



**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**

**Initial periodic report of States parties**

**United Arab Emirates\***

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



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## **Introduction**

Starting from the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the United Arab Emirates pursuant to Federal Decree No. 38 of 2004, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs began work on the preparation of the country's report to be submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, based on the provisions and requirements of the Convention. A commission was set up to draft the report, with members from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs, the General Women's Union and the Family Development Foundation.

The period from 2004 to 2008 witnessed momentous positive changes in favour of women in terms of national legislation, as they became members of the Federal National Council and the Council of Ministers. All this made it incumbent on the commission to follow up those developments and successive changes and provide documentary information in order to put out the report in its final form.

In submitting its first report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the United Arab Emirates hopes that the report will present a favourable picture of the advancement of women in the Emirates in recent years, as the country strives to continue to develop national legislation and to strengthen rights to favour the integration of women into society and their positive participation in its building and development.

At the outset, this report presents a picture of the national context in order to shed light on the State systems in place in the United Arab Emirates relating to the political system and constitutional institutions. Next, it explains the indicators of empowerment of women in the country, and finally, it takes up the articles of the Convention and the measures taken for their implementation in the Emirates.

## **Chapter One**

### **The national context**

#### **I. Basic information**

The United Arab Emirates was founded on 2 December 1971 as a federation including seven emirates, namely Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ras al Khaimah, Ajman, Umm al Qaiwain and Fujairah, with Abu Dhabi as their capital.

#### **Geographical situation**

The country is situated in the Asian continent, in the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, between latitudes 22° and 26.5° north and longitudes 51° and 56.5° east of Greenwich. It is bounded on the north by the Arabian Gulf, on the west by State of Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the south by the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and on the east by the Gulf of Oman.

#### **Area**

The country's area is 83,600 square kilometres, including a number of islands whose area equals approximately 5,900 square kilometres. The portion of the coastline situated on the southern coast of the Arabian Gulf extends for 644 kilometres from the base of the Qatar Peninsula in the west to Ras al Musandam in the east, while the eastern coast, on the Gulf of Oman, is 90 kilometres long.

#### **Topography**

The land of the Emirates consists for the most part of desert, particularly in the western regions, punctuated by a number of well-known oases such as Al-`Ayn and Liwa, in addition to the fertile grasslands located in the Al-Dhafrah area, where there is abundant groundwater. Located to the south of these regions are the sand dunes that border on the Rub` al-Khali.

The mountain known as Jabal Khafit constitutes the southern border of the Buraimi valley, where the city of Al-`Ayn is situated. Its elevation is approximately 1220 metres. In addition, the Hajar chain divides the Musandam peninsula, running 80 kilometres in a north-south direction and having a breadth that reaches 32 kilometres. It cuts across the Sultanate of Oman to the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula. At the foot of the northern reaches of this chain, which attains an elevation of 2438 metres at its highest point, lies the city of Ras al-Khaimah. The western slopes are characterized by the presence of large valleys and gorges, some of which are farmed.

Most of the country's shores are sandy, with the exception of the northern region in Ras al-Khaimah, which constitutes the extremity of the Hajar mountain range. Its territorial waters are generally shallow, the average depth being 35 metres and the greatest depth being 90 metres, except in the area where the Strait of Hormuz is located, where the depth reaches 145 metres. The country's territorial waters count numerous coral reefs rich in pearl oysters and fishery resources.

#### **Climate**

The United Arab Emirates lies in the dry tropical region that extends across Asia and North Africa. Yet at the same time it is subject to oceanic influences,

being washed by both the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, which communicates with the Red Sea via the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb.

The extremely high average summer temperatures are coupled with high humidity. However, marked differences in climate are observable between the coastal regions, the inland desert areas and the highlands, which together constitute the country's topography. The country is subject to two types of winds, seasonal and non-seasonal, which become more intense in spring and late summer, and suffers from a shortage of rain, the amount of which varies and which falls from November to April.

### Population

According to the most recent census, done in 2006, the country's population is 4,229,000, of whom 3.5 million live in towns and urban areas, while 700,000 are scattered among the remote areas of the country. The percentage of citizens out of the total population is approximately 21 per cent. The census results also show that the work force, consisting of the economically active population aged 15 years and over, including both women and men, is 2.5 million.

Table 1  
**Geographical distribution of the population of the United Arab Emirates in 2006**

<i>Emirate</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Abu Dhabi	1 430 000	33.81
Dubai	1 372 000	32.44
Sharjah	821 000	19.42
Ajman	212 000	5.01
Umm al Qaiwain	50 000	1.18
Ras al Khaimah	214 000	5.06
Fujairah	130 000	3.08
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 229 000</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: *UAE in Numbers 2007*, Ministry of Economy.

## II. Political system

The United Arab Emirates is a federal State and as such has a federal political system. Its Constitution defines its features, purposes and constituent elements and, in the articles relating to matters entrusted to the Federation, indicates that the Federation shall exercise its sovereignty in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution over all territory and territorial waters lying within the international borders of the member Emirates. The member Emirates exercise sovereignty over their territory and territorial waters in respect of all matters not reserved to the Federation under the Constitution. The people of the Federation are a single people and are part of the Arab nation. Islam is the official religion of the Federation, in which the Islamic sharia is the principal source of legislation, and the official language is Arabic. The federal authorities provided for by the Constitution consist of the following constitutional institutions:

## A. Federal Supreme Council

The Federal Supreme Council, the highest authority of the State, is made up of the rulers of all the Emirates constituting the Federation or such persons as may act in their stead in their Emirates in case they are absent or unable to attend. Each Emirate has one vote in the deliberations of the Council.

The Council formulates general State policy on all matters entrusted to the Federation pursuant to the Constitution and considers everything related to the realization of the goals of the Federation and the common interests of the member Emirates. In addition, it ratifies federal laws, decrees and international agreements and treaties; approves the appointment of the Prime Minister and accepts his resignation or dismissal from office on the proposal of the President of the Federation; and approves the appointment of the president and judges of the Federal Supreme Court and accepts their resignation or removal in the cases provided for in the Constitution. In addition, the Council exercises supreme control over the affairs of the Federation in general, inasmuch as article 47 of the Constitution provides as follows:

The Federal Supreme Council shall have responsibility for the following:

1. Formulation of general policy in all matters entrusted to the Federation by this Constitution and consideration of all matters relating to the realization of the goals of the Federation and the common interests of the member Emirates;
2. Ratification of the various federal laws before their promulgation, including the laws relating to the annual general budget and the final account;
3. Ratification of decrees relating to matters subject to such ratification under the provisions of this Constitution;
4. Ratification or approval of the Supreme Council prior to the promulgation of such decrees by the President of the Federation;
5. Ratification of treaties and international agreements, such ratification to be effected by decree;
6. Approval of the appointment of the Prime Minister of the Federation and acceptance of his resignation or his removal from office upon the proposal of the President of the Federation;
7. Approval of the appointment of the president and judges of the Federal Supreme Court and acceptance of their resignation or removal in the cases provided for in this Constitution, all of which shall be effected by decrees;
8. Supreme control over the affairs of the Federation in general;
9. Any other matters provided for in this Constitution or in the federal laws.

Article 49 of the Constitution also provides:

Decisions of the Supreme Council on substantive matters shall be taken by a majority of five of its members, provided that such majority includes the votes

of the Emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The minority shall be bound by the view of the said majority.

Decisions of the Council on procedural matters, however, shall be taken by a majority vote. Such matters shall be defined in the rules of procedure of the Council.

## **B. President and Vice-President of the Federation**

The Federal Supreme Council elects from among its members a President and Vice-President of the Federation. The Vice-President exercises all the powers of the President during the latter's absence for any reason. The term of office of the President and Vice President is five years and both are eligible for re-election to the same office. Indeed, article 51 of the Constitution provides as follows:

The Federal Supreme Council shall elect from among its members a President and Vice-President of the Federation. The Vice-President shall exercise all the powers of the President during the latter's absence for any reason.

Article 54 of the Constitution provides:

The President of the Federation shall exercise the following powers:

1. To preside over the Supreme Council and conduct its deliberations;
2. To convoke and close meetings of the Supreme Council in accordance with the rules of procedure adopted by the Council, being required to convene a meeting of the Council whenever one of its members so requests;
3. To convoke a joint meeting of the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers of the Federation whenever necessary;
4. To sign and promulgate federal laws, decrees and decisions ratified by the Supreme Council;
5. To appoint the Prime Minister of the Federation, accept his resignation and relieve him of his post with the consent of the Supreme Council and to appoint the Deputy Prime Minister of the Federation and the ministers, accept their resignations and relieve him of their posts on the proposal of the Prime Minister of the Federation;
6. To appoint the diplomatic representatives of the Federation to foreign States and other senior federal officials, both civil and military, with the exception of the President and judges of the Federal Supreme Court, and accept their resignations and dismiss them with the consent of the Council of Ministers of the Federation. Such appointments, acceptances of resignations and dismissals shall be effected by decree and in accordance with federal law;
7. To sign credentials of diplomatic representatives of the Federation to foreign States and organizations; accept the credentials of diplomatic and consular representatives of foreign States to the Federation and receive their letters of credence; and sign documents of appointment and exequaturs;

8. To oversee the implementation of federal laws, decrees and decisions by the Council of Ministers of the Federation and the competent Ministers;
9. To represent the Federation internally, vis-a-vis other States and in all international relations;
10. To exercise the right of pardon and commutation of sentences and approve death sentences in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and federal laws;
11. To confer decorations and medals of honour, both civil and military, in accordance with the laws relating to such decorations and medals;
12. Any other power vested in him by the Supreme Council or vested in him under this Constitution or federal laws.

### **C. Council of Ministers of the Federation**

Article 55 of the Constitution provides:

The Council of Ministers of the Federation shall consist of the Prime Minister, his Deputy and a number of Ministers.

Article 56 provides as follows:

Ministers shall be chosen from among citizens of the Federation known for their competence and experience.

Article 60 provides:

The Council of Ministers, in its capacity as the executive body of the Federation, shall be responsible, under the supreme control of the President of the Federation and the Supreme Council, for dealing with all domestic and foreign affairs which, under this Constitution and federal law, are within the competence of the Federation.

The Council of Ministers shall, in particular, exercise the following powers:

1. To monitor the implementation of the public policy of the federal Government both at home and abroad;
2. To propose federal legislative bills and submit them to the Federal National Council before they are submitted to the President of the Federation for presentation to the Supreme Council for ratification;
3. To prepare the annual general budget of the Federation and the final account;
4. To prepare drafts of various decrees and decisions;
5. To issue the regulations necessary for the implementation of federal laws, without amending or annulling them or granting exemption from their enforcement; to issue law-enforcement regulations and regulations relating to the organisation of public administrations and departments within the limits of the provisions of this Constitution and federal laws. The competent federal Minister or any other administrative authority may



be charged by a special provision of the law or the Council of Ministers with the promulgation of some of such regulations;

6. To oversee the implementation of federal laws, decrees, decisions and regulations by all authorities concerned in the Federation or the Emirates;
7. To oversee the execution of judgements rendered by federal law courts and the implementation of international treaties and agreements concluded by the Federation;
8. To appoint and dismiss federal employees in accordance with the provisions of the law, provided that their appointment and dismissal do not require the issuing of decrees;
9. To monitor the course of work in federal public administrations and departments as well as federal employee conduct and discipline in general;
10. Any other powers vested in it by law or by the Supreme Council within the scope of this Constitution.

