009), amending article 26 of Law No. 13 (1975) on the regulation of retirement pensions and payments for Government employees such that article 1 of Law No. 2 (2009) contains a replacement for article 26 of Law No. 13 (1975), guaranteeing the sons and daughters of a widow the right to have her share transferred to them upon her remarriage after the death of their father or upon her death. On the other hand, it guarantees her right to reclaim her share of a pension that was transferred to the sons and daughters of the deceased or reverted to the Pension Fund because she remarried, if she subsequently becomes widowed or divorced from her last husband.
- The promulgation of Law No. 3 (2009), amending article 25 of the law regulating retirement pensions and payments for officers and enlisted personnel of the Bahrain Defence Force and Public Security, promulgated by

Legislative Decree No. 11 (1976) such that article 1 of Law No. 3 (2009) contains a replacement for article 25 of the said law, guaranteeing the sons and daughters of a widow the right to have her share transferred to them upon her remarriage after the death of their father or upon her death. On the other hand, it guarantees her right to reclaim her share of a pension that was transferred to the sons and daughters of the deceased or reverted to the Pension Fund because she remarried, if she subsequently becomes widowed or divorced from her last husband.

- The promulgation of Law No. 19 (2010), amending certain provisions of the Social Security Act promulgated by Legislative Decree No. 24 (1976). Whereas article 80 of the Social Security Act limited enjoyment of a pension to the sons and daughters of a son, if their father was deceased or died after being entitled to a pension, such that their father's share was transferred to them, the amended article treats the sons and daughters of a deceased son and the sons and daughters of a deceased daughter equally, with the proviso that they were dependent on the insured for subsistence.

Non-legislative measures and arrangements to ensure the realization in practice of the principle of equality

78. In its legislation and strategic plans, the Kingdom of Bahrain is keen to translate that which is affirmed by the Constitution, the law and the country's international obligations in respect of the advancement of the situation of women to one of equality with men. Accordingly, several national documents and programmes have been adopted which contribute, directly or indirectly, to the advancement of the situation of women in Bahrain, These include:

- **The national plan for implementing the National Strategy for the Advancement of Bahraini Women**

SCW is monitoring implementation of the national plan for implementing the National Strategy for the Advancement of Bahraini Women, adopted in 2007 with the goal of boosting women's participation in decision-making, promoting the economic empowerment of women, ensuring family stability and security and providing opportunities for positive and effective participation in public life through civil society organizations in collaboration with public and private sector institutions, as well as ensuring health and education services and environmental protection.

- **Bahrain Economic Vision 2030**

The Bahrain Economic Vision 2030 sets out a long-term conception of the future directions of the Bahraini economy to 2030, defining the ambitions which the country is seeking to realize at economic, governmental and societal levels, without the slightest discrimination between men and women. These ambitions include:

- Treating everyone equally under the law and applying international standards of human rights;
- Giving everyone equal access to education and health care, offering support to those who need it in the form of appropriate job training and subsidized facilities and providing social security;

- Ensuring equal opportunities for Bahrainis in the job market by reviewing the labour laws and foreign labour recruitment regulations;
 - Giving all Bahrainis equal opportunities through high levels of social assistance;
 - Enabling all Bahraini nationals and residents to have access to high quality health care;
 - Providing a safe environment and reducing levels of crime, violence and other hazards in the Kingdom of Bahrain;
 - Providing Bahrainis with access to the highest possible level of education to enable them to acquire the skills required to realize their ambitions.
- **The National Economic Strategy 2009-2014 (linked to implementation of the Bahrain Economic Vision 2030)**

The National Economic Strategy affirms the country's endeavour to improve women's participation in Government, the private sector and civil society, in addition to strengthening the economic and social role of women, particularly in leadership positions. To achieve this, the Government, in partnership with SCW, civil associations and private sector companies, will continue the work begun by Bahrain's female pioneers of incorporating women into the public and private sector workforce. Furthermore, an increasing number of incentives will be provided to expand the growing role of women in all areas of employment by:

- Enacting laws to ensure greater protection for women from discrimination;
- Supporting the campaign to increase awareness of women's rights;
- Ongoing support for equal employment opportunities for women in all sectors;
- Easing the burden on working women with a number of measures, including subsidized crèches and care and rehabilitation facilities for the elderly and disabled.

• **The national youth strategy (2011-2015)**

The Kingdom of Bahrain's national youth strategy represents a framework for integrated action to meet the various needs of Bahrain's young people. Phase 2 of the strategy was formulated in the light of the results, conclusions and recommendations of an evaluation study of phase 1 (2005-2009), in addition to the results of a survey of the youth situation in Bahrain. Development of the various phases of the national youth strategy has been based on a number of principles, of which the most important are justice and equality, participation in fostering gender equality and protection of the rights of the disabled and those with special needs. This is shown clearly by the phase 2 (2011-2015) action plan, which has increased the number of programmes and projects based on the real situation and needs of youth.

(Annexes 2 and 3 contain, respectively, the Bahrain Economic Vision 2030 and National Economic Strategy 2009-2014.)

Reservation to article 2 and ensuring the principle of equality

79. The Kingdom of Bahrain expressed its reservation to article 2, stipulating that implementation is ensured within the parameters of the sharia. The following may be noted with regard to this reservation:

- The reservation has no bearing upon the principle of equality between men and women, which is affirmed by the sharia; Koranic verses and Prophetic traditions are decisive in this regard.
- The reservation only deals with a woman's position in the family in respect of guardianship, the financial rights she enjoys and inheritance. Other issues relating to women are guaranteed by the Constitution and operative legislation and are unaffected by the said reservation.
- Article 2 of the Constitution stipulates that the sharia is a principal source for legislation in the State. Accordingly, when formulating national legislation and assuming international obligations in the field of human rights, the Kingdom of Bahrain must observe the stipulation of this article, especially as the sharia emphasizes respect for human rights within the framework of a universal, comprehensive and integrated concept.

80. The fact is, that with its comprehensive system, the sharia has achieved genuine equality between men and women on the bases of justice; it does not stop at mere formal equality. Take, for example, the issue of inheritance. A superficial interpretation may suggest that Islamic law, which grants a woman one-half of the inheritance of a man, discriminates against women. However, if we treat the system of inheritance in the sharia as an integrated one, it is apparent that Islam has not made it a general rule that a woman's inheritance is to be one-half of a man's. In fact, the rule is only applied in certain cases, for reasons explained in the Kingdom's two previous reports.

Challenges and future measures

81. To clarify and affirm the above, a study is currently being conducted into the possibility of amending the reservation to article 2 to limit it to the narrow scope of a woman's position within the family.

82. Likewise, measures are currently being expedited to formulate a draft amendment to the Nationality Act, which will observe the principle of gender equality and accord with objective rules and conditions.

C. Article 3. The development and progress of women**Measures taken**

83. Reference was made previously to the constitutional and legal framework and plans and programmes to ensure the full development and progress of women and their exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with men. The measures taken by the Kingdom of Bahrain have ensured that women have enjoyed considerable development and progress, with the country having made a number of leaps forward in gender equality. By way of example, the *Global Gender Gap Report 2010* of the World Economic Forum showed that Bahrain outperformed six other countries in terms of gender equality to occupy third position among the Gulf States. In the Middle East and North Africa, it occupied fifth place.

Furthermore, female employment in Bahrain over the last eight years has seen an increase of 75 per cent, compared with only 31 per cent for males in the same period. The proportion of working women in comparison with men has also gradually increased, with women now making up 33 per cent of the total Bahraini workforce, compared with 29 per cent four years ago.

84. On 22 February 2010, under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Sabika bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, President of SCW, a centre for the development of the entrepreneurial capacities of Bahraini women was founded. The centre aims, inter alia, to develop women's skills in managing enterprises and freelance work and to provide training, consultancy and marketing services to support these enterprises.

85. In connection with concluding observation No. 42 of the Committee, on follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which reinforce the provisions of CEDAW, the Kingdom of Bahrain submitted, in 2009, a report on follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action that included a brief account of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in critical areas of importance.

(Annex 4 contains the Kingdom of Bahrain's report on follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action.)

86. As regards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the subject of concluding observation No. 43 of the Committee, it may be noted that, in preparation for the September 2010 meeting of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to evaluating 10 years of work on achieving these goals, the Kingdom of Bahrain submitted a report entitled *Review of the Progress of the Millennium Development Goals in the Kingdom of Bahrain: A National Perspective*. This report draws attention to the tangible progress made in respect of the empowerment of women. Reference was made to the substance of the report in Part III (General overview) of the present report.

87. It is worth mentioning that gender dimensions were observed when formulating indicators for the Millennium Development Goals. For example, article 3, clause 7 of Law No. 58 (2009), on the rights of the elderly, stipulates that protection and care of the elderly shall be based on certain basic principles, including the development of a database on the elderly by gender to track demographic, social and economic changes and to encourage research and studies to be carried out on the care of the elderly.

88. We might refer here to the Kingdom of Bahrain's commitment to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which provides for equality between males and females in respect of the right to enjoy all the economic, social and cultural rights stipulated in the Covenant. We might further refer to the Kingdom of Bahrain's commitment to article 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, guaranteeing civil and political rights without discrimination.