#### **D. The Federal National Council**

The Federal National Council is made up of 40 seats, distributed among the member Emirates as follows: Abu Dhabi 8, Dubai 8, Sharjah 6, Ras al Khaimah 6, Ajman 4, Umm al Qaiwain 4, Fujairah 4. The Constitution provides, in article 69:

Each Emirate shall be free to determine the method of selection of the citizens representing it in the Federal National Council.

In article 70, it sets out the conditions of membership:

As conditions for membership of the Federal National Council, a member must:

1. Be a citizen of one of the Emirates of the Federation and permanently resident in the Emirate he represents in the Council;
2. Be not less than 25 years of age, according to the Gregorian calendar, at the time of his selection;
3. Be in possession of his civil rights, have demonstrated good conduct, enjoy a good reputation and not have previously been convicted of a dishonourable offence, unless he has been rehabilitated in accordance with the law;
4. Have adequate knowledge of reading and writing.

Article 71 of the Constitution stipulates:

Membership of the Federal National Council shall be incompatible with the holding of any other public office in the Federation, including ministerial posts.

Regarding the duration of membership, article 72 of the Constitution provides as follows:

The term of membership in the Federal National Council shall be two years. Upon the expiration of that term, the Council shall decide the renewal thereof for the period remaining until the end of the transitional period referred to in Article 144 of this Constitution. Members whose term of membership has expired may be re-elected.

Article 89 of the Constitution refers to the competency of the Council for draft laws, providing as follows:

Provided that there is no conflict with the provisions of article 110, federal legislative bills, including financial bills, shall be submitted to the Federal National Council before their submission to the President of the Federation for presentation to the Supreme Council for ratification. The Federal National Council shall discuss such bills, which it may approve, amend or reject.

With regard to international conventions, article 91 of the Constitution stipulates the following:

The Government shall undertake to notify the Federal Council of international conventions and treaties it executes with other States and various international organizations, accompanying such notice with an appropriate explanation.

In the context of firmly establishing the democratic process in the State, Federal Supreme Council Decision No. 4 of 2006 brought a constitutional change in the definition of the manner in which representatives of the Emirates are elected to the Federal National Council, based on political participation among all the individuals of the community and the enablement of the citizens of the Emirates to choose the members of the Council in a manner which, in the initial stage, combines election and appointment. Article 1 of the Federal Supreme Council decision provides:

Half the members shall be elected by an electoral college made up, for each Emirate, of at least 100 times the number of its representatives;

and article 2 provides:

The other half of the representatives of each Emirate shall be chosen by the ruler.

## **E. The federal judiciary**

Article 94 of the Constitution stipulates:

Justice is the basis of rule. In performing their duties, judges shall be independent and shall not be subject to any authority but the law and their own conscience.

The judicial system in the United Arab Emirates shall consist of a Federal Supreme Court in the federal capital and courts of first instance scattered throughout the country's various cities. The Federal Supreme Court shall comprise a president and a total of not more than five judges, who shall be appointed by decree issued by the President of the Federation after ratification by the Supreme Council. The local jurisdictions in each Emirate shall deal with all judicial matters not reserved to the Federal judiciary.

Article 99 of the Constitution defines the competence of the Court as follows:

The Federal Supreme Court shall be competent to decide the following matters:

1. Disputes between Emirates members of the Federation, or between one or more Emirates and the Federal Government, whenever such disputes are submitted to the Court on the request of any of the interested parties.
2. Examination of the constitutionality of federal laws, if they are challenged by one or more of the Emirates on the grounds that they violate the Constitution of the Federation. Examination of the constitutionality of laws passed by an Emirate, if they are challenged by a federal authority on the grounds that they are in violation of the Constitution of the Federation or of federal laws.
3. Examination of the constitutionality of laws, legislation and regulations in general, if requested to do so by any court in the country during a case pending before that court. Such court shall be bound by the ruling rendered by the Federal Supreme Court in that connection.
4. Interpretation of the provisions of the Constitution, when so requested by any Federal authority or by the Government of any Emirate. Such interpretation shall be considered binding on all.
5. Calling to account of ministers and senior officials of the Federation appointed by decree regarding their actions in carrying out their official duties, at the request of the Supreme Council and in accordance with the relevant law.
6. Crimes directly affecting the interests of the Federation, such as crimes relating to its internal or external security, forgery of the official seals or records of any of federal authority or counterfeiting of currency.
7. Conflict of jurisdiction between the federal judiciary and the local judicial authorities in the Emirates.
8. Conflict of jurisdiction between a judicial authority in one Emirate and a judicial authority in another Emirate. The rules relating thereto shall be regulated by a Federal Law.
9. Any other matters which are provided for in this Constitution or which may be referred to it pursuant to a federal law.

### **III. Social and economic development**

The United Arab Emirates has managed, thanks to the development policy it has followed, to achieve high growth rates in all economic and social sectors. Indeed, the gross domestic product (GDP) rose from 321 billion dirhams in 2003 to 599.23 billion dirhams in 2006 and the share of non-petroleum sectors reached 375,809 billion, which amounts to a total of 62.7 per cent of GDP, while the petroleum and gas sector accounted for 223.4 billion dirhams, or 37.3 per cent of GDP. At the same time, per capita income rose from 91.5 thousand dirhams in 2003 to 147.1 thousand in 2006.

Since its establishment, the United Arab Emirates has seen rapid economic and social growth rarely achieved in developing or even advanced societies, using its ever-increasing petroleum earnings to satisfy the fundamental needs of society.

The Emirates is one of the States that have had a favourable impact on the international community through its generous donations to Arab States and other developing countries throughout the world. The following are some of the more outstanding achievements realized within the country itself:

1. The realization of most of its infrastructure projects;
2. The establishment of educational and health institutions and the dissemination of educational, health, social and cultural services;
3. The bringing in of investment and production materials and equipment to set up various types of industry;
4. The drafting of laws and regulations and the establishment of the State's modern administrative system;
5. The drafting of flexible laws to facilitate the bringing in of workers from abroad and the provision of the requisite labour force to meet the needs of the various development projects;
6. The effort to use modern technology suited to the country's actual needs;
7. The encouragement of working women and the strengthening of their participation in the labour force and in development efforts.
8. The opening up of channels of cooperation with partners outside the country in the economic, commercial, political and cultural fields for the mutual benefit of the United Arab Emirates and fellow Arab and non-Arab friendly States and peoples.

The United Arab Emirates has adopted a system characterized by a liberal economy based on free trade and ease of flow of funds and services, aimed at developing the national economy and diversifying sources of income. The country's concern is to achieve economic and social development that is balanced for the Federation as a whole as well as for the member Emirates. In establishing State policies and plans for the future it seeks to strike a balance between social growth and economic development. Thanks to its development policies, the United Arab Emirates has come to occupy an advanced place among the countries of the world, inasmuch as the findings of the Human Development Report 2005, published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), were positive and the Emirates ranked forty-first world-wide among the total of 177 countries included in the report and second among the Arab countries.

The report also stated that the country had made appreciable progress on gender-related development indices that was linked to equality between men and women, a result of quantitative and qualitative changes in the fields of education and health.

The report indicated that the Emirates were distinguished by a rise in standards of living in general, a drop in poverty and deprivation to the lowest levels and an elevation of indicators of reading and writing among the elderly. The progress made in the field of health services was clearly reflected in all health indicators, with a

decline in infant mortality, the under-five mortality rate and the percentage of infants who are underweight, as well as a reduction of neonatal mortality, an increase in the percentage of children who reach the age of one year and are completely immunized against tuberculosis and measles, and an increase in the number of doctors per 1000 people. The report also pointed to an increase in the rate of expenditure on health services in the Emirates in relation to GDP.

In the field of education and modern technology, the Human Development Report 2005 stated that the United Arab Emirates had spent increasing amounts and made enormous efforts on education that affected the overall rate of primary-school enrolment, including an increase in the rate of girls at the various levels of education as compared with boys.

In addition, great strides, and in fact a quantum leap, had taken place in the area of both fixed and mobile telephones and the use of the Internet as a result of the increased rate of development and the expansion of the range of services.

As a confirmation of those excellent findings of the Human Development Report, the World Development Indicators report for the year 2007, published by the World Bank, also showed that the United Arab Emirates ranked high in terms of world development indicators, achieving excellent performance on the global level with respect to education, health, environment and attraction of foreign investment. Furthermore, the World Economic Forum's sixth annual Global Information Technology Report (2006-2007), which includes a Networked Readiness Index measuring the development of the information technology and communication sector, states that the United Arab Emirates has come to occupy the foremost place in the Arab as well as the Islamic world, ranking twenty-ninth world-wide.

Owing to the high standard of living and economic and social prosperity enjoyed by the Emirates, the Mercer 2007 Quality of Living survey on cities around the world, produced by Mercer Human Resource Consulting, placed both Abu Dhabi and Dubai at the top of the list of cities in the Middle East and the Arab world, sharing rank 58 out of 215 world cities rated according to health aspects, medical services and quality of life.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission that recently visited the United Arab Emirates praised the country's outstanding economic performance, stemming from the State's policy of relying on the market mechanism, the strengthening economic policy, judicious administration in the investment of oil proceeds and the granting of an important role in development to the private sector. It also pointed to the United Arab Emirates' success in converting its economy into an integrated economy aimed at strengthening the country's role as a regional centre for the export of services to the region, with resulting benefits for social development and individual well-being.

The mission also welcomed the achievements of the federal Government in the area of financial reforms, including the draft programme and performance budget, the application of the international Government Financial Statistics system and the single treasury account.

The State also took pains to restructure activities and turn over services to the private sector. This enabled the Government to take advantage of standards of efficiency and direct more of its expenditure to the health and education sectors and provide support for low-income housing. The Government also acted to give the

private sector a greater share in infrastructure works and utilities such as electricity and water and to reduce the services provided by\* Government agencies, turn them over to the private sector and cut down on labour.

The most recent Ministry of Economy statistics point to an increase in the per capita share of GDP as a result of the economic policy adopted by the State, as shown by the following table:

Table 2  
**Social and economic development indicators**

<i>Indicator</i>		<i>2006</i>
Per capita share of GDP (in thousands)	UAE dirhams	141.7
	US dollars	38.6
Labour force (in thousands)	Males	2 288
	Females	359
	Total	2 647
Labour force as percentage of total population	Males	79.0
	Females	26.9
	Total	62.6
Crude Activity (Participation) Rate	Males	2.58
	Females	6.96
	Total	3.17
Overall dependency ratio		25.5
Old-age dependency ratio		1.1
Child dependency ratio		24.4
Population density (per km <sup>2</sup> )		54
Rural population as percentage of total population		17.5
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)		217
Crude birth rate (per 1000 population)		14.9
Total fertility rate		1.96
Crude death rate (per 1000 population)		1.55
Life expectancy at birth	Males	76.5
	Females	78.5
	Total	77.4
Infant mortality rate (per 1000 births)		7.3
Illiteracy rate*	Males	10.0
	Females	7.6
	Total	9.3

Source: UAE in Numbers 2007, Ministry of Economy.

\* 2005 data.

\* Reading الجهات as للجهات - See (separately) Translator's notes.—Translator.

The United Arab Emirates has sought to use petroleum wealth for the development of society, based on the fundamental principles on which the Federation was founded and on which the general aims of development were predicated, namely that in the United Arab Emirates the human being is the object of development and of the various social services. Thanks to that policy, the United Arab Emirates has been able to bring its people out of the cycle of poverty, ignorance and disease to a world of economic and social well-being, providing individuals with a high average income, developing remote areas and establishing social guarantees, in addition to providing citizens with free services in the fields of education, health, housing, culture, sanitation, infrastructure and others.

The 2005 World Health Organization report stated that the United Arab Emirates had been highly successful in reducing mortality in children aged under five years, which had dropped to approximately 8 per 1000 live births. The report pointed out that the indices of inoculation with vaccines essential for newborn infants and two-year-old children were as high as 98 per cent. The organization also announced that the United Arab Emirates was free of poliomyelitis and malaria.

Owing to the developments that have taken place, the pattern of family life in the Emirates has undergone important changes in recent years in a transition from a nomadic Bedouin life to a more sedentary life and from the extended family to the nuclear family. As for the social roles of men and women, they have continued to be based on the principle of complementarity of roles and responsibilities, both men and women having responsibilities and duties towards their families and towards society.

The 2006 United Arab Emirates Report on Millennium Development Goals, prepared by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Commerce in cooperation with UNDP, stated that the country had succeeded in achieving many of the desired goals, especially in the fields of education and health, before the target date of 2015 and that it was approaching the mean values that had been achieved by the advanced countries.

The country's development strategies had been focused on the activation of the role of the private sector, diversification of income sources, development of human resources, technology transfer and the fulfilment of all the basic requirements for entering the global economic system.

#### **IV. General legal framework**

As of its creation, in 1971, the United Arab Emirates undertook to establish a legal and legislative system to govern all the relations of individuals and institutions within the country. The Constitution of the United Arab Emirates is the basic authority for many legislative and legal matters, and since it came into being, the State has passed many laws that govern the various fields.

In addition, the United Arab Emirates has been quick to ratify and accede to numerous international conventions and to join regional and international organizations. It is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council and many other international and regional organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization, and has ratified numerous human rights instruments, including the following:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime;
- ILO Convention No. 1 of 1919: Convention Limiting the Hours of Work in Industrial Undertakings to Eight in the Day and Forty-eight in the Week;
- ILO Convention No. 29 of 1930: Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour;
- ILO Convention No. 81 of 1947: Convention concerning Labour Inspection in Industry and Commerce;
- ILO Convention No. 89 of 1948: Convention concerning Night Work of Women Employed in Industry;
- ILO Convention No. 100 of 1951: Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value;
- ILO Convention No. 105 of 1957: Convention concerning the Abolition of Forced Labour;
- ILO Convention No. 111 of 1958: Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation;
- ILO Convention No. 138 of 1973: Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment;
- ILO Convention No. 182 of 1999: Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

Article 125 of the Constitution provides:

The Governments of the Emirates shall undertake the appropriate measures to implement the laws promulgated and the treaties and international agreements concluded by the Federation, including the promulgation of the local laws, regulations, decisions and orders necessary for such implementation.

The Federation authorities shall supervise the implementation by the Governments of the Emirates of federal laws, decisions, treaties, agreements and federal judicial decisions. The competent administrative and judicial authorities in the Emirates shall provide all possible assistance to the Federation authorities in that connection.

#### **Position of the United Arab Emirates concerning the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

The United Arab Emirates ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on 6 October 2004 pursuant to federal Decree No. 38 of 2004, with reservations concerning the texts of articles 2,



subparagraph (f); 9; 15, paragraph 2; 16; and 29, paragraph 1, of the Convention, as set forth below:

**Article 2, subparagraph (f)**

The United Arab Emirates views this subparagraph as containing a violation of the rules concerning inheritance laid down by the sharia and for that reason expresses a reservation concerning it and does not see any need to abide by its content.

**Article 9**

The United Arab Emirates, considering the acquisition of nationality an internal matter which is governed, and the conditions and criteria of which are established, by national legislation makes a reservation to this article and does not consider itself bound by the provisions thereof.

**Article 15 (2)**

The United Arab Emirates, considering this paragraph in conflict with the precepts of the shariah regarding legal capacity, testimony and the right to conclude contracts, makes a reservation to the said paragraph of the article in question and does not consider itself bound by the provisions thereof.

**Article 16**

The United Arab Emirates will abide by the provisions of this article insofar as they are not in conflict with the principles of the shariah. The United Arab Emirates considers that the payment of a dower and of support after divorce is an obligation of the husband, and the husband has the right to divorce, just as the wife has her independent financial security and her full rights to her property and is not required to pay her husband's or her own expenses out of her own property. The shariah makes a woman's right to divorce conditional on a judicial decision, in a case in which she has been harmed.

**Article 29 (1)**

The United Arab Emirates appreciates and respects the purposes of this article, which provides: "Any dispute between two or more States Parties concerning the interpretation or application of the present Convention which is not settled by negotiation shall, at the request of one of them, be submitted to arbitration. If within six months...the parties are unable..." [any one of those parties] "may refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice..." The United Arab Emirates therefore makes a reservation to this article, inasmuch as no dispute may be submitted to the International Court of Justice for arbitration unless it be with the agreement of all parties to the dispute, and declares that it is not bound by the provisions thereof.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Institutions for the empowerment of women in the United Arab Emirates**

Women have always occupied a lofty position in the society of the United Arab Emirates. In the period preceding the discovery of petroleum the social roles of women were no less important than the role of men, and in fact surpassed them in terms of duties and responsibility. In the absence of a male breadwinner, the woman was both mother and father as well as the protector of her children and her family, seeking opportunities to earn a living to provide for the household.

Both the discovery of oil and the establishment of the United Arab Emirates on 2 December 1971 greatly helped to change and improve living conditions in the Emirates in general and for women in particular, inasmuch as the State concerned itself with improving their condition and qualifying them to become active, productive members of society through their positive participation in the various facets of life. The advancement of women in the United Arab Emirates was a pioneering experience, for the country's women were able to realize many achievements and acquire many rights in record time as compared with the rest of the world's countries.

The legislative environment in the United Arab Emirates, too, established equal rights and duties between men and women. Indeed, in enacting laws, the legislator was intent on stressing two principles: first, equality between the man and the woman as a general rule, and second, in certain legislative acts, respect for the inherent nature of the woman.

Consequently, the United Arab Emirates possesses fundamental elements and norms for the success of any policies and programmes for the empowerment of women. What is more, the ratification by the United Arab Emirates of a number of international conventions, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, provides a clear yardstick by which to gauge the country's desire to adopt all measures likely to offer opportunities for the effective participation of women in social and economic development.

#### **I. Education**

Educational in the United Arab Emirates is aimed at building an integrated human personality, in terms of faith, behaviour, skills and performance, by providing equal educational opportunities for all citizens and diversifying them according to the capacities that are there.

Ministry of Education statistics show a constant increase in the enrolment of girls in both general and technical education. Indeed, the number of girl students rose from 15,696 in the 1972/1973 school year to 145,956 in 2004/2005, and the number of public girls' schools, scattered throughout the different Emirates, has reached 318.

The rate of female participation in higher education in the United Arab Emirates is one of the highest in the world, i.e., 95 per cent for female students, while the rate is 80 per cent for male students, in relation to secondary-school

graduates, some of whom wish to enrol in institutes of higher education within the country, while others enrol in study programmes abroad. The number of females enrolled in Government higher education institutes during the school year 2005/2006 was 24,880.

With regard to literacy and adult education programmes, the results of the 2005 population census showed that the illiteracy rate among the general citizen population was 8.8 per cent, while it was 11.7 per cent for female citizens.

In addition, the State offers citizens, male and female alike, opportunities for university education and higher studies in various programmes abroad. Thus, 43 women students were sent abroad during the school year 2005/2006 with a view to obtaining bachelor's degrees, 24 for master's degrees, and 18 for doctorates.

## II. Health services

The economic and social developments witnessed by the United Arab Emirates have led to an improvement in the health of individuals, including women. The health services provided and the therapeutic and preventive programmes carried out by the Ministry of Health have also helped to improve the health situation of the country's women. Without a doubt, the higher individual level of education and awareness has had a favourable impact on the success of State efforts aimed at improving the health of its citizens, as can be measured by means of a number of indicators, such as: a lower morbidity rate, with a consequent drop in mortality, especially among infants; a higher birth rate; a higher individual life expectancy; and greater health awareness among individuals generally speaking and among mothers in particular in most segments of society.

The latest statistics (2004) put out by the Ministry of Health show that there exist 68 hospitals in the country, in addition to 109 primary-health-care centres and 124 maternal and child welfare centres. The same statistics indicate low rates of infant mortality at birth, i.e., 3 out of every 100,000 infants, which corresponds to less than 10 infant deaths per year. Childbirth is supervised by skilled specialists in 99 per cent of all cases. In addition, maternal deaths due to pregnancy and childbirth and during puerperium amounted to 0.01 per 100,000 women of childbearing age.

The country's health institutions—i.e., the Ministry of Health, with the participation of the General Authority for Health Services of Abu Dhabi Emirate, the Department of Health and Medical Services in Dubai, the medical services of the armed forces and the medical services of the petroleum companies, together with private-sector health institutions—have expanded their base of services to cover all parts of the State, on the basis of the concept of health care as the fundamental approach to high-quality health services including comprehensive therapeutic care, prevention, the administration of booster doses and rehabilitation. The features of health strategy in the United Arab Emirates are therefore based on:

- The provision of comprehensive health care, both primary and specialized, to the entire population of the country;
- Increased life expectancy through the lowering of mortality and the prevalence of disease;

- Continued eradication of communicable diseases, especially the childhood diseases at which the national vaccination programme is aimed, as well as new and exotic diseases;
- Early detection and optimal treatment of chronic diseases;
- Identification of targeted programmes aimed at population segments having economic and social importance, in particular mothers, children, school students and the youth, as well as the elderly, persons with special needs and professionals;
- Provision of a unified technical data and information base for the planning, follow-up and assessment of health performance in the country, together with participation in the working manpower programme and the training of that manpower in specialized technical and administrative institutes;
- Establishment of specialized centres and therapeutic/diagnostic units; such as open-heart-surgery units; organ surgery and transplant units; renal lithotripsy units for the treatment of kidney stones, in which shock waves, rather than surgery, are used; units for examining the heart and arteries by means of catheterization; and dialysis units for patients with chronic end-stage kidney failure;
- Development of health strategies, establishment of accurate criteria and specifications for health facilities and providing of those facilities with the most up-to-date high-technology equipment in order to keep abreast of current developments and scientific achievements;
- Concern with preventive and booster programmes through the development of strategies aimed at fighting epidemic and contagious diseases and with programmes intended for specific segments of society, such as children, mothers and school students.