Challenges and future measures

89. Reference was made previously to certain future challenges concerning the advancement of women and the measures to be taken to address these. These include:

- Studying and reviewing the budgets of official organizations in Bahrain to determine the extent of their current responsiveness to the needs of women as a key component of society;
- Holding workshops targeting officials and workers in the planning and programming sections of ministries and Government corporations to enable them to acquire the planning skills that accord with the perspective of incorporating women's needs in the development process.
- Fostering the role of the media in spreading the culture of incorporating women's needs in the development process and raising awareness of the importance of incorporating the needs of women in policy and planning.
- Continuing to raise environmental consciousness in society and among women in particular in order to minimize the environmental hazards they face at home and at work;
- Continuing to produce studies showing the negative impact on women of environmental degradation.

D. Article 4. Temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women

Measures taken

90. It will be observed that, in concluding observation No. 21, the Committee basically recommended that Bahrain take temporary special measures to accelerate de facto equality between men and women, particularly in the field of the participation of women in politics and in the workplace. In this regard, we might draw attention to the following:

- One temporary measure to accelerate de facto equality in the field of public sector employment has been to start work on creating equal opportunity units in certain Government bodies, such as the Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development.
- The draft State budget for fiscal years 2011-2012 contains special items, activities and projects pertaining to women, with allocations only to be used for the specified purpose, namely care for women.
- SCW, in coordination with the Ministry of Finance as the competent body, is seeking to obtain more information on the budget for activities associated with the advancement of women in all Government bodies in order to monitor and develop these activities. In coordination with the Labour Fund, SCW is working to promote training for women to enable them to enter the job market.
- Measures have been taken to facilitate the granting of service facilities in relation to the issue of the nationality of the children of a Bahraini woman married to a non-Bahraini man. The details of these measures will be discussed in the context of implementation of article 9 of CEDAW.
- As regards measures to protect motherhood, the laws regulating public and private sector employment incorporate the rights of women in this respect.

- We might also draw attention to the temporary measures taken within the context of article 7 of the Convention, pertaining to political and public life, taking into consideration concluding observation No. 29 of the Committee.

Challenges and future measures

91. SCW continues to strive for numerous measures to be taken, including:

- Financial and non-financial measures relating to the incorporation of women's needs in development, such as budgets responsive to women's needs;
- Accelerating the creation of equal opportunity units in the various ministries, as already done at the Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development.

E. Article 5. Stereotyped gender-based roles

92. It is worth mentioning that the Committee, after studying the Kingdom of Bahrain's first and second reports, recommended in concluding observation No. 23 that Bahrain effectively implement and monitor its national strategic plan, in particular to bring about change in the widely accepted stereotypical roles of women and men by promoting equal sharing of family responsibilities between women and men. The Committee further recommended that awareness-raising campaigns be addressed to both women and men and that the media be encouraged to project a positive image of women and the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in the private and public spheres.

93. As regards the equal status and responsibilities of women and men in the private and public spheres, it was noted previously that:

- Bahraini society is not one in which the concept of the inferiority or superiority of an individual or specific class because of race or religion is widespread. On the contrary, Bahraini society is one that is open to others and rejects the very idea of discrimination because its principles, ideas and Islamic faith are based on the notion of equality, rejection of discrimination and acceptance of the other. A clear indication of this is Bahraini women's pursuit of formal education and employment since the beginning of last century without male opposition.
- In Bahraini society, the roles of men and women are complementary and responsibility is shared between man and woman within the family. In view of the large numbers of educated females in Bahraini society, a substantial proportion of women enter the labour market and public sector positions, where all jobs are open to both sexes. There are no jobs which are the exclusive monopoly of men.

94. As regards implementation of the national plan for implementing the National Strategy for the Advancement of Bahraini Women, we might draw attention to the following, by way of example:

- SCW formed a working group to evaluate the achievements of the national plan for implementing the National Strategy for the Advancement of Bahraini Women (2007-2011) and to update and develop the plan in a manner consistent with the demands of the next phase. The most important themes are economic empowerment, decision-making and domestic stability and the main programmes and projects relating to these themes are:

- In the area of promoting and boosting women's economic possibilities, SCW inaugurated, on 26 January 2010, the portfolio of Her Royal Highness Princess Sabika bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa to support programmes for the economic empowerment of Bahraini women, promote the centre for the development of the entrepreneurial capacities of Bahraini women and set up several small and medium-sized enterprises, in collaboration with Ebdaa Bank for Microfinance and Tamkeen.
- In the area of empowering Bahraini women to assume leadership and executive decision-making positions, thereby translating the pillars of His Majesty's reform project into reality, the third round (2010) of Her Royal Highness Princess Sabika bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa Award for Empowering Bahraini Women was announced to support and promote the position of women in official and private sector organizations. Her Royal Highness Princess Sabika is the consort of His Majesty the King and President of SCW. A political empowerment programme was implemented to boost the participation of Bahraini women in the 2010 elections.
- In the area of family stability SCW, in collaboration with the relevant bodies, organized family culture and awareness-raising programmes, as well as programmes directed at secondary school students in this area.
- Although women have made great strides in Government sector employment, both quantitatively and qualitatively, their role in the private sector is still below the level of present challenges. Accordingly, there is a carefully studied and conscious approach to define and formulate policies designed to provide equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market and to integrate women effectively into the labour market by offering training programmes and youth incentives (for both men and women) and channelling young people toward available employment opportunities.

95. The media has an important role to play in implementing CEDAW, particularly article 5 thereof, and Bahraini women have made prominent contributions to the development of journalism and the media, in keeping with the climate of political and media openness and democratic development. The Bahraini media has a vital role to play in spreading awareness of the importance of women's role in society and of empowering women as worthy partners in implementing sustainable development plans and programmes. In this regard, we might draw attention to the following:

- SCW plays a key role in proposing general policy regarding the development of women's affairs in the constitutional and civil institutions of the State and in fostering those principles of the Constitution and NAC concerned with ensuring justice, equality and equal opportunities. This has included launching the National Strategy for the Advancement of Bahraini Women and the national plan to implement it, and working to eliminate stereotyped roles of women in all spheres, including the media.
- SCW has organized workshops and awareness-raising courses for male and female Bahraini and Arab media workers on the concept of mainstreaming women's needs and women's issues and the empowerment of women. These included the first women's media forum in the Kingdom of Bahrain (8-9 January 2008), under the auspices of the Information Affairs Authority (IAA) and in

collaboration with Badeel Centre for Training and Development, and a course on strategic media planning for the empowerment of women, in May 2011, in collaboration with UNDP and IAA.

- SCW conducted a scientific study on the image of women in Bahraini drama, in collaboration with the University of Bahrain. This resulted in a lecture on the results of the study being delivered to media officials.
- The protocol of cooperation between IAA and SCW on changing the negative stereotyped image of women in the media and raising awareness of CEDAW was put into effect.
- IAA has produced a media strategy for 2011-2015, consisting of several plans to ensure that the aspirations of the Bahrain Economic Vision 2030 are realized. These include developing the human element in the media and promoting the status and role of women in society.
- The Bahraini media plays a vital role in presenting information on women's issues and defending women's rights, particularly as regards combating violence against women and domestic violence, raising awareness of the need to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and changing the prevailing negative stereotypes of women. It does this in a number of ways, chiefly:
 - Preparing and publishing numerous periodic reports and studies relating to women's and children's issues on the website of the Bahrain News Agency and in the local press, as well as highlighting periodic studies by SCW;
 - Frequent broadcast of programmes on women's, family and children's health, social and educational issues on radio and television in the period 2008-2010. It has also given coverage to the events and activities of SCW, women's associations and BWU. The most prominent of these programmes are:
 - ✓ Radio programmes: "The family" (*al-Usra*, a daily programme), "Our homes" (*Manaziluna*, a weekly programme) and "SCW letter" (a weekly programme);
 - ✓ Television programmes: "My dear" (*Azizati*) and "For you" (*Laki*).
 - Bahrain TV is committed to addressing several of the stereotypical roles of women through its programs and series and to avoiding any negative view of women's role in society, whether in locally produced programmes or imported ones.

Challenges and future measures

96. In spite of the ongoing efforts, including those mentioned above, SCW and other relevant bodies are focusing on the following:

- Continuing efforts to change the stereotyped image of women in the media;
- Improving the programmes broadcast on Bahrain radio and television to attract Bahraini youth, particularly as some Arab and foreign satellite stations attract a large proportion of young people with programmes, films, series and clips

which, regrettably, reinforce in one way or another the stereotypical role of women as advertising objects;

- Fostering the role of the audio-visual media in implementing the Bahraini model for mainstreaming women's needs in the development process, adopted in November 2010, in recognition of the media's role as a partner helping SCW to build a societal culture supportive of the empowerment of women and their incorporation in sustainable development programmes in implementation of the National Strategy for the Advancement of Bahraini Women and executive plan, by producing informative and awareness-raising programmes focusing on:
 - Spreading awareness of the concept and mechanisms of mainstreaming women's needs and the importance of this for successful sustainable development;
 - Spreading awareness of the value of work and the worthiness of Bahraini women as partners in the development process;
 - Continuing to strive to increase the integration of women in the organizational structures of media organizations to ensure their participation in decision-making positions;
 - Continuing to support creative women as partners representing the Kingdom at conferences and in cultural and intellectual circles;
 - Continuing to produce research and studies on the impact of the media in changing patterns of behaviour toward women as the life partners of men.