It should be pointed out here that the Ministry of Health in the United Arab Emirates offers maternal and child health-care services whereby follow-up of pregnant women is provided through the maternal and child centres and units in the primary health-care centres, in addition to health establishments and general hospitals and those specializing in gynaecology and obstetrics, where follow-up of pregnant women takes place from the onset of pregnancy to the eighth month. Thereafter the woman is referred to the hospital where the childbirth will take place, In the event that any unnatural symptoms appear and in cases of high-risk pregnancy, the health-care doctors immediately refer a pregnant woman to a specialized hospital for follow-up of the pregnancy under constant medical supervision. Ministry of Health statistics indicate that from 1993 to the present 100 per cent of all births have taken place under the supervision of health-care personnel. This is the advancement achieved in the United Arab Emirates in the field of health care provided to women that is documented in the international reports. Health institutions in the United Arab Emirates have established a series of services designed to preserve the health of pregnant women, some of which are the following:

- Complete medical examination including weight and height measurements and a dental check-up;

- Laboratory studies (urine, for sugar and protein; and blood, for haemoglobin, Rh factor, hepatitis B, complete blood picture and AIDS);
- Checking of the viability and natural growth of the foetus within the womb (ultrasound imaging of the uterus, auscultation of foetal heart rate);
- Preparation for natural breast feeding through the necessary consciousness-raising;
- The offering of the necessary treatment for certain simple occurrences, in addition to vitamins and mineral salts.

Maternal care is not limited to the period of pregnancy, but extends to the post-partum period, during which the mother returns to the health centre to make sure that there are no childbirth-related complications and also for support and encouragement for natural breast feeding, not to mention the care provided to the baby.

### III. Economic participation

Any assessment of the experience of women in the United Arab Emirates with economic participation requires mentioning two facts on which the country's economy is founded and which are central to the analysis and evaluation of that experience. In this connection the latest statistics published by the Ministry of Education indicate an increase in the number of female citizens (aged 15 years and older) in the work force from 15,729 in 1995 to 49,000 in 2006; in other words, they constituted 22 per cent of the total citizen work force in 2006. Over the same period, the participation of the female citizen population in the total citizen work force rose from 5.4 per cent to 11.8 per cent.

Table 3  
**Percentage distribution of the population (15 years and older) according to relation to the work force, based on the findings of the 2005 census**

	Citizens			Non-citizens			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<i>Relation to the work force</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Worker	57.6	14.9	36.3	94.3	42.9	82.1	90.3	35.1	75.0
Unemployed, previously employed	5.2	0.5	2.9	0.5	0.4	0.5	1.0	0.5	0.8
Unemployed, not previously employed	2.6	2.9	2.7	1.2	1.9	1.4	1.3	2.2	1.6
Domestic work	0.0	47.0	23.4	0.0	43.3	10.2	0.0	44.3	12.3
Student	25.6	29.2	27.4	3.6	10.2	5.1	5.9	15.5	8.6
Not seeking employment	2.3	0.9	1.6	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.3
Unable to work	2.2	0.8	1.5	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.5
Overage and not employed	4.4	3.5	3.9	0.1	0.7	0.3	0.6	1.5	0.8
Unspecified	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: UAE in Numbers 2007, Ministry of Economy.

The United Arab Emirates has been eager to encourage the entry of women into the labour market and careful not to place any restrictions on the jobs women might take. Indeed, in the current ministerial make-up there are four women ministers. In addition, women occupy other leadership posts in the Government, with the rank of under-secretary and assistant under-secretary. In this regard, the statistics issued by the Service Council as of 15 April 2007 show that United Arab Emirates women participate in all federal ministries, as can be seen from the table below, and that women predominate in some institutions such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Table 4  
**Distribution of persons employed in federal institutions according to sex as of 15 April 2007**

<i>Ministry</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Ministry</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Ministry of Education	11 500	20 215	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research	27	36
Ministry of Health	2 702	5 328	Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs	11	7
Ministry of Culture, Youth and Development of Society	1 070	95	Department of Protocol and Hospitality	59	7
Ministry of the Interior	196	92	Ministry of Social Affairs	150	459
Ministry of Public Works	2 140	128	National Media Council	176	55
Ministry of Environment and Water	4 760	105	Minister of State for the Council of Ministers Affairs	26	9
National Transport Authority	64	34	Office of Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Sultan	50	1
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	152	101	Office of Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Hamdan	16	7
Ministry of Justice	633	171	Ministry of Development for the Government Sector	9	2
Ministry of Justice	376	331	Ministry of Supreme Council and Cooperation Council Affairs	2	1
Ministry of Finance and Industry	277	124	General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments	176	45
Department of Civil Service	76	70	Office of the Prime Minister	21	3
Ministry of Economy/Planning Section	72	48	Ministry of Energy	56	30
Ministry of Economy and Planning/Economy Section	99	68			

Source: Department of Civil Service.

The State has also launched a number of initiatives aimed at strengthening the role of women in the business sector and enhancing their position in all economic, social and political fields. This has been achieved through the development and qualification of women at managerial levels with a view to strengthening their participation in supporting economic advancement, the establishment of councils of businesswomen and the creation of a businesswomen's award in the Emirates. The

volume of investments in businesses run by more than 11,000 women country-wide is estimated at approximately 14 billion United Arab Emirates dirhams. The majority of these investments are in business areas such as general commerce, maintenance, banking, real estate, leasing, manufacture, tourism and hotels, contracting and construction.

#### **IV. Political participation and decision-making**

The United Arab Emirates has undergone a change with regard to political participation by the country's citizens in the election of the members of the Federal National Council. The change did not merely involve enabling citizens of the United Arab Emirates to elect half the members of the Council, but went further in that it opened the way for the political participation of women, granting them the opportunity to become members of the electoral college, which counts 1189 women out of a total of 6688 members.

Although the electoral experiment that took place from 16 to 20 December 2006 was modest and limited, it could still be considered a positive step towards broader participation of the community in the Federal National Council, particularly when one considers that the first elections resulted in the election of a single woman to the Council. In view of the small number of women who were in fact elected and the Government's belief in the importance of political participation by women, eight other women were appointed to the National Council, thus bringing the rate of female representation in the Federal National Council to 22.5 per cent.

Women in the United Arab Emirates have been able, thanks to the support of the political leadership, to achieve significant standing in society, acceding to a number of leadership posts through which they participate, offering opinions and advice and taking decisions. United Arab Emirates women have also joined the diplomatic corps of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has 1 woman with the rank of minister plenipotentiary first class, 3 with the rank of second secretary and 15 with that of third secretary. Women of the Emirates have also entered the military and the police, the highest rank attained by women in the armed forces being that of brigadier-general. In addition, a woman has been appointed to the office of Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, 12 women have become members of boards of directors of chambers of commerce and industry and two female public prosecutors have been appointed in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

United Arab Emirates women actively participate in the representation of the country in international and regional organizations, as for example at meetings of the United Nations and specialized international organizations and in international programmes, such as the United Nations Development Programme and the National Committee on Education, Science and Culture associated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as well as in the membership of the Board of the United Nations Global Compact.

The leadership positions mentioned above are not exhaustive: indeed, women have gained access to many other leadership posts if one takes into account the administrative jobs that have been taken by women of the United Arab Emirates in both governmental and private establishments in the individual Emirates. Mention must be made here of the experience of the Emirate of Sharjah in the area of

promotion of the political participation of women, inasmuch as the Advisory Council of Sharjah includes seven women members.

## **V. Social services**

Since its inception, the United Arab Emirates has sought to provide its citizens with every means of well-being and to use its petroleum wealth to improve their living conditions. The country's women have had a share in that social development in terms of both the education opportunities and the health services already mentioned in this report.

Vigorous efforts have been made in the country to mainstream women's issues in development and to translate that overall trend into policies that serve sustained economic growth. Women in the United Arab Emirates have achieved considerable social gains in addition to those already mentioned. The following paragraphs highlight the most important social services granted to women by the State.

### **A. Social allowance for workers' children and housing allowance**

The President of the United Arab Emirates, in his capacity as ruler of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, has issued a regulation effecting changes in some of the provisions of the child allowance and a second regulation amending some of the provisions of the housing allowance for civil servants and employees who are citizens of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The amendment to the child allowance regulation provides that the allowance shall be granted to a female employee for her children who are nationals if it is not paid to their father and that, in the case of divorce, the allowance shall be granted to the person providing support. The amendment to the regulation on the housing allowance for civil servants and employees who are nationals provides that a woman employee who is a national shall be granted the housing allowance for the married category if she is married or is widowed or divorced and is supporting a child.

The promulgation of this regulation by the Head of State embodies the concern which His Highness has for supporting women's issues; his commitment to promoting their rights; an appreciation of their outstanding participation and role in building and advancing society; an encouragement and stimulus to women and support for their role in society; and assistance to women in meeting life's needs, including familial and social stability. The amendments also firmly establish social justice among all the classes of society and achieve equality and eliminate differences between men and women national employees.

### **B. Establishment of day-care centres in ministries and public institutions**

Believing in the importance of promoting women's participation in the labour market and assisting them in balancing family responsibilities and job demands, the Council of Ministers issued Decision No. 19 of 2006 on day-care centres in ministries, public institutions and Government offices and agencies, article 1 of which states:



In the headquarters of ministries, Government departments and offices and other public agencies and institutions, day-care centres attached thereto shall be established to provide care for the children of women employees working therein if the number of married women employed therein is 50 or more or the number of female employees' children in the age group ranging from newborn infants to 4 years is 20 or more.

Under article 2 of the same Decision, institutions in which the number of married women employees or the number of children falls short of that mentioned in article 1 may together open joint day-care centres.

### **C. Allocation of housing for widowed and divorced women**

The availability of suitable housing gives a human being a feeling security, safety and belonging and is therefore one of the most important factors of stability not only for the individual and the family, but also for society as a whole. All this spurs the person to do good, to give and to increase his productivity and provides a solid ground for economic and social development. State policy has thus been founded on the principle of providing housing support and enabling citizens to obtain housing through a number of facilities, for example by providing citizens having no land on which to build their dwellings with free land for housing, with already prepared infrastructure, i.e., streets, water, electricity, sanitation and other facilities. Thus, the Government seeks to provide—for some classes of citizens—free land and the requisite financial facilities to build their homes, in the form either of long-term loans or outright financial grants.

Women have benefited extensively from this policy, inasmuch as a woman citizen who is widowed or divorced or is married to a person who is not a national of the United Arab Emirates is entitled to receive a residence or residential land in addition to the necessary financing to build a residence.

### **D. Care of the disabled**

Council of Ministers Decision No. 356 of 1979 relates to the formation of a higher commission on disabled persons combining the ministries of Social Affairs, Health and Education. This was the first step taken by the State for the care of disabled persons.

A subsequent Council of Ministers Decision, No. 96 of 1981, pertained to the establishment of a centre for the care and training of disabled persons in Abu Dhabi and another in Dubai, in response to the United Nations proclamation of 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons. The objectives of the Council of Ministers in creating the two centres were as follows:

- To provide opportunities and possibilities for treatment and medical, psychological and social care for disabled persons;
- To offer opportunities for education and the acquisition of learning at the various levels of both formal and non-formal education, or to diversify the fields and methods of teaching in order to make it possible for disabled persons to develop their capacities to the highest degree possible, so as to enable them to be self-reliant;

- To expand the fields of vocational training and rehabilitation for disabled persons in a manner compatible with their capacities and in keeping with development needs in terms of professions and skills;
- To make it possible for disabled persons to integrate socially and help them to acquire confidence in themselves as well as to help the community to gain confidence in them; to expand the horizons of social interaction of various groups and classes of people in order to break the cycle of isolation and maladjustment that the disabled person may experience; and to take advantage of the scientific, technological and organizational knowledge available in advanced countries and apply it in a manner compatible with disability and handicap conditions in the United Arab Emirates.

Two centres for the disabled were opened at the end of 1981, one in Abu Dhabi and the other in Dubai. They each began by opening five departments, namely: Intellectual Development (mental disability), Deaf and Dumb (hearing disability), The Blind (visual disability), Physical Disability (bodily disability), and Vocational Rehabilitation.

The opening of these two centres was followed by that of new centres in each of the following places: Ras al Khaimah, Fujairah, Al-`Ayn and Dibba, and recently a centre was opened in Ajman, with a view to extending the umbrella of care for this group all over the Emirates.

As for Sharjah, Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services provides services for disabled persons in that Emirate. Consequently the centres for the disabled cover the entire country. Care of the disabled has taken on especial importance in the programmes of the Ministry of Social Affairs, which are based on the following objectives:

- To help the disabled person live with his family within his social environment, whenever possible;
- To help the family adapt to the presence of its disabled son or daughter as part of the family and to offer assistance, both material and in kind, to the family for providing family care to disabled persons, so as to give them security, love and affection within the family context;
- To rehabilitate and train disabled children at rehabilitation and training centres for the disabled while keeping them within their family and their own environment. and to avoid placing them in permanent care facilities where they are totally isolated and stripped of their family and their community.

With a view to the achievement of complete care of disabled persons in United Arab Emirates society and the inclusion of all disabled persons, whether nationals or immigrants, private centres for disabled persons have been licensed to operate in the Emirates. In addition, Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services offers services for disabled national and immigrant persons alike in Sharjah, Khor Fakkan and Al-Dhayd. There are 36 such centres accommodating 3753 disabled persons, in other words five times the number of disabled persons in the Government centres. Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services has the largest number of disabled persons (1051).

Federal Act No. 29 of 2006, on persons with special needs, was passed by the State to guarantee all rights and forms of care for the disabled in accordance with the relevant international conventions. The Government of the United Arab Emirates signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the related Optional Protocol in 2008 and accordingly will complete the constitutional steps for accession to the Convention and develop its domestic regulations in keeping with its international commitments regarding the rights of disabled persons.

## **VI. Women's institutions in the United Arab Emirates**

In its commitment to the empowerment of women, the Government of the United Arab Emirates encourages the establishment of women's associations and institutions that concern themselves with women's issues and work for the promotion of women and the enhancement of their skills in various fields. The country's most outstanding women's institutions include the following: General Women's Union, Family Development Foundation, Women's Development Society (Dubai), Society for the Advancement of Women (Dubai), Sharjah Women's Union, Umm Al Moumineen Association (Ajman), Umm al-Qaiwain Women's Association, Al Nahda Women's Association (Association for the Advancement of Women) (Ras al Khaimah), Supreme Family Council (Sharjah), Women's Centre at the Centre for Documentation and Research of the Ministry of Presidential Affairs, Abu Dhabi Ladies' Club, Sharjah Girls' Club, Al-Sharia Ladies' Park, Ras Al-Akhdar Ladies' Beach, Ministry of Social Affairs social development centres, Human Rights Administration—Dubai Police General Command, social support centres—Abu Dhabi Police General Command, family guidance and reform centres in the State courts, Higher Council on Maternity and Childhood (in process of being founded), women and children's shelter centres of the Emirates Red Crescent Society, Al-Amal women's shelter centre—Dubai Police.

## Chapter Three

### Measures of the United Arab Emirates towards implementation of the Convention

The United Arab Emirates ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women in October 2004, expressing reservations concerning certain provisions not in agreement with the sharia or in conflict with State policy. In keeping with article 125 of its Constitution (cited above), the United Arab Emirates is committed to complying with the conventions and treaties it ratifies by establishing appropriate strategies for implementation and periodic review of local laws to bring them into line with the State's obligations under such international instruments.

The following is an analysis of the steps and measures taken by the United Arab Emirates in connection with the entry into force of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women:

#### **Articles 1-4: General political and legal measures**

##### *Summary of the provisions of the Convention*

Articles 1 to 4 of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women call, generally speaking, for the adoption of all legislative and other measures to establish legal protection of the rights of women.

##### *Measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates*

The Constitution of the United Arab Emirates is the basic authority in many legislative and legal matters. In the Constitution, which sets forth the rights and duties of individuals in society, the legislator was intent that there should be no distinction between the citizens of the Emirates on the basis of sex in any laws or legislation and in fact took into consideration the nature of women through special legislation for their protection.

In view of the fact that articles 1 to 4 of the Convention call upon States to revise their local legislation and laws to bring them into line with the provisions of the Convention, the legislation and laws of the United Arab Emirates are periodically revised in a manner appropriate to the public interest of the society of the Emirates. Federal laws have been passed that guarantee human rights and take into account the special conditions of women, which require special legislation that takes into account their rights and their natural needs. In addition, numerous laws have recently been revised that deal with the fundamental rights of the citizens of the United Arab Emirates and persons resident in its territory, such as: Federal Act No. 17 of 1972 concerning nationality, amended by Act No. 10 of 1975; Act No. 23 of 1976 concerning labour law in the non-governmental sector; Federal Act No. 8 of 1980 governing working relations; Federal Act No. 7 of 1999 on pensions and social insurance; Federal Act No. 6 of 2001 on social security; Federal Act No. 21 of 2001 on the civil service; and Federal Act No. 51 of 2006 on the suppression of human trafficking.

The Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers have also issued numerous executive decisions for the purpose of explaining or reaffirming certain rights in addition to making practical changes in work regulations within the country to serve women and guarantee their rights, such as Federal Supreme Council Decision No. 4

of 2006 on the determination of the selection of the representatives of the National Council and Ministerial Decision No. 19 of 2006 on day-care centres in ministries, public institutions and Government offices and agencies.

### **Article 5: Women and men and stereotyped roles**

#### *Summary of the provisions of the Convention*

Article 5 of the Convention calls for modification of the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to the elimination of prejudices and customary practices that involve discrimination against women, emphasizing that family education is a function based on the shared responsibility of men and women.

#### *Measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates*

Article 14 of the Constitution states:

Equality, social justice, the provision of safety and security, and equality of opportunity for all citizens shall be pillars of society, and mutual assistance and compassion shall be a strong bond between them.

Article 25 provides:

All persons are equal before the law and there is no distinction between citizens of the Federation on grounds of race, nationality, religious belief or social status.

In the context of article 5 (a) of the Convention, we find that the family in the United Arab Emirates has undergone numerous changes and transformations since the foundation of the State, as a result, in particular, of its opening-up to the world and to different cultures. Indeed, there has been a transformation from the extended family to the nuclear family in the wake of the country's entry into a phase of rapid urbanization and the spread of education.

Despite the fact that prior to the Federation the family in the United Arab Emirates was characterized by the paternal authority enjoyed by the head of the household, the woman was responsible for arranging to meet all the family's needs in view of the relative absence of the man, who was off at work engaging in trade or fishing. In other words, she helped to add to household income by going out to engage in simple trade activities. With the establishment of the federal State, the United Arab Emirates family felt the importance of education, as girls and boys alike rushed to obtain learning, ranging as high as university education and beyond, through study abroad. All this enhanced the role of women in society.

The economic and social development phenomena experienced by the federal State played a fundamental role in changing many cultural patterns and traditional customs relating to the social roles of men and women, and there have come to be greater appreciation and encouragement of working women and emphasis on the need for women to take part in economic development. As a result, the stereotyped picture of the social roles of men and women have begun to change, the principle of complementarity is gaining ground and many young men today prefer to marry educated girls who are active in the society, owing to their intellectual equality and the guarantee of dialogue between them.

Moreover, the State organizes symposiums and conferences aimed at changing the stereotyped image of women in the media and there are now a number of television and radio programmes and women's magazines that seek to highlight the role of women in society, pointing to their positive contributions. The Ministry of Education, too, works on developing study curricula that cast a favourable light on the idea of complementarity of men and women's social roles, helping to change the stereotypes regarding the role of women in society.

The General Women's Union, too, with UNDP support, is working to implement a draft national programme for the integration of women, the purpose of which is to make known the concept of integration and equality between the sexes in governmental institutions operating within the State, with a view to the adoption of policies and programmes that guarantee equal opportunity between males and females.

With regard to subparagraph (b) of the same article, we find that the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates affirms the importance of maternal and child welfare in its article 16, which stipulates:

Society shall take children and mothers into its care and protect minors and others who are unable to care for themselves for any reason, such as illness, incapacity, old age or forced unemployment. It shall assume responsibility for assisting them and training or rehabilitating them for their own benefit and that of the community. Such matters shall be governed by the public-assistance and social-insurance laws.

Consequently, United Arab Emirates society considers family education, maternity and the upbringing and development of children a societal function and responsibility.

The Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health and grassroots associations, in particular women's associations, provide many services in the sphere of family service. Given that family relations in United Arab Emirates society are ruled by the Islamic perspective on such relations, we find that the raising of children is a joint responsibility, shared by the father and mother, and the father's responsibility is not confined to material support. For that reason, United Arab Emirates families today believe in the impact of family relations on the development of children and their need for the love of both parents in order to obviate any cause for anxiety or insecurity. They also recognize the need to emphasize the role of the father in upbringing, and the fact that it is a joint responsibility of both parents.

The General Women's Union, women's associations and public welfare associations organize symposiums and lectures on successful family relations and on child-rearing. The State, through both the federal and the local Governments, has also deemed it essential to provide specialized institutions for family welfare, such as the Higher Council on Maternity and Childhood (in process of being founded), at the federal level, and the Family Development Foundation in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, the Women's Development Society in Dubai and the Supreme Family Council in Sharjah, in addition to women's associations in the country's different Emirates.

Act No. 27 of 2006 concerning the management of the human resources of the Government of Dubai, which was passed by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin

Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates (may God preserve him), in his capacity as ruler of the Emirate of Dubai, consists of more than 230 articles grouped under 17 chapters. The Act entitles Government employees to whom a child is born within the State of the United Arab Emirates to obtain three days' paternity leave, with payment of his salary, during the first month following the birth of the child, by way of affirmation of the joint responsibility of both parents for the upbringing of children.

Here it should be pointed out that the Ministry of Health accords great importance to family and reproductive health. The scope of that interest covers all segments of society and includes consciousness-raising among school students via the school health administration.

#### **Article 6: Trafficking in women and inducing them to engage in prostitution**

##### *Summary of the provisions of the Convention*

Article 6 of the Convention calls upon States to take all appropriate measures to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of women in prostitution.