F. Article 6. Combating all forms of the trafficking and exploitation of women

Measures taken

97. It was previously pointed out that the status quo shows that Bahraini society rejects the trafficking of women and their exploitation in prostitution, because such behaviour violates the sharia as well as social customs and principles. Reference was also made to national legislation and Bahrain's commitments in the field of human rights as further support for this stance.

98. In connection with the subject of human trafficking, the Committee recommended in concluding observation No. 27 that Bahrain take measures stressing prevention and the punishment of offenders, as well as measures to protect and rehabilitate victims. The Committee further recommended that Bahrain collaborate and cooperate internationally and regionally in this matter. In this regard, the following examples of the Kingdom of Bahrain's efforts are noted:

- The promulgation of Legislative Decree No. 1 (2008), on combating human trafficking, which contains 12 articles: one article specifying the punishment for human trafficking, one setting out the rights of victims of the crime of human trafficking, one providing for the creation of a national committee to combat human trafficking and another providing for the formation of a committee to assess the situation of foreign victims of human trafficking.
- In implementation of the articles of the aforementioned law, a national committee to combat human trafficking has been formed, chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with a membership consisting of

representatives from relevant ministries (Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs, Ministry of Interior), the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) and civil bodies. The committee seeks to:

- Formulate programmes to prevent and combat human trafficking and protect victims of trafficking from further suffering;
 - Encourage and support research, information, media campaigns and social and economic initiatives to prevent and combat human trafficking;
 - Monitor implementation by the concerned Government bodies of recommendations and directives relating to human trafficking.
- In implementation of the said law, a committee has been formed to assess the situation of foreign victims of human trafficking. This committee is chaired by the Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development and membership consists of representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior and LMRA. The committee has a mandate to:
 - Remove any obstacles preventing a foreign victim from obtaining employment, if needed, on the basis of a report from the competent body to the chair of the committee;
 - Coordinate with the Ministry of Interior to repatriate victims to their place of origin in the country whose nationality they hold or to their place of residence in any other country, if requested. The committee has produced several information leaflets about its work in the languages of the target groups.
 - The relevant bodies receive complaints via a so-called hotline, providing psychological support, arranging places of shelter for victims and coordinating with embassies and foreign labour offices on the matter of foreign victims to overcome the difficulties they may face and do what can be done to improve their situation.
 - LMRA has published booklets advising foreign workers of their rights in a number of languages, including Hindi, Urdu, Bengali and English. These also contain the number of the hotline which the worker can call in complete confidentiality to ask for advice or help regarding his situation.
 - The public prosecutor issued a decision confining the investigation of crimes of human trafficking to the public prosecutor's office in the capital, in order to tighten cooperation between law enforcement officers and officials of the public prosecutor's office.

99. The Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development has established a shelter for victims of human trafficking, supervised by the Ministry in collaboration with the relevant agencies. Furthermore, premises have been allocated as a shelter for foreign women who have not committed any criminal offence but have nowhere to stay while they await the conclusion of their exit procedures from the country. The aforementioned shelter, called Dar al-Aman, is a Government social care institution attached to the Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development, designed for the protection of women and their children who have been subjected to violence and harm either from their families or the community. It shelters both

Bahraini and non-Bahraini women. Between 2008 and 2010, Dar al-Aman received 287 cases, mostly Bahrainis and domestic servants. There was only one case of a trafficked domestic servant in 2008, 8 cases in 2009 and 10 in 2010. To October 2010, Dar al-Aman received 135 cases, mostly Bahrainis; among those were 41 victims of trafficking in persons, of various nationalities. The Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development is seeking to establish a shelter for male victims of human trafficking in the course of 2011-2012. The shelter will provide residents with full subsistence, psychological, health and legal services.

100. The job of the anti-human trafficking division set up by the Ministry of Interior includes receiving reports on trafficking-related crimes and conducting the awareness-raising operations necessary to combat human trafficking. In 2010, the division recorded 19 cases relating to human trafficking crimes. Investigations resulted in the arrest of 22 suspects of Bahraini, Indian, Thai, Bangladeshi, Iraqi and Russian nationality, all of whom were referred to the public prosecutor, with convictions in five cases. In 2011, the division recorded two cases, on which judgement has not yet been delivered.

101. There are currently three memoranda of understanding with labour exporting countries.

102. There is no migrant labour in the Kingdom of Bahrain; instead, there is temporary contract labour. Bahrain was the first Gulf country to be admitted to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as an observer. IOM opened an office in the United Nations building in Bahrain in January 2008 and a capacity-building and awareness-raising project to counter human trafficking in the Kingdom of Bahrain was launched. The principal activities since the start of this project have been:

- Training courses in April, June, July and November 2008 and workshops in July 2008 and February and November 2009 and a round table attended by representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development, civil society organizations, the United States embassy, the Indian, Philippines, Ethiopian, Pakistani and Thai embassies, as well as embassies of other labour exporting countries. The goal of the round table discussions was to bring all interested parties together, discuss all the issues relating to human trafficking, propose options for mutual cooperation and possible solutions and pave the way for liaison and cooperation. Furthermore, the Be-Free Centre, attached to the Bahrain Women's Society (BWS), held a conference in May 2009 entitled, "Active strategies to protect children from abuse and trafficking through the internet".
- Coordination between the anti-trafficking division of the Ministry of Interior and the Bahrain Radio and Television Corporation (BRTC) regarding the production of programmes to raise awareness of the law on human trafficking and to make all those working in agencies responsible for implementing the law aware of the ways of dealing with victims of trafficking before, during and after the investigation.

103. The Kingdom of Bahrain is active internationally, regionally and bilaterally in combating human trafficking. By way of example, we might draw attention here to the following:

- The participation of Her Royal Highness Princess Sabika bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, consort of His Majesty King and President of SCW, in the Luxor International Forum (Luxor, Arab Republic of Egypt, 10-12 December, 2010). The goal of the Forum was to boost international efforts to combat human trafficking and benefit from successful practice in this field. The invitation to take part was a mark of appreciation of the role of Her Royal Highness and the efforts of the Kingdom of Bahrain in combating human trafficking.
- Under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Sabika bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, the Kingdom of Bahrain successfully hosted a conference on “Human trafficking at the crossroads” in Manama (2-3 March 2009).

The foregoing is an affirmation of the Kingdom’s position and reflection of His Majesty the King’s reform project, which affirms the values of tolerance and respect for human rights. It illustrates Bahrain’s pioneering efforts in combating human trafficking, which is a global phenomenon offensive to mankind, wherever it occurs and whatever form it takes. As such, it is essential to mobilize national efforts, both governmental and non-governmental, as well as international efforts and to involve the media.

Challenges and future measures

104. Bahrain will continue to exert efforts to achieve full implementation of all international measures to combat the phenomenon of human trafficking, wherever it occurs, and will continue to cooperate locally, regionally and internationally with the bodies concerned with this issue.

105. Bahrain is formulating plans to combat human trafficking by collaboration between the relevant ministries and Government agencies and increasing the awareness of citizens and religious leaders via the media. The relevant bodies in Bahrain will continue to work with foreign labour exporting countries to combat this phenomenon.

VI. Part II of CEDAW: articles 7-9

A. Article 7. Equality in political and public life

Measures taken

106. Attention was drawn previously to NAC, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the relevant laws which affirm and ensure equality between women and men in political and public life.

107. In connection with equality between women and men in political and public life, the Committee recommended in concluding observation No. 29 that Bahrain take all appropriate measures, including temporary special measures under article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, and the Committee’s general recommendation No. 25, and establish concrete goals to accelerate the increase of women in the Chamber of Deputies and Municipal Councils. The Committee recommended that the State party encourage awareness-raising campaigns on the subject of women’s participation in decision-making at all levels. In this regard, we might draw attention to the following:

- Within the framework of the programme to empower Bahraini women politically, awareness-raising on the subject of women's participation in decision-making at all levels is continuing. In this connection, we might mention the efforts of the SCW President, Her Royal Highness Princess Sabika bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, to encourage all governmental and non-governmental agencies, professional and political associations and scientific institutions to support women, make them partners in decision-making and accord them their rightful place in political and economic life. These efforts include participation by Her Royal Highness in a dialogue meeting, organized by the SCW General Secretariat and the University of Bahrain on 19 May 2010, on how young people view the political participation of women.
- The SCW General Secretariat arranged a press conference on 5 May 2010, at which a political empowerment programme was launched to promote the participation of Bahraini women in the 2010 elections. The programme involved, inter alia, strengthening the role of the women's electoral bloc and training female candidate support teams. In this connection, the SCW General Secretariat organized a meeting, on 23 May 2010, with youth organizations and associations to support the participation of women in the 2010 elections.
- In the third legislative term (2010-2014), the number of women members of the Consultative Council rose to 11 out of 40, representing 27.5 per cent of the total. A woman was also successful in the elections for the Chamber of Deputies. Furthermore, for the first time a woman was directly elected to a seat on a municipal council, in Muharraq Governorate.
- Women took charge of two service ministries, namely the Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development and Ministry of Health, and of the Ministry of Culture.
- The Bahrain Institute for Political Development (BIPD) holds courses and organizes workshops on the importance of political participation, raising politico-legal awareness among all sections of the population and underscoring the importance of the participation of women in political life. Note that a woman held the chair of the board of trustees of the BIPD in its initial phase.
- The efforts of bodies concerned with the empowerment of women were evident in the media campaigns conducted on the occasion of the 2010 municipal and legislative elections, encouraging women to participate in political life as candidates and voters and extolling the ability of women to assume such responsibilities. This was in addition to the measures taken by SCW to support women in the 2010 parliamentary and municipal elections.
- SCW has organized a number of youth dialogue meetings in support of female candidates and voters in the forthcoming by-elections in September 2011, in the event that a female candidate is nominated for a vacant seat in the Chamber of Deputies. These meetings are designed to foster the political participation of young people of both sexes, provide support to women in particular during the re-nomination and election stage by identifying peaceful ways of expressing political demands and raise awareness of the importance of boosting women's participation in the by-elections.
- As part of the "I am Bahrain" campaign organized by the SCW youth committee, SCW produced a television programme in collaboration with the

IAA entitled, “I can change” to build positive capacities among young people and consolidate the sense of national belonging.

108. Women played a key role vis-à-vis the regrettable events in Bahrain at the start of 2011, which took the form of acts threatening the security of the homeland and its citizens. SCW, presided over by Her Royal Highness Princess Sabika bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, consort of His Majesty the King — may God protect them — invited BWU and all women’s associations and committees of whatever orientation to a meeting to look for ways to protect the homeland and its citizens. Furthermore, the SCW General Secretariat produced a programme called, “National kinship” (*al-Luhma al-wataniya*), in partnership with the cooperation committee and the BWU, as a contribution to national unity.

109. The reality is that women participate widely in the political and public life of the Kingdom of Bahrain. This participation includes:

- The active participation of the lady member of the Chamber of Deputies and lady members of the Consultative Council in submitting draft laws and proposals in the desire to serve citizens, both men and women, and also out of particular concern for the rights of women, children and the family. In 2011, a women and children’s affairs committee was established in the Chamber of Deputies, modelled on the one in existence in the Consultative Council since the first legislative term (2002).
- Women are to be found in ministries and institutions at all leadership levels (for example, in positions of undersecretary and assistant undersecretary). Women are to be found working in other areas, too. For example, there are a number of women working in the judiciary, as judges and officials of the office of the public prosecutor. There are women directors at the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs. There are many women working in a range of leadership, executive, technical and logistic positions at BRTC and in the Bahraini press. Indeed, Bahraini women hold many positions in the press, with 12.6 per cent of the total workforce employed by Bahraini daily and weekly newspapers consisting of women. In addition, women are employed in the private sector, while making a conspicuous contribution to civil activity.
- Women are to be found in the unions and professional associations, including those of the doctors, engineers, journalists and lawyers (which is headed by a woman) and various rights associations.
- Women have flourished in the intellectual, literary and writers’ movement, publishing more than 160 titles between 1999 and 2010, according to statistics published by the National Library at the Issa Cultural Centre.
- All the laws relating to State employees accord with the Constitution, which promotes equality between men and women. These include Legislative Decree No. 48 (2010), promulgating the Civil Service Act on 11 November 2010, which regulates employment conditions in general and the employment conditions of women in particular in accordance with the principles of the Constitution.
- Within the framework of advancing the situation of women through civil society organizations, several legal instruments have been issued setting up or licensing associations concerned with women’s affairs. Examples are the

establishment of the Girl Guides Association of Bahrain (2008) and the licensing of the Sitra association for the advancement of women (2009), the Middle East and North Africa Businesswomen's Network (2010), the Bahrain Breast Cancer Society (2010) and the Aisha Yateem Family Counselling Centre (2007).

Challenges and future measures

110. Despite the contributions made by women to political and public life, it is evident that insufficient numbers of women are inclined to come forward to take up political and public work. In many cases, there is an unwillingness to apply for leadership positions in civil society organizations. Consequently, the SCW continues to be active in many areas, including:

- Capacity-building in this area, including implementing programmes to train specialist leadership cadres in civil work;
- Continuing to adopt mechanisms and measures to ensure that women have the same access as men to structures of power and decision-making;
- Continuing to create a societal culture that accepts the presence of women in senior positions, while focusing on making women aware of their right to participate politically at all levels.

B. Article 8. Representation and participation at international level

Measures taken

111. Women participate on an equal footing with men in representing Bahrain at international level. There follow some examples of participation in international representation and in the work of international organizations, according to information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

- The number of female ambassadors increased from two in 2007 to three in 2010;
- The number of female envoys in various overseas missions of the Kingdom of Bahrain in 2010 was nine;
- The number of female diplomats in the Ministry rose from 58 in 2007 to 62 in 2010 and the number of female administrative staff rose from 8 in 2007 to 18 in 2010, out of a total staff of 337.

112. Female staff of the Ministry have taken part in international, regional and bilateral meetings including, for example, participating in the 5 meeting of the national committees of the States of the GCC; attending the twenty-first session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme; accompanying the delegation from the Chamber of Deputies and Consultative Council which visited the headquarters of NATO and meeting the Secretary General of the Alliance; participating in meetings of the one hundred twenty-seventh ordinary session of the Council of the League of Arab States at ministerial level; attending a meeting of the Human Rights Commission in Geneva to adopt Bahrain's report on the universal periodic review of human rights; attending the meeting of the second working group (arbitration) of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law; and attending the 5th meeting of the working group

charged with monitoring the preparation of detailed studies on uses of nuclear energy in the GCC States.

113. Female executives working in ministries of State have participated in the proceedings of conferences relating to the work of these ministries, including conferences of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations bodies concerned with social development and human rights.

114. There is a distinguished female Bahraini role model working at the United Nations in the post of Director, United Nations Information Centre, Cairo, Egypt. Furthermore, a Bahraini lady occupies the post of Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

115. A Bahraini woman occupies a senior position on the GCC Advisory Board.

Challenges and future measures

116. Women still make up a relatively small proportion of Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff but the Ministry is working to increase this by encouraging women to apply to work in the Ministry and by providing training opportunities to enable women currently employed to be promoted and assume greater responsibility. Work is also continuing in all areas to enable women to participate at international level.

C. Article 9. Nationality

Measures taken

117. It was noted previously that:

- Bahraini law guarantees the right of Bahraini women to enjoy equality with men in respect of the acquisition of Bahraini nationality. As such, Bahraini women enjoy, on a basis of equality with men, the right to retain Bahraini nationality or acquire another nationality. The nationality of a Bahraini woman is not affected by marriage to a foreign man. However, she may reclaim Bahraini nationality following the end of the marriage, if she declares her wish to do so, that is to say simply by declaring her wish to reclaim Bahraini nationality and returning to reside in the Kingdom.
- As regards travel documents, a Bahraini woman is able to obtain a passport and leave the country without the consent of spouse or guardian. A passport is an identity document that a woman can obtain independently.

118. The Kingdom has expressed its reservation to article 9, paragraph 2 of the Convention, concerning nationality, which states: "States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children". The reservation takes into consideration the Bahraini Nationality Act (1963), amended, of which article 4, amended by Legislative Decree No. 12 (1989), stipulates that a person shall be considered to be Bahraini if born in Bahrain or abroad and the father is Bahraini at the time of birth. Furthermore, a person shall be considered to be Bahraini by birth if born in Bahrain to a father born in Bahrain and whose normal place of residence is Bahrain, with the proviso that the father does not hold another nationality. It was noted previously that:

- The Bahraini legislature recognises right of blood on the father's side, a position upheld by experts in private international law on the grounds that the said criterion constitutes a presumption of the affirmation of a feeling of national belonging and of the spiritual bond linking a person to the nation to which his forefathers belonged. The reason for the said reservation is also attributable to the fact that a father can grant his children Bahraini nationality, even if he is married to a foreign woman, while a Bahraini woman married to a foreign man cannot grant Bahraini nationality to her children. Here, the legislature is seeking to avoid the acquisition of dual nationality by the children, as they will acquire the nationality of their foreign father, given that most of the legislation around the world upholds right of blood on the father's side.
- However, the Bahraini legislature adopts right of blood on the mother's side in the case stipulated by article 4, paragraph (b) of the Nationality Act, which states that a person shall be considered to be Bahraini if born in Bahrain or abroad and the mother is Bahraini at the time of birth, with the proviso that the child is of unknown father or its relationship to its father has not been legally established. It will be noticed here that the legislature upholds right of blood on the mother's side and grants Bahraini nationality to the child of a Bahraini mother in these cases, whether the child was born in Bahrain or abroad. This provision established by the Bahraini legislature is characterized by a large measure of progressiveness and by conformity to human rights principles requiring that such children have the right to acquire nationality.