##### *Measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates*

United Arab Emirates society is characterized by the fact that it is conservative and does not encourage traffic in women or induce them to engage in prostitution. The prevailing religious and social beliefs in the society of the Emirates condemn practices of that sort.

From the legal standpoint, the legislator in the United Arab Emirates was intent on criminalizing the phenomenon of traffic in human beings and took the requisite steps in that regard, starting with the Constitution, article 34 of which states:

No person may be enslaved.

The United Arab Emirates has also ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which it did in May 2007, and has sought to promote bilateral cooperation, signing bilateral agreements with numerous States that export labour to the United Arab Emirates, in its belief in the importance of bilateral cooperation to suppress that international phenomenon, which violates human dignity and human rights.

The State has also promulgated Federal Act No. 51 of 2006 on the suppression of human trafficking, which provides deterrent penalties for perpetrators of human trafficking offences. The Act served as the basis for the issuance of the Council of Ministers Decision No. 15 of 2007 on the establishment of the National Committee for the Suppression of Human Trafficking, chaired by His Highness the Minister of State for Federal National Council Affairs and including as members representatives of a number of competent Government authorities. The Committee is charged with periodically taking stock of and following up human trafficking issues with the competent authorities and supporting and encouraging the establishment of additional refuges for woman and child victims.

Moreover, the United Arab Emirates has passed laws for convicting anyone who might perpetrate offences of that nature. Articles 354 to 357 of the 1987 Penal Code, for example, set out the penalties incurred for rape and violations of honour; articles 358 and 359 lay down the penalties for indecent acts or indecent assault; and

articles 360 to 370 set out the penalties for incitement to debauchery and prostitution.

As for laws and regulations pertaining to immigrant labour, the working mechanisms of the country's labour importation offices are subject to the control and inspection of the Ministry of Labour. In fact, there exists within the Ministry a department for labour complaints and legalization of the process of entry into the State of United Arab Emirates, and there are laws and regulations governing that process. The Naturalization and Residency Administration and the State's embassies and consular missions abroad grant foreigners desirous of entering the territory of the United Arab Emirates permission to enter for the following reasons:

- To visit a relative or friend legally resident in the country;
- To visit a public or private artificial person;
- For travel, with the sponsorship of institutions or bodies operating in the field of tourism.

Under an entry permit for a visit, entry into the territory of the State is allowed once during the two months following the date of issue thereof and a stay of 30 days from the date of entry is permitted. Two successive extensions thereof for the same period shall be permitted for serious reasons for persons not entering the country for the purpose of touring. The Naturalization and Residency Administration deems it important to check the reasons for the visit in order to ensure that no misuse of the visiting permit takes place. If the purpose of entry is to visit a relative or friend legally resident in the country, the following conditions must be met:

- The visitor must be the spouse or a first-degree relative of the sponsor, provided that exceptional permission shall be possible for second-degree relatives to visit with the approval of the Assistant Deputy Minister for Naturalization and Residency Affairs or such person as may be designated by him;
- The sponsor must be a citizen if the visitor is a friend;
- Documents substantiating the marriage or relationship or the compelling reasons for the visit must be attached and the sponsor must submit sufficient guarantees against any violation by the person sponsored by him;
- If the purpose of entry is for a foreign wife to visit her husband who is a national of one of the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, she must have a currently valid permit for residence in the State whose nationality the husband bears;
- If the purpose of entry is to visit a public or private artificial person, plausible justification must be submitted to the competent administration stating the reasons for and purpose of the visit;
- If the purpose of entry is tourism, the sponsor must be a company or organization operating in the field of tourism that has sufficient guarantees. The application must be submitted to the competent administration at least a week before the date of arrival and be accompanied by a list of the names of the tourists indicating their personal particulars and their touring programme, which shall include their arrival and departure dates, places of



residence and the places they have decided to visit in the country, it being understood that the number of persons shall not be less than ten.

It should be pointed out here that the State established the age requirement of 25 years for women to be able enter alone, the approval of the family or the husband being required for girls under that age. The regulations mentioned above confirm that the United Arab Emirates has adopted all legal measures governing the entry of individuals into the State while preserving the security and stability of the community. In addition, the competent State authorities fine anyone who commits indecent acts or acts contrary to morals in public places and keep an eye on suspicious places and apartments that might be hotbeds of immorality.

What is more, the United Arab Emirates began to apply throughout the Federation, starting 1 April 2007, a uniform work contract for the domestic help classes that work in homes and other persons in similar situations, for the purpose of protecting their rights.

In this context mention should also be made of the roles played by the social support centres of the Abu Dhabi police, the human rights protection administration of the Dubai police, the Red Crescent Society and the Dubai charitable foundation for the care of women and children, in combating human trafficking through the implementation of a programme for the care of crime victims, and in particular the victims of trafficking in human beings, with a view to alleviating their psychological pain, helping them to regain their balance and providing them with assistance in solving their problems.

#### **Article 7: Participation of women in political life**

##### *Summary of the provisions of the Convention*

Article 7 of the CEDAW Convention relates to the need for States to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against the participation of women in political the public life, through the right to vote and elections, participation in the formulation of government policy and participation in non-governmental organizations and associations.

##### *Measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates*

Looking at the nature of the political system of the United Arab Emirates, we find that the political structure consists of five bodies, divided up as provided by the Constitution and performing legislative, executive and judicial functions. According to the Constitution, the general federal authorities consist of the Federal Supreme Council, the President and Vice-President of the Federation, the federal Council of Ministers, the Federal National Council and the federal judiciary.

In speaking of women's political participation, it is essential to mention that His Highness the late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan — may he rest in peace — in many of his statements, and his wife, Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Supreme Chairperson of the Family Development Foundation and Chairperson of the General Women's Union, have emphasized that there is nothing, legally, to prevent a woman in the Emirates from being an ambassador or minister or from taking part in political life provided that she is armed with sufficient awareness and knowledge and the capacity to bear the responsibility for the decisions she will take as a decision-maker, and that the Constitution, in one of its articles, affirms that

the door to the highest offices is open to all, there being no distinction among the citizens of the State concerning their selection.

As can be seen from the preceding remarks, political life in the United Arab Emirates has changed. Indeed, Federal Supreme Council Decision No. 4 of 2006, on the determination of the selection of the representatives of the National Council, introduced a fundamental constitutional change in the realm of establishment of democratic practices, based on political participation and the enablement of the citizens of the Emirates to choose the members of the National Council in a process which, in the initial stage, combines election and appointment.

The initial electoral experience saw the participation of 63 women as candidates within the electoral college, including 14 from the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, 15 from Dubai, 27 from Sharjah, 2 from Ajman, one from Umm al Qaiwain, 3 from Ras al Khaimah and 1 from Fujairah.

Though the first electoral experience was limited and resulted in the election of only one woman, from the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, to the Federal National Council, it can still be considered a positive step towards the establishment of a culture of democratic action and it is hoped that it will contribute in the future to the expansion of women's political participation.

It should be stated here that there is nothing in the Constitution or the laws to prevent the political participation of women of the United Arab Emirates. The only impediment to political participation and greater participation of women in decision-making lies in the customs and traditions of society, and those have begun to change gradually. The nature of the prevailing culture regarding political action and its association with men; the social customs, habits and traditions prevalent in the country with regard to women's work and the areas in which it is deemed fitting; the belief among some members of society that political action and women's engaging in it go against religion and encourage the mixing of men and women, something not favourably looked upon by traditional society; and the demands of political action in terms of availability, effort and time that might be in conflict with the responsibility of the woman as housewife in charge of managing the affairs of her home and raising her children — these are the reasons to which one can attribute the low degree of participation of women politically in spite of the great support women receive on the part of the political leadership in the United Arab Emirates and despite the existence of laws that protect and guarantee the rights of the country's working women and encourage them to assume the highest offices so long as they are able to bear the responsibility at the State level and provided they are armed with knowledge and awareness of all the day-to-day concerns of individuals in the United Arab Emirates.

Thus the participation of women of the United Arab Emirates in decision-making processes is not confined simply to their becoming members of the Federal National Council, but also includes their assumption of leadership positions in the institutions operating in the country. The current ministerial structure includes four women ministers: the Minister of Foreign Economic Affairs, the Minister of Social Affairs and two ministers of State. Moreover, the State has encouraged women to join the diplomatic corps and female citizens have been appointed as diplomatic attachés in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There were about 45 such women diplomats in 2006, including 10 in United Arab Emirates embassies abroad, who were successful and demonstrated high performance levels, as affirmed by the

ambassadors who worked with them in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Women also occupy a number of leadership posts in the federal ministries, as can be seen from the following table:

Table 5  
**Distribution of women in higher Government posts according to institution and grade**

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Under-secretary</i>	<i>Assistant under-secretary</i>	<i>Special grade</i>	<i>Grade 1</i>	<i>Grade 2</i>	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Grade 4</i>
Ministry of Education				10	208	2 646	9 949
Ministry of Health		1		49	298	369	827
Ministry of Culture, Youth and Social Development		1	1	1	8	6	27
Ministry of the Interior					4	6	7
Ministry of Public Works				20	32	8	29
Ministry of Environment and Water				7	4	23	26
National Transport Authority		1		1	1	2	2
Ministry of Foreign Affairs				4	3	9	30
Ministry of Justice				3	9	19	24
Ministry of Justice			1	41	58	18	66
Ministry of Finance and Industry		1	5	11	17	21	15
Department of Civil Service		1		11	8	11	5
Ministry of Economy/Planning Section					6	10	12
Ministry of Economy and Planning/Economy Section				8	13	4	15
Ministry of Energy				1	4	4	3
Office of the Prime Minister						3	
General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments						1	19
Ministry of Supreme Council and Cooperation Council Affairs							
Ministry of Development for the Government Sector					1		
Department of Protocol and Hospitality					1		2
Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs			1				3
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research				2	5	8	8
Ministry of Social Affairs			12	47	74	59	122
National Media Council					11	11	17
Minister of State for Council of Ministers Affairs							3
Office of Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Hamdan							2
Office of Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Sultan							
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>3 238</b>	<b>11 213</b>

Source: Department of Civil Service, 15 April 2007.

Mention should be made here of a tendency of some local governments towards the participation of women in their consultative councils, such as the Consultative Council of the Emirate of Sharjah, 7 of whose 40 members are women.

In the United Arab Emirates there are also programmes and strategies aimed at developing women's capacities in the field of political action through programmes of intellectual education, political training and consciousness-raising. At the same time, efforts are being made to exchange experience and expertise with Arab countries in the field of integration of women into political activity, through the Arab Women Parliamentarians project, which was initiated by the General Women's Union together with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and scientific conferences and symposiums are being organized in this field. The Emirates Diplomatic Institute also plays a role, training women for diplomatic work.

The State also seeks to strengthen the concept of participation in decision-making among students in schools and institutes of higher learning through student unions. Moreover, the Emirate of Sharjah, it should be mentioned, has established a Children and Young Persons Consultative Council made up of 85 seats, 30 of which are earmarked for females as a step toward inculcating the concept of political action among them.