119. Nevertheless, there is a wish on the part of the relevant bodies for conformity between Bahraini legislation on nationality and the Convention and a proposal to grant nationality on the basis of right of blood on the mother's side is currently under discussion. Until a decision on this proposal is reached, temporary measures are being taken to grant women equal rights with men regarding the naturalization of their children, taking into consideration concluding observation No. 30 of the Committee, on issues relating to the draft Nationality Act. The following paragraphs review the temporary measures taken in this regard, as proposed by SCW, until such time as the Nationality Act is amended:

- Applications by children of Bahraini women married to foreign men have been studied and approved by the committee formed pursuant to the directives of His Majesty the King, and submitted to the Ministry of Interior. The said committee, which consists of SCW, the Royal Court and the Ministry of Interior, has the task of studying these applications and considering the possibility of granting Bahraini nationality to applicants.
- Between 2007 and May 2011, Bahraini nationality was granted to 78 sons and daughters of Bahraini mothers and non-Bahraini fathers.
- The promulgation of Law No. 35 (2009), which contains provisions relating to the treatment of the children of a Bahraini woman married to a non-Bahraini man in the same way as Bahraini citizens in respect of exemption from governmental, health and education service fees and fees for permanent residence in the Kingdom. This law is one of the legislative measures taken to improve the living conditions of this category of persons.

- In implementation of Law No. 35 (2009), the minor children of a Bahraini woman may be granted an entry (visit) visa or permanent residence visa (to join family) under the sponsorship of their Bahraini mother at no cost. Her sons of full legal age may be granted an entry visa under her sponsorship at no cost, if enrolled in full-time education. The same applies to unmarried daughters of full legal age.
- The procedures for granting non-resident children unconditional residence for a longer period, when they wish to visit the Kingdom, have been eased.

Challenges and future measures

120. In connection with the foregoing and concluding observation No. 31 of the Committee on taking all necessary steps to expedite the adoption of the draft Nationality Act in order to comply with article 9 of the Convention and to withdraw the reservation to article 9, paragraph 2, and in connection, too, with the observations of the Committee following its discussion of the information submitted by the Kingdom on the Committee's concluding observation No. 31, we affirm at this point that the issue of the amendment of the Nationality Act to grant Bahraini nationality to the children of a Bahraini woman married to a foreign man has engaged the concern of SCW since its foundation, in its endeavour to advance the situation of Bahraini women. The concern of SCW and civil society organizations, particularly women's associations and BWU, with this issue is founded on the principle of equality enshrined in NAC and Bahraini Constitution.

121. A proposal is currently being discussed with the relevant bodies to amend the Nationality Act to permit the children of a Bahraini woman married to a foreign man to be granted Bahraini nationality in accordance with objective rules and criteria which will protect the rights of this category of person without conflicting with the principle of the sovereignty of the State.

122. SCW is working with all the relevant authorities to speed up consideration of a draft new Nationality Act designed to achieve gender equality in the issue of nationality. In connection with the foregoing, the promulgation of a new Nationality Act would permit withdrawal of the reservation to article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention.

VII. Part III of CEDAW: articles 10-14

A. Article 10. Equal rights with men in the field of education

Measures taken

123. Bahraini women make up the greater proportion of those attending at all levels of education, including university. The efforts of the Kingdom of Bahrain in the field of education were crowned when the country achieved first place among the Arab States in the Education for All Development Index two years running, thereby placing it in the ranks of the high-index countries. Bahrain is the only Arab country to achieve this level two years running, according to the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* of 2007 and 2008 published by UNESCO.

124. Furthermore, Bahrain occupied first place in respect of enrolment in basic, secondary and higher education between 2005 and 2008, according to the *Global*

Gender Gap Report. These achievements have been made possible by virtue of a supportive legislative environment and the programmes and projects implemented in the field of education, including the King Hamad Schools of the Future project, the International Scholarship Programme and the other programmes and measures which have helped Bahrain to reach an advanced level in education.

125. The initiatives of the national project to develop teaching and training include the introduction of an apprenticeship scheme for boys and girls from the start of school year 2007/2008. The scheme, which will be gradually extended, seeks to develop technical and vocational education, combining academic education and practical application at school with on-the-job training at companies and organizations. It will provide an opportunity for young women to follow a course of technical and vocational education and improve the output of education to ensure openings for young women, providing them with a wide range of options of different types of technical and vocational education, thus enhancing employment opportunities for them in the future.

126. As regards endeavouring to change the stereotypical portrayal of women in education which is, basically, the substance of concluding observation No. 33 of the Committee, we draw attention to the following:

- The basic and secondary education curriculums, particularly for social subjects, education for citizenship, Arabic language and Islamic and family education, portray diverse images of women in the light of the positive developments in Bahraini society and the country's institutions and in the light of human rights principles and the international conventions signed by Bahrain. These include:
 - Images of women participating in public life, including politics (elections), voluntary work (women's associations), the professions (health, education, banking, commerce, investment etc.) and various senior positions (chairwoman, director, judge, minister, etc.);
 - Positive images of women in history, particularly Islamic history;
 - The image of both parents cooperating in domestic matters, in keeping with the social development of Bahraini society (extended family or nuclear family);
 - The image of a daughter within the family having rights and duties (sport, family matters etc.), designed to show the advantages of consultation within the family;
 - The image of the diligent female student alongside and having the same standing as her male counterpart.
- The curriculum seeks to strengthen the role of Bahraini women in society and eradicate the stereotypical portrayal of women. Reference is made to women's achievements, their entry into various fields and their assumption of leadership positions. Particularly in the curriculums for social subjects and education for citizenship, a number of images are presented of women employed in various sites across the country, as well as in civil society organizations and voluntary work, and participating in parliamentary and municipal elections.

- The Ministry of Education has proposed a compulsory community service course at secondary level for both boys and girls, giving them an opportunity to engage in voluntary work in such places as hospitals, juvenile institutes and civil society organizations, and creating suitable opportunities for them to perform roles that match their inclinations and aspirations.
- The family education curriculum now extends to both girls and boys, where previously the subject had been confined to girls. The subject concerns the physical, psychological, intellectual and reproductive aspects of proper upbringing in accordance with Islamic teaching, customs and traditions and consistent with contemporary changes and developments. It is further concerned with enabling learners to acquire the key life skills to fit them for their future work and family lives.
- The Ministry of Education endeavours to make use of contemporary concepts and ideas from CEDAW and related conferences and seminars, as well as the National Strategy published by SCW, of which the Ministry was one of the certifying parties, when including the concepts of the empowerment of women in the school curriculums generally and incorporating special studies within the citizenship curriculum. Various resources make it easy for schools to teach the subject of women as part of a range of school activities.

Challenges and future measures

127. The Ministry of Education will continue to:

- Expand technical and vocation education and training for girls to match the needs of the labour market;
- Update school plans and curriculums in a manner consistent with a gender-based approach, removing all stereotypical images of women;
- Make women aware of the advanced vocational specializations required by the labour market;
- Train and improve the skills of teachers of both genders in modern technology;
- Strengthen the trend toward incorporating, as far as possible, those with special needs of both genders into formal education.

B. Article 11. Equality between men and women in the field of employment

Measures taken

128. The right to work and equality between women and men:

- The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain consolidates the principle of equality between citizens in the country such that there shall be no discrimination among them in respect of public rights and duties on grounds of gender. By way of example, the Civil Service Act, No. 35 (2006) and the Diplomatic Corps Act (2009) make no distinction between men and women when defining the conditions for appointment.
- It is worth pointing out that the draft private sector labour law presently before the legislature has added several benefits for women working in the private sector, such as increasing certain existing leave and adding other types of leave

not in the present law, such as child care leave and bereavement leave. This proves that the Bahraini legislature desires the rights for working women stipulated in the international labour standards and other relevant international conventions.

129. The right to social security:

- As regards benefits provided to women under the unemployment insurance system and the Labour Fund, it is important to draw attention to the Unemployment Insurance Act, promulgated by Legislative Decree No. 78 (2006), which makes no distinction between men and women in respect of benefit. It is observed that the majority of those registered as unemployed in the system are women. This is clearly shown by the number of unemployed female beneficiaries compared with the number of unemployed males receiving benefit. The Labour Fund, set up under Law No. 57 (2006), makes no distinction between men and women in respect of the provision of training courses to help people join the workforce. Additionally, courses to raise the competitive capacity of small and medium-sized private sector enterprises are available to all, both male and female. This clearly demonstrates that the system upholds the principle of equality between men and women.
- The Ministry of Labour seeks to update legislation on a regular basis, particularly legislation that grants women more rights. It is also studying a number of Arab and international recommendations and conventions in this area. Furthermore, when planning and preparing strategic projects, the Ministry takes into account the situation of Bahraini women, whether working or looking for work, and is anxious for them to obtain the same benefits as men.