With regard to participation in non-governmental associations and organizations, there is nothing to prevent a woman from joining or forming any non-governmental association under Federal Act No. 6 of 1974 concerning associations of public interest, amended by Federal Act No. 20 of 1981. Data from the administration of public-interest associations of the Ministry of Social Affairs indicate that up to the end of 2005 there were 120 public-interest associations in the country. Among these, popular art associations ranked highest in terms of number, inasmuch as there were 30 such associations in 2005, followed by cultural and public services associations (23) and professional associations (20). Within this context one finds five women's associations in the country, divided among the different Emirates and having branches in the various regions in each Emirate, in addition to the General Women's Union, which was founded on 27 August 2007 and counts among its members the following founding women's associations:

- Abu Dhabi Society for the Advancement of Women (1973-2006) , now the Family Development Foundation;
- Women's Advancement Society, Dubai;
- Sharjah Women's Union;
- Umm Al Moumineen Association (Ajman);
- Umm al-Qaiwain Women's Association;
- Association for the Advancement of Women, Ras al Khaimah.

#### **Article 8: Participation of women in representation abroad**

##### *Summary of the provisions of the Convention*

Article 8 relates to the need to ensure to women the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.

##### *Measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates*

There does not exist any legal impediment to the participation of women of the United Arab Emirates in the representation of the State abroad. The State's belief in the role of women in society and the need to give them opportunities led to an

initiative in the country that will have long-term positive repercussions with regard to international representation, when United Arab Emirates women began to assume diplomatic posts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, some of them working in the country's missions abroad. Based in those missions, they represent the country in international organizations, especially in areas such as human rights, humanitarian affairs, development and economic affairs.

Furthermore, women of the United Arab Emirates play an active part in representing the country at international conferences and symposiums and there is no obstacle to their doing so provided that they have the requisite competence and expertise. It should be mentioned that the General Women's Union, which represents United Arab Emirates women, is a member of many organizations, both international and regional, to wit:

- The Arab Women's Organization, whose headquarters is in Cairo;
- The World Family Organization, with headquarters in Paris;
- The Arab Family Organization, with headquarters in Tunis;
- UNDP, headquartered in New York;
- The Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education, whose headquarters is in Egypt.

It is also worth mentioning that there are a number of women from the United Arab Emirates who occupy posts at UNDP, UNIFEM and the National Committee on Education, Science and Culture associated with UNESCO.

#### **Article 9: Nationality**

##### *Summary of the provisions of the Convention*

In article 9, the Convention calls on States Parties to grant women rights equal to those of men to acquire, change or retain their nationality and to ensure that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband changes the nationality of the wife or renders her stateless. It also calls for granting women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.

##### *Measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates*

The United Arab Emirates legislation regarding nationality, found in Federal Act No. 17 of 1972 concerning nationality and passports, as amended, provides that a woman who is a national of the State *ex lege* or by naturalization and who marries a person holding foreign nationality retains her nationality and does not lose it unless she has taken the nationality of her husband. In other words, the law of nationality in the United Arab Emirates is in accord with the CEDAW Convention with regard to women's rights being equal to those of men concerning the acquisition, retention and change of nationality. The legislation in the Emirates in fact goes on to grant a woman *ex lege* national having acquired the nationality of her foreign husband, who subsequently dies or abandons or divorces her, the right to regain United Arab Emirates nationality on condition that she relinquish the nationality of the foreign spouse, as provided in article 17 of the said Act. Generally speaking, the Act contains texts governing the woman's right to nationality in the United Arab Emirates, which can be summarized as follows:

- General provisions

Article 1: Nationality is acquired ex lege, by dependence or by naturalization in accordance with the law.

- Naturalization

Article 3: The marriage of an alien woman to a citizen of the United Arab Emirates shall not entail her acquisition of the nationality of her husband unless she declares to the Ministry of the Interior her wish to do so and the marriage continues in existence for three years from the date of such declaration. It is a condition therefor that she relinquish her original nationality.

If the woman married a citizen prior to the effective date of the present Act and the marriage is still in existence, or her husband has died and she has children of his, and she held a passport of one of the Emirates or was mentioned in her husband's passport, she may be granted United Arab Emirates nationality by way of dependence on condition that she relinquish her original nationality. In no case, however, may the husband acquire the nationality of his wife.

Article 7: United Arab Emirates citizenship may be granted to any person having full legal capacity if he has been continuously and legally resident in the member Emirates since 1940 or before and has maintained his customary residence up to the effective date of this Act, has a legitimate source of income, has demonstrated good conduct, has not been convicted of an offence violating honour or trust and is proficient in the Arabic language.

Article 8: United Arab Emirates citizenship may be granted to any person having full legal capacity, other than those mentioned in article 5 or 6, who has been continuously and legally resident in the member Emirates for a period of at least 30 years, including at least 20 spent after the effective date of this Act, has a legitimate source of income, has demonstrated good conduct, has not been convicted of an offence violating honour or trust and is proficient in the Arabic language.

Article 9: Any person who has rendered extraordinary services to the country may be granted United Arab Emirates citizenship without regard to the period of residence otherwise prescribed by law.

Article 10: A wife of a national by naturalization shall be deemed a national by naturalization if she relinquishes her original nationality. Minor children of a national by naturalization shall be deemed nationals by naturalization and may decide their original nationality within one year after reaching the age of majority.

Article 12: Nationality is granted only once.

- Acquisition of nationality

Article 2: The following are considered nationals ex lege:

- (a) An Arab established in a member Emirate in or before 1925 who has maintained his customary residence there up to the effective date of this Act;

- (b) Anyone who was born in the country or abroad to a father who was a citizen ex lege of the United Arab Emirates;
- (c) Anyone who was born in the country or abroad to an ex lege citizen mother and concerning whom no paternity has been legally established;
- (d) Anyone who was born in the country or abroad to an ex lege citizen mother and whose father is unknown or stateless;
- (e) Anyone born in the country to unknown parents, a founding being deemed to have been born in the country in the absence of proof to the contrary.

- Loss of nationality

Article 14: A woman who is a national ex lege or by naturalization and who marries a person holding foreign nationality shall retain her nationality and shall not lose it unless she has taken her husband's nationality.

- Naturalization of children according to the mother's nationality

Article 17: ... A woman national ex lege who has acquired the nationality of her alien husband may, if her husband has died or has abandoned or divorced her, regain her nationality on condition that she relinquish the nationality of her husband. Her children by the husband may request to take the nationality of the United Arab Emirates if their customary residence is within the State and they express their desire to relinquish the nationality of their father.

Article 2: Cases in which the mother gives her nationality to her children: The following are considered nationals ex lege:

- (a) Anyone who was born in the country or abroad to an ex lege citizen mother and concerning whom no paternity has been legally established;
- (b) Anyone who was born in the country or abroad to an ex lege citizen mother and whose father is unknown or stateless;

- Recovery of nationality

In addition to the provisions of article 17, cited above, concerning the right to recover nationality, article 18 provides the following:

Minor children who have lost their nationality may regain it upon their request on reaching the age of majority.

- Nationality by dependence

In addition to what is provided in articles 3 and 10, cited above, article 4 takes up the question of nationality by dependence, as follows:

Without prejudice to the provisions of article 17 of this Act, a wife who has acquired nationality by dependence on her husband in accordance with the previous article shall, in the event that her husband dies, retain United Arab Emirates nationality, which may not be withdrawn from her except in two cases:

- (a) Her marriage to an alien holding foreign nationality;
- (b) Her recovery of her original nationality or acquisition of another nationality.
- Forfeiture of nationality

Article 15: The United Arab Emirates nationality of any person possessing it shall be forfeited by him in the following cases:

  - (a) If he joins the military service of a foreign country without permission from the State and, on being ordered to abandon such service, refuses to do so;
  - (b) If he works in the interest of an enemy State;
  - (c) If he has adopted, by choice, the nationality of another State.

#### **Article 10: Educational opportunities**

##### *Summary of the provisions of the Convention*

Article 10 of the Convention refers to the need to take appropriate measures to ensure to women equal rights with men in the field of education.

##### *Measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates*

Since the founding of the Federation of the United Arab Emirates, education in the State has been governed by article 17 of the Constitution, which states:

Education is a fundamental factor in the advancement of society. It shall be compulsory in the primary level and free of charge in all levels within the Federation. The law shall prescribe the necessary plans for the spread and universalization of education at its various levels and for the eradication of illiteracy.

The education of women in the United Arab Emirates represents one of the most important achievements of the federal State. Education and the eradication of illiteracy are rights established by the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates for its citizens without regard to sex, age or place of residence, in keeping with the principle of equal opportunity for men and women. Consequently, concern with the education of women is based on the fact not only that they constitute half of society, but that their education will possess added value that will contribute to providing a sound basis for the socialization of the family and children, and therefore of the society as a whole, as well as for participation in the labour force through educational outcomes that assist in building and development.

Formal education in the United Arab Emirates began in the 1950s, but simply involved individual attempts and at times did not continue owing to the circumstances of those who were in charge of it. Such was the situation until educational missions from neighbouring countries came and contributed to a certain extent to the spread of education in some of the principal cities. The establishment of the Federation of the United Arab Emirates greatly helped to change the situation, when the Ministry of Education and Youth adopted two lines of action to fight illiteracy: the first, concern with the education of the new generation, and the second, adult education. Side by side with formal education early in the day, the State concerned itself with opening the doors of knowledge to those who had been



bypassed by learning opportunities in the past, and instituting evening centres for citizens that were joined by thousands who took advantage of that service. Many of the students of those centres subsequently graduated from universities thanks to those outstanding services that were offered them.

Ministry of Education statistics point to a constant increase in the number of students in the various levels of education: the number of students, both male and female, rose from 52,751 during the school year 1975/1976 to 186,516 in 2004/2005. Females constituted 52 per cent of the total number of students during the year 2004/2005 as compared with 41 per cent during 1975/1976.

Table 6  
**Student distribution according to sex and educational level**

<i>Level</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>1975/1976</i>	<i>1985/1986</i>	<i>1995/1996</i>	<i>2004/2005</i>
Kindergarten	Male	1 926	6 861	9 670	9 921
	Female	1 767	6 613	9 610	10 397
	Total	3 693	13 474	19 280	20 318
Primary	Male	25 474	56 570	76 861	49 476
	Female	21 039	55 541	75 880	51 266
	Total	46 513	112 111	23 846	100 742
Preparatory	Male	4 171	16 897	37 250	48 227
	Female	3 126	16 294	37 538	48 179
	Total	7 297	33 191	74 788	96 406
Secondary	Male	1 548	8 673	19 684	29 979
	Female	997	9 213	26 252	35 477
	Total	2 545	17 886	45 936	65 456

*Source:* Ministry of Education.

As for the rate of participation in higher education, the United Arab Emirates is considered as having one of the highest rates worldwide, i.e., 95 per cent of female and 80 per cent of male students in relation to general secondary-school graduates, both those who wish to enrol in institutes of higher education within the country and those enrolling in student programmes abroad. Statistics on the numbers of students enrolled in and graduating from institutions of higher education point to an increase in overall number of students enrolled in institutions of higher education within the country, including United Arab Emirates University, the Higher Colleges of Technology and Zayed University.