130. The right to choose profession, job and training:

- The labour market in the Kingdom of Bahrain is open to everyone, male and female. As such, women have the freedom to choose the job which suits them and matches their qualifications. There is no obstacle, legal or otherwise, limiting the areas in which women may work. Indeed, women are to be found in all places of work. The Ministry of Labour employs all its resources to develop and foster the skills of women to help them enter the labour market. It offers training programmes to help women obtain available jobs and to help them advance up the promotion ladder.
- In 2000, the Kingdom of Bahrain ratified the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), which affirms the repudiation of any distinction or preference “made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation”.

131. The right to employment and equal wages:

- There is no distinction between males and females as regards wages. Thus females are granted the same wages, payments and bonuses as males. The Bahraini legislature imposes no restrictions on women in respect of employment. On the contrary, the new Labour Law grants women benefits, such as 60 days maternity leave, in addition to daily maternity hours.

- Bahraini law does not discriminate between the employment of males and females, because all areas of the Bahraini labour market are open to both sexes, with the same salaries, benefits, bonuses and payments and the same hours of work. In 2010, the number of female employees (Bahraini and foreign) in the public sector was 22,823, out of a total staff of 56,023, while the number of female employees in the private sector was 48,560, out of a total of 459,323. There is no need for additional legal provisions in this area.
- The Ministry of Labour works tirelessly to ensure that women play a significant part in its projects and a number of employment projects and training programmes have been implemented, directed specifically at incorporating women into the Bahraini labour market and opening the way for their promotion. The Ministry of Labour has received no complaints of discrimination between men and women over wages or hours of work.

132. In concluding observation No. 35, the Committee called upon the State party to take all appropriate measures to expedite the adoption of the draft labour code, and to ensure that it covers all migrant domestic workers. The Committee further urged the State party to strengthen its efforts to ensure that migrant domestic workers have adequate legal protection, are aware of their rights and have access to legal aid. In this regard, we might point out the following:

- The Labour Law currently in force has put in place regulations and measures relating to two key aspects of the work of domestic servants. The first of these concerns disputes with an employer. The law permits them to apply to the Ministry of Labour for settlement of disputes with their employers by amicable means. If settlement is not possible, the matter is referred to the district court for a ruling, with exemption from fees at all stages of litigation. The second concerns the employer's obligation to pay the costs of a female servant's return to the place determined in the contract of employment or the place where the contract was concluded or the place from whence she came or to her country of nationality. The Ministry of Labour has received no complaints from female servants requiring measures to be taken.
- Ministerial Decree No. 21 (1994) was issued, on the terms and conditions to be observed when an employer enters into agreement with a contractor for the supply of non-Bahraini workers, including domestic servants, to ensure they have the necessary guarantees.
- The legislature is currently examining a draft private sector labour law, which will contain several provisions to safeguard the rights of all domestic servants and foreign workers. The Kingdom of Bahrain is currently studying, in collaboration with the GCC States through the Executive Office of the Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs, a legal document (convention/recommendation) prepared by ILO and designed to regulate and ensure the rights of domestic servants and the like.
- The Department of Labour Relations of the Ministry of Labour is concerned with monitoring the labour situation in the private sector, to ensure full compliance with the provisions and articles of the Labour Law in that sector. The Arbitration and Labour Complaints Section is responsible for litigation and legal process under the Labour Law and provides legal advice to employers and employees. The section also educates, raises awareness and

provides information on the Labour Law and the ensuing rights and obligations of both parties to the relationship. The Labour Inspection Section is responsible for oversight and surprise inspection of establishments to ascertain adherence to the Labour Law.

- The Bahraini legislature did not distinguish between national and foreign workers on grounds of sex, race or colour, when drafting the current private sector labour law or the new draft law currently before the legislature. When the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain promulgated Decree No. 79 (2009), on the free movement of a foreign worker from one employer to another, it became the first State in the region to grant foreign workers free movement from one employer to another without having to obtain the approval of their current employer. This decree has earned the praise of several Arab and international organizations and States, particularly the labour exporting countries. It grants foreign workers additional protection from exploitation and mistreatment and from being paid salaries below the market rate for similar jobs. It also grants a worker the freedom to choose his employer, alongside protection from unsuitable or undesirable working conditions, giving him the possibility of transferring to another employer smoothly and lawfully.
- The General Directorate of Nationality, Passports and Residence will only deport a foreign worker on the basis of judicial rulings or orders. Moreover, the Department will ascertain from the worker that he has no outstanding financial or other entitlements owing to him from his employer. If it is evident that he does have such entitlements, he will be given sufficient time to collect these and sign in acknowledgement of receipt thereof.

(Annex 5 contains a schedule of certain unemployment assistance and compensation entitlements; annex 6 contains a schedule showing all labour complaints concerning women in the period January-December 2010; annex 7 contains statistics on the female element in trades unions.)

Challenges and future measures

133. In addition to current legislative measures designed to speed up the drafting of the private sector labour law, several measures to overcome the practical difficulties facing female employment in certain areas are presently being studied. These measures include endeavouring to:

- Change prevailing ideas on women's employment in certain private sector activities, given that there are still some types of employment that women are disinclined to take up, either because the work is hard, as in the building and construction sector, or because of the influence of the customs and traditions of Bahraini society. A good indication of this is that there is still a lack of interest among women in working in a sector such as the hotel sector due to the influence of custom and tradition.
- Change the tendency among employers of preferring to employ men in certain jobs rather than women, either because women are unwilling to work in those sectors, preferring employment elsewhere, such as the Government sector, or because of cost, with employers preferring to employ men in certain jobs because it costs less to employ them than it does to employ women.

C. Article 12. Equality in health care

Measures taken

134. Bahraini women enjoy excellent free health services, which respond to their different needs and roles. Examples include:

- On the legislative and strategic level, a number of strategies have been formulated, including:
 - In 2010, the new Ministry of Health strategy for 2011-2014 was formulated as part of the Government programme. It contains six strategic goals, served by a number of initiatives itemized under the Ministry budget and linked to specific performance indicators. The first goal provides for the continued safeguarding of the health of society by promoting health and providing prevention services. A number of women-specific initiatives include expansion of the regular screening service for women, which comprises two performance indicators: the proportion of women screened for cervical cancer and the proportion of women screened for breast cancer. Health promotion initiatives include encouraging a healthy lifestyle, and health protection policies include the prohibition of smoking in enclosed public places. Additionally, there are initiatives to protect against infectious and non-infectious diseases, as well as the continued implementation of the expanded immunization programme.
 - The national strategy for the elderly in the Kingdom of Bahrain was formulated and approved by the Cabinet in 2010. All ministries, relevant bodies and civil society organizations endeavour to implement the strategy by providing better services, care and programmes for the elderly. The Ministry of Health and Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development are the key Government ministries concerned with services for the elderly. The Ministry of Health has formulated a health strategy for the elderly that includes a plan for its implementation. The Ministry of Health provides many services for the elderly, including mobile units which provide nursing and care services for the elderly at home, particularly when they are unable to get to a health centre. This service was transferred from the Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development to the Ministry of Health in 2008. A total of 963 elderly men and women benefited from the service in 2010, with 15,891 visits made that year. The number of elderly women benefiting from the service was 546, with 8,796 visits made.
 - In 2009, a strategy was formulated to promote psychological health, with initiatives to incorporate psychological health within primary care. There was involvement in the national youth strategy (2010-2011), as this relates to the health of young people and adolescents.
 - The National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities was launched in February 2010, in collaboration with the UNDP office in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Higher Committee for Disabled Affairs and the Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development. The strategy addresses a number of themes, including legislation, health and rehabilitation, education, economic and social empowerment, the media and awareness-raising.

- The National Childhood Strategy was launched in February 2010, in collaboration with the UNDP office, the National Committee for Childhood and the Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development, with the goal of achieving the balanced development of children, responding to the needs of children and protecting them. The strategy addresses a number of themes, of which the most important are the right to education and capacity-building, the right to survival and development, the right to protection and the right to participation without discrimination.
- It is worth pointing out that the draft children act, which is currently before the legislature, has added a stipulation requiring the regular medical screening of pregnant women. This demonstrates that the Bahraini legislature is keen to provide health services for pregnant women.
- Concerning health facilities and services in the Kingdom of Bahrain:
 - The Government action programme and Bahrain Economic Vision 2030 emphasize a strategy of health promotion by strengthening preventive health and facilitating access to health services. The number of health centres has been increased this year to 23 and three additional centres are in the process of being built as part of the Government plan to create one health centre for every 20,000 people. A number of health services for women and the family have been introduced in these centres.
 - New obstetrics and gynaecology clinics were established in 2011.
 - The construction of a new maternity hospital in the Central Governorate was included in the 2010-2011 budget.
 - Work is currently underway on expanding and modernizing the maternity hospital.
 - Construction of the 312-bed King Hamad Hospital has been completed (the second Government general hospital) and 70 maternity beds allocated; the hospital is expected to become operational at the end of 2011.
 - The 2008-2009 guides to all mother and child services have been updated and health service providers have been trained in their use; these include guides on protecting women from violence, regular screening, breastfeeding, protecting children from violence and neglect, the health of the mother post-delivery, family planning, adolescent health and paediatric examination.