Moreover, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research offers equal opportunities for higher education to nationals of both sexes who are general secondary-school graduates. Indeed, according to Ministry statistics, the number of students enrolled in public higher education in school year 2005/2006 was approximately 34,950, of whom 24,880 were female students, i.e., a ratio of 71 per cent of the total. This means that in the school year 2005/2006 an overwhelming majority of the students in public higher education were female, a figure that in turn reveals an absence of social obstacles that might stand in the way of higher education for girls. It is fair to say, therefore, that such obstacles have disappeared.

The table below shows the numerical superiority of females over males at the institutional level. It can be seen that the percentage of females enrolled with respect to the total is approximately 78.7 per cent at United Arab Emirates University; 100 per cent at Zayed University, a women's school; and approximately 60.6 per cent in the Higher Colleges of Technology, clearly indicating that applied specializations are no longer the preserve of males, but have been invaded by females and in large numbers.

Table 7  
**Male and female citizens enrolled in public higher education in 2005/2006**

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	
UAE University	3 190	21.3	11 794	78.7	14 984
Zayed University	-	-	3 014	100	3 014
Higher Colleges of Technology	6 441	39.4	9 897	60.6	16 338
Higher education scholarships	439	71.5	175	28.5	614
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>10 070</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>24 880</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>34 950</b>

*Source:* Admissions Office, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

The State also offers citizens, male and female alike, opportunities for university education and higher studies under its various programmes abroad. The Department of Scholarships and Foreign Cultural Relations of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research sends students abroad for study at State expense. In addition, there are other institutions that offer citizens grants for study abroad, such as the student exchange committee of the office of the Head of State and the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority. Table 8 shows the numbers of students sent by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research to study computer science abroad according to scientific degree and sex. It will be noted that the scholarships included both males and females for all degrees: bachelor's, master's and doctorate.

Table 8  
**Students sent abroad by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research according to degree and sex for the school year 2005/2006**

<i>Specialization</i>	<i>Degree</i>						<i>Total</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>		<i>Master's degree</i>		<i>Doctorate</i>		<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>			
Medicine and medical sciences	11	21	6	9	3	11	20	41	61
Engineering sciences	9	5	3	6	1		13	11	24
Science and agricultural sciences	4	6		2		1	4	9	13
Administration and economy	14	3	19		4	2	37	5	42
Computer science	6	2	3	2	1		10	4	14

<i>Specialization</i>	<i>Degree</i>								<i>Total</i>
	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>		<i>Master's degree</i>		<i>Doctorate</i>		<i>Total</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
Humanities and education	1	3	6	4	2	4	9	11	20
Sharia and law	2	1	3	1			5	2	7
Media and information	3	2					3	2	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>186</b>

*Source:* Department of Scholarships and Foreign Cultural Relations, Department Statistical Report.

State efforts towards educating women and enhancing their knowledge has not stopped at formal education supervised by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Non-governmental grass-roots organizations in the United Arab Emirates, too, have made active and outstanding contributions in the areas of literacy and adult education. The General Women's Union, through the various women's associations, has been in the forefront in this regard with its efforts to educate and raise the awareness of women as representing half of society and as mothers bringing up future generations. Societies for the revival of heritage, girls' clubs, the Jum`a Al-Majid Foundation and other associations of public interest such as the Teachers' Association also contribute in one way or another to the realization and implementation of illiteracy-eradication and adult-education programmes.

In view of the weighty responsibilities placed on women, the General Women's Union has made it a point, through its associations, to cooperate with the Ministry of Education in order to provide a system of distance learning, i.e., home study, whereby women are given the opportunity to join the adult education system from home. A woman who signs up for this system can study the local educational curricula by herself at home, after which she may take final examinations for each class at qualified centres and institutions. Moreover, while studying in this way, a woman can request assistance and support whenever necessary from such centres to help her understand the subjects she is studying.

The women's associations have succeeded in encouraging women students to persist in their study and in ensuring the graduation of a number of secondary-school students who enrolled for higher education in universities either within the country or abroad, as well as in the field of teacher qualifications. With a view to achieving the desired goal, the General Women's Union, starting in 1990, established a plan and programme of action, at the level of all women's associations and their branches, for the eradication not only of illiteracy but of cultural and intellectual ignorance and ignorance concerning health, social, professional and family matters and everything that can help women grow and develop. All this was done through yearly programmes and plans of action carried out by each association. The associations were not content to deal merely with literacy, but sought to ensure that women acquired various life skills. For that purpose they organized training courses in a variety of areas such as secretarial, computer and other professional skills to help women participate in the labour market in the way that best suits them. The women's associations and their branches have succeeded

in encouraging women students to persist in their studies until they complete their university education and join the labour market.

Cultural institutions and the various media have also helped to educate the society in general and women in particular, whether by organizing educational lectures, holding conferences and symposiums or allocating media space to deal with the issues of women and their development. In the United Arab Emirates there are in fact 5 Arabic daily newspapers, 4 daily newspapers in English, 6 weekly magazines in Arabic, 8 satellite stations and a number of local radio stations. In addition, the communication and technology revolution, in the form of satellite communications and the Internet, help to educate women and open up their intellectual faculties.

The indicators mentioned above offer a positive picture of general trends in the United Arab Emirates with regard to the educational and cultural empowerment of women. There is still a need, however, to step up those efforts through a review of school curricula to make sure that the messages they instil promote concepts of gender that call for a change in the stereotyped image of the woman in society and stress the principle of complementarity of roles between men and women.

The State is also redoubling its efforts on literacy and adult education programmes. Indeed, the preliminary results of the 2005 census indicate a general illiteracy rate among the citizen population of 8.8 per cent, the rate being 11.7 per cent among female citizens. The commitment of the United Arab Emirates to the Millennium Declaration and the social and economic development goals to which it refers, calling for an annual reduction in illiteracy by 0.18 per cent, place the country face to face with a challenge that requires greater efforts in combating illiteracy until it is able to abolish illiteracy altogether by the year 2015 at the latest.

With regard to subparagraph (f) of this article, which urges States to reduce school dropout rates, Ministry of Education statistics for the school year 2004/2005 show a relatively higher dropout rate among boys as compared with girls, the rate of dropouts from general education being 2.8 per cent for boys and 1.1 per cent for girls. The Ministry of Education works in cooperation with the parents' councils in the educational districts on adherence to education and monitoring programmes to reduce the school dropout rate and encourage students to complete their formal education.

Regarding the need to grant women the same opportunities to participate in sports activities, in accordance with article 10 (g), the United Arab Emirates encourages women's sports in a manner in keeping with the customs of the society, providing gymnasiums in schools. In addition, there are both public and private women's sports clubs. It should be mentioned that United Arab Emirates girls have won international and regional prizes in sports activities, such as equestrian sports, karate, chess and shooting.

#### **Article 11: The field of employment**

##### *Summary of the provisions of the Convention*

Article 11 of the Convention calls upon States Parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment.

*Measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates*

Federal Act No. 8 of 1980, regarding the organization of labour relations, is the law that regulates the labour market in the United Arab Emirates, while Federal Act No. 21 of 2001 regulates civil service in the federal Government. In addition, every local Emirate has its own law concerning civil service in its local departments, which must not, in its general purport, be incompatible with federal law. The laws contain a number of articles granting rights to women, in addition to guaranteeing that their basic rights are equal to those of men in terms of work opportunities and economic participation, starting with the Constitution, article 20 of takes up the question of work, as follows:

The community considers work a cornerstone of its development and shall endeavour to provide it for citizens and train them for it. It shall ensure appropriate conditions therefor by enacting legislation that preserves the rights of employees and the interests of employers in the light of developing international labour legislation.

The State endeavours to provide work for citizens and train them for it by ensuring appropriate conditions therefor. Reference should also be made to the provisions of articles 34 and 35, mentioned above, and article 9 of the Labour Law states that work is a right of the citizens of the State of the United Arab Emirates without discrimination between the sexes.

The articles referred to above call for equal rights between men and women in the field of work, actually considering the participation of women in the United Arab Emirates labour market a fundamental and vital matter, owing to the State's expectations that women's participation will make up for shortcomings in the labour market. The State therefore adopts all measures likely to enhance the participation of United Arab Emirates women in the labour market, and the Labour and Civil Service Acts grant equal rights to men and women with regard to both work opportunities and pay. The legislation governing women's work passed in the United Arab Emirates can be summarized as follows:

- **Employment of women**

- Work in which women may be employed

Article 33 of the Labour Law:

The Minister of Labour and Social Affairs may issue a decision exempting charity and educational institutions from all or part of the provisions of the two preceding sections of this Chapter if the purpose of such institutions is vocational rehabilitation or training of young persons or women and provided that the by-laws of those institutions specify the nature of the work to be carried out by the young persons and women and the working conditions and hours within the institution, which must not be incompatible with the actual capacity of the women and juveniles.

- Work in which women may not be employed

Article 29 of the Labour Law:

It is prohibited to employ women in work that is hazardous, arduous, detrimental to health or morally harmful or in such other work as may be

decided by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs after seeking the opinion of the competent authorities.

- **Working hours of women**

Article 27 of the Labour Law:

Women shall not be required to work at night. The term "night" means a period of not less than eleven consecutive hours including the period from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Article 28 of the Labour Law:

The following cases shall constitute exceptions to the clause prohibiting the employment of women at night:

- (a) Cases in which work in the establishment stops due to force majeure;
- (b) Work in administrative and technical posts of responsibility;
- (c) Work in health services and other jobs defined by a decision of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs if the working woman does not normally perform manual work.

- **Remuneration of work**

Article 32 of the Labour Law:

A working woman shall be paid a wage comparable to that of a man if she does the same work.

Article 67 of the Labour Law:

If work conditions require that an employee work more than the normal working hours, the extra time shall be considered overtime, for which the employee shall receive pay equal to that corresponding to normal working hours plus an additional amount of not less than 25 per cent of that pay.

Article 68 of the Labour Law:

If work conditions require that an employee work overtime between 9 p.m. and 4 a.m., he shall be entitled, for the overtime, to the pay established for normal working hours plus an additional amount of not less than 50% of that pay.

Article 70 of the Labour Law:

Friday is the normal weekly holiday for all employees except day labourers. If circumstances require that an employee work on that day, he must be compensated by another day of rest or be paid the basic pay for normal working hours plus an additional amount of at least 50% of that pay.

Article 78 of the Labour Law:

An employee shall receive his basic pay in addition to the housing allowance, if any, for the days of annual leave. However, if work conditions require that an employee work during all or part of his annual leave and the period of leave during which he has worked is not carried forward to the next year, the employer must pay him his wage in addition to leave compensation for the days he has worked equal to his basic pay.

Article 79 of the Labour Law:

An employee is entitled to receive his pay for days of annual leave not obtained by him if he is dismissed from work after the period of notice stipulated by law. Such compensation shall be calculated on the basis of the pay received by him at the time of his entitlement to such leave.

Article 80 of the Labour Law:

Before an employee takes his annual leave, the employer shall pay to him all wages owing to him plus the pay for the leave to which he is entitled under this law.

Article 81 of the Labour Law:

If work conditions require that an employee work on feast days or holidays for which he receives full or partial pay, he shall be compensated therefor by other leave plus additional pay in the amount of 50 per cent