135. In concluding observation No. 37, the Committee calls upon the State party to take appropriate measures to ensure that women can consent to Caesarean-section procedures and medical treatment without the consent and/or authorization of any other person, including that of their husbands. The Committee further recommends that the State party undertake systematic awareness-raising among women on the importance of regular medical examination to facilitate early detection of breast and cervical cancer. In this regard, it may be observed that the Ministry of Health has carried out the following.

- Measures were explored with those responsible for secondary care to introduce a policy of obtaining the woman's consent to a Caesarean-section and medical treatment without obtaining the husband's consent. The policy has been

adopted and circulated to staff in the relevant departments. The policy includes the following:

- The physician is required to inform both spouses that a Caesarean-section is to be carried out and to obtain the consent of the patient thereto; the consent of the husband is optional in this case.
- If the physician believes that the life of the mother or the foetus or both are at risk and the risk can only be averted by surgical intervention and the condition of emergency is met, and if the husband or wife refuses a Caesarean-section, the consulting physician shall give the right to perform surgical intervention after obtaining the agreement of another consultant but without obtaining the consent of the patient, in order to save the life of the mother or the foetus or both, in accordance with the professional code of conduct, without negligence or error.
- The Ministry is striving to increase the proportion of women undergoing screening for the early detection of breast and cervical cancer. A computer program has been designed to notify the health worker when any woman in the 40+ age group presents, in order to send her for screening. Following a successful trial at one health centre, the programme is currently in the process of being introduced at all health centres. This has helped to increase the proportion of women above the age of 40 screened during the campaign to 34.9 per cent by mid-2010, compared with 10 per cent in 2006.

136. In addition to the above:

- Measures were explored with those responsible for secondary care to introduce a policy of obtaining the woman's consent to a Caesarean-section and medical treatment without obtaining the husband's consent. The policy has been adopted and circulated to staff in the relevant departments.
- The proportion of women above the age of 40 screened during the campaign increased to 34.9 per cent by mid-2010, compared with 10 per cent in 2006.
- A computer programme has been designed to notify the health worker when any woman in the 40+ age group presents to direct her for screening. Following a successful trial at one health centre, the programme is currently in the process of being introduced at all health centres.

137. Bahrain has made outstanding progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals for health, as follows:

- Goal 4: reduce child mortality:
 - Mortality rates of children below the age of five years fell by more than two thirds to 7.2 per 1,000 live births in 2009.
 - Infant mortality rates fell by more than two thirds to 8.6 per 1,000 live births in 2009.
- Goal 5: improve maternal health:
 - Maternal mortality figures have remained stable at between 2-3 cases per annum over the last 10 years.
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases:

- Cases of HIV/AIDS infection fell from 106 in 2008 to 84 in 2009.
- New cases of pulmonary tuberculosis per 100,000 population fell from 22.9 in 2006 to 18.2 in 2008 and new cases of non-pulmonary tuberculosis fell from 14.4 in 2006 to 9.3 in 2008.
- Bahrain has been free of malaria since 1981.

138. In concluding observation No. 25, the Committee recommends that the State party implement the recommendations identified in the study on violence against women and monitor their impact. Furthermore, the Committee calls upon the State party to enact legislation on violence against women, including domestic violence. The Committee urges the State party to revise relevant provisions of the Penal Code in order to ensure that all forms of domestic violence, including marital rape, are criminalized. In this regard, the following should be noted:

- A guide has been published for health workers on the early detection of violence against women.
- A general practitioner specialising in family relations has been trained to deal with family problems and domestic violence.
- A general practitioner has been trained to specialise in the treatment of sexual problems.
- A specialist primary care clinic has been opened to treat sexual problems.
- A referral clinic has been opened to deal with cases of domestic violence.
- The National Centre for Child Protection, a Government-funded central body, has been opened to provide health, psychological, legal and family services for children who have been exposed to violence, physical or mental abuse or family neglect. Furthermore, the Centre provides evaluation, investigation, treatment and follow-up services for child victims of physical abuse and neglect.
- Work is currently under way on the adoption of a special form for reporting cases of violence presenting at health centres.
- The legislature is currently looking into a draft domestic violence law, to be formulated in the light of a proposed law put forward by the Chamber of Deputies. The Chamber of Deputies has approved the draft law, which is currently being considered by the Consultative Council.

Current and future challenges and measures

139. Despite the availability of the above services, there are still a number of significant challenges affecting women's health in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The list of these includes the incidence of non-infectious diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and cancer and the increased incidence of iron-deficiency anaemia. The Ministry of Health has adopted a number of measures to address these challenges through clinics, medication and education. Furthermore, the Ministry is continuing to improve the level of health services for women in terms of both quantity and quality, foster health awareness programmes in line with its health development plans, work for the adoption of patterns of behaviour which will promote women's health and raise awareness of the importance of women having

regular check-ups. The Ministry is expanding programmes to combat hereditary diseases, targeting both sexes but particularly women.

D. Article 13. Social and economic benefits

Measures taken

140. The right to family benefits:

- Reference was made previously to family benefits in the Kingdom of Bahrain that are provided through several bodies and governed by various pieces of legislation. There are social allowances on top of salaries, health insurance provided by some private sector companies and banks and cash assistance for needy families provided by certain civil society organizations, such as Islamic and charitable associations and the RCO.
- Alongside development of the social security network and continuing evaluation of the utility of financial assistance, the quantum leap which has occurred in respect of the increased social security budget and the creation of the Social Security Fund is helping to extend the umbrella of benefit coverage to a large swathe of poor families. There were 13,323 such families as at December 2010, consisting of several groups, including the elderly, widows, families with no male provider and destitute families. The services from which they benefit include monthly cash assistance, reduced electricity and water charges, and distribution of royal largesse on feast days and special occasions. In addition, there is compensation for fire damaged homes, a returnee affairs allowance and disability allowance, as well as a budget allocation to cover the full operating costs of rehabilitation centres for the disabled managed by civil society organizations.
- The provision of services contains an element of endeavour to develop the standards and systems of the social security system. In this regard, an evaluation study has been carried out on the role of social assistance in economic and social empowerment. Another study is currently being implemented, in collaboration with the World Bank, on the utility and economic and social impact of direct financial support to families and alternative approaches to achieving a positive impact on families by channelling support in multiple directions. The most important programmes implemented in the last phase have been:
 - Financial support for the social security budget and creation of the Social Security Fund; the following schedule shows the number of individuals and families benefiting from social security, by year:

<i>Number of social security beneficiaries</i>				
<i>Year/Type</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
Families	9 266	10 690	12 117	13 323
Individuals	18 528	22 468	27 530	31 846

- Increased expenditure on the returnee affairs allowance; the following schedule shows the number of beneficiaries, by year:

<i>Number of beneficiaries from returnee affairs allowance</i>			
2007	2008	2009	2010
307	317	315	309

- Reduced electricity and water charges for needy families; the following schedule shows the number of beneficiaries, by year:

<i>Number of beneficiaries from reduced electricity charges</i>			
2007	2008	2009	2010
9 936 families	1 695 additional cases	All families entitled to social assistance: 12 117	10 000 families

- Financial compensation for victims of house fires: the following schedule shows the number of beneficiary families, by year:

<i>Number of beneficiaries from fire compensation</i>			
2007	2008	2009	2010
55 families	66 families	72 families	45 families

- In December 2007, the Disabled Services Centre was opened, providing services for persons with special needs. In line with the country's policy, the centre provides support and employment for the disabled of both sexes. The centre provides a variety of services for the disabled to meet their daily subsistence needs, finding jobs which match their abilities and capacities and providing them with appropriate training, in coordination with institutes, companies and organizations. The centre offers family advice to the disabled and their families, as well as receiving complaints and seeking to find suitable solutions by meeting the demands of the disabled.
- In addition to the above:
 - Law No. 33 (2009) was promulgated, amending certain provisions of Law No. 34 (2005), on the establishment of the Alimony Fund and, inter alia, facilitating implementation of the rules pertaining to alimony, expanding the Fund's resources by adding the return on investment of its funds as a new resource, and stipulating that the Government shall be obliged to subsidize the Fund financially to ensure that it continues to perform its duties.
 - Decree No. 83 (2006) of the Minister of Works and Housing was issued, amending certain provisions of Decree No. 3 (1976), concerning the Housing Law. This defines the basic family as the family unit for the purpose of eligibility to obtain housing under the provisions of the decree.

A basic family having the right to apply to the Ministry to obtain one housing unit shall consist of a single breadwinner, either male or female, with one or more minor children.

- Law No. 40 (2010) was promulgated, amending certain provisions of Law No. 74 (2006), on the care, rehabilitation and employment of the disabled, stipulating that the disabled person, with no discrimination between men and women, should be granted a disabled allowance of no less than BHD 100 per month, with the proviso that this shall not affect any other rights or assistance provided to the disabled under any other law. Thus on the one hand, the law raises the disabled allowance ceiling, while on the other hand, it stipulates that payment of this allowance shall not affect any other rights or assistance provided to the disabled under any other law. It is designed to protect the rights of women who may be entitled to assistance pursuant to another law, such as widows, divorcees and abandoned women under the Social Security Act.

141. The right to obtain bank loans, mortgages and other types of financial credit:

- As pointed out previously, Bahraini women are able to obtain a loan from a commercial bank in the country in the same way as men and under the same terms. Women in general can benefit from loans from the commercial banks. It is worth drawing attention to the following:
 - The Family Bank, an initiative of the Ministry of Human Rights and Social Development with support from RCO and several banks, was established in 2007 to provide innovative micro-finance services, provide opportunities for self-employment, strengthen the participation of women in societal development and close the gender gap in respect of access to finance and borrowing.
 - Ebdaa Bank was established in 2009 to support micro-projects, families with limited income, housewives and young people. From its establishment to the end of 2010, the bank has been able to finance 1,928 micro-projects for a total of BHD 2,239,948, with women having a 65 per cent share of the finance.

142. The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life:

- It was previously noted that there is no legislation to prohibit women from enjoying the right to engage in sports and Bahraini women take part with commitment and complete freedom in all recreational activities, sports and aspects of cultural life. Note that Bahrain has a women's football team. Bahraini women take part in athletics at regional events and one Bahraini woman is a member of the Olympic Committee of the Table Tennis Association.

Challenges and future measures

143. In order to address certain social and economic difficulties, the relevant bodies are continuing to:

- Encourage women to run small and medium-sized enterprises by providing them with the appropriate backing;

- Take advantage of international and regional finance programmes directed at projects run by women;
- Help women to obtain access to productive resources, loans and public services;
- Plan the rehabilitation, training and integration into the job market of national labour of both sexes;
- Expand the opening of employment centres in all governorates of the Kingdom to study vacancies and apportion these among the people of the district (of both sexes) on the basis of priority, taking gender equality into consideration;
- Provide more detailed statistics on poverty, adopting a gender-based approach;
- Organize awareness-raising programmes to motivate women to integrate into the labour market;
- Provide training and qualification for women in modern technology to integrate them into the labour market and improve their social level.

E. Article 14. Rural women

Measures taken

144. It was noted previously that, because of its geographical make-up, the Kingdom of Bahrain has no “town” and “country” distinction. The country does not have isolated rural districts in the traditional sense because, given the Kingdom’s small area, as towns extend, they blend into the villages. Accordingly, the inhabitants of all districts can take advantage of public health, housing and social service projects. Consequently, there is no difference in the education, health, economic and social services provided to the various regions of the Kingdom, and the regional governorates at all times enjoy the same quality of services as the capital.

Challenges and future measures

145. The relevant bodies support the continued implementation of policies and programmes to ensure increased education, health, economic and social services for all regions the Kingdom of Bahrain.

VIII. Part IV of CEDAW: articles 15-16

A. Article 15. Equality before the law in civil matters

Measures taken

146. In the first and second reports, it was noted that Bahraini law guarantees equality between men and women before the law and in respect of legal competence, including a women’s right to conclude contracts and manage her wealth and property. Women enjoy the same treatment as men before the courts and have the right to bring actions and petitions in their own name. They have the same right as men to benefit from all legal services, including legal aid, which is given to a woman if she cannot afford the costs of bringing a case and the lawyers’ fees.

147. All official bodies, at the forefront of which are SCW and women's civil groups, are noticeably active in raising awareness among women of their rights before the judiciary, particularly in respect of family cases. Activities include the convening of forums and workshops, the publication of a women's guide to litigation procedures before the sharia courts and the holding of a training course, organized by SCW in collaboration with the University of Bahrain, to train trainers in the use of this guide.

148. As regards the Kingdom's reservation to article 15, paragraph 4, of the Convention, which stipulates that States Parties shall "accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile", it will be observed that the Constitution ensures complete and unfettered freedom of movement for both women and men. A husband cannot retain his wife's travel documents to prevent her from moving freely. Accordingly, Bahrain's reservation is, in practice, limited only to the question of a married woman's residence. The reservation concerning a married woman's residence is a logical consequence of the marriage contract, the intent of which is that the wife should actually reside in the marital home, wherein all the conditions imposed by law (civil and sharia) are met in such a way as to ensure her freedom, dignity and independence.

B. Article 16. Equality in matters relating to marriage and family relations

Measures taken

149. In the Kingdom of Bahrain's first and second reports, reference was made to the fundamentals of marriage and family relations, such as the age of marriage, the marriage contract, the right of guardianship, the independent financial status of the wife, the custody of children, the termination of the marriage relation, family planning and inheritance.

150. In connection with matters of marriage and family relations, Law No. 19 (2009) was adopted, promulgating the family law (first part), pertaining to the Sunni community. This law defines the rights and obligations of the litigant, man or woman, ascertains the best interests of the children and facilitates the task of the judge. The law, contains, inter alia, the following provisions:

- The need for the woman's consent to the marriage;
- The stipulation, in article 18, that the approval of the sharia court is needed in the case of the marriage of a girl under the age of 16 Gregorian years, after establishing the suitability of the marriage. Furthermore, article 10 of Decree No. 45 (2007), on the list of officials legally authorized to perform marriage and the provisions for notarizing personal status documents, does not permit a marriage to be concluded or certified unless the bride has reached the age of 15 and the groom has reached the age of 18, at the time of concluding the contract, unless there is an urgent need to warrant the marriage of someone below this age, in which case it is a condition that the approval of the competent court be obtained.
- The right of the wife to stipulate in the marriage contract that her husband shall not take another wife;

- To rule on custody in the best interests of the children, the law permits the judge to call experts in psychological and social matters.
- A divorced foreign woman is granted the right to reside in Bahrain while she has the custody of her children.

The report submitted by the Kingdom in November 2010 made reference to certain rulings issued pursuant to this Law concerning a wife's right to file for divorce in the event of the husband's abandonment, holding this to be an injury that gives her the right to file for divorce. (Annex 8 contains the text of Law No. 19 (2009), on family provisions.)

151. In connection with the family law, the Committee's concluding observations Nos. 38 and 39 and its observations following discussion of the written information supplied by the Kingdom on No. 39 of the Committee's concluding observations, which urged the State party "to take ... all necessary measures, including through awareness-raising campaigns among all sectors of the society, particularly traditional leaders, religious clerics, the media and civil society, on the importance of adopting a unified family law which provides women with equal rights ... [and] to raise the minimum age of marriage of girls from 15 to 18", we might draw attention to the following:

- Given the difference of juristic and judicial opinions on personal status issues, there have been a number of attempts on the part of the executive, governmental organizations and civil society organizations, particularly women's associations and BWU, to have a unified family law for both sects (Sunni and shiite) promulgated, with a single piece of legislation that brings together all family provisions or, at least, two laws, one for the Sunni community and another for the shiite community. However, only the provisions relating to the Sunni community met with societal approval. Following awareness-raising campaigns and wide-ranging societal dialogue, the said family law for the Sunni community was promulgated, after receiving the consent of the legislature.
- Within the context of raising awareness of the importance of Law No. 19 (2009) on the family, SCW, in coordination with research centres in the country, is currently producing a study on the impact of the law's application. It is hoped that the results of the study will reflect the extent to which promulgation of the first part of the law has been a success. SCW has organized and continues to organize awareness-raising campaigns providing information on the substance and significance of the law to maximize the benefit from its promulgation.

152. The economic impact of divorce, the subject of concluding observation No. 41 of the Committee, which calls upon the State party to conduct a study on the economic consequences of divorce on both spouses and to adopt legislative measures to remedy possible adverse effects of existing rules of property distribution, has been taken into consideration by SCW, which is currently looking into the possibility of conducting the said study. It is worth mentioning that a family guidance and reconciliation section has been established in the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs, after the Ministry discovered it needed such a spousal reconciliation service to prevent divorce and the resulting social, family and psychological damage.

Challenges and future measures

153. Appropriate societal efforts are continuing with the relevant bodies on the feasibility of promulgating a family law for the shiite community.

IX. Conclusion

154. The Kingdom of Bahrain's third report is a reflection of the country's desire to fulfil its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. That desire is underpinned by the law, political will and the national social and economic mechanisms and programmes relevant to implementation of the Convention. There is no doubt that the ongoing constructive dialogue with the CEDAW Committee constitutes an important frame of reference for building on achievements and continuing to confront challenges.

Annexes¹

- Annex 1. Protocols of cooperation between SCW and domestic and foreign bodies
 - Annex 2. Bahrain Economic Vision 2030
 - Annex 3. National Economic Strategy 2009-2014
 - Annex 4. Kingdom of Bahrain's report on follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action
 - Annex 5. Schedule of certain unemployment assistance and compensation entitlements
 - Annex 6. Schedule showing all labour complaints concerning women in the period January-December 2010
 - Annex 7. Statistics on the female element in trade unions
 - Annex 8. Text of Law No. 19 (2009), on the family (first part)
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¹ The annexes are available at the CEDAW Committee secretariat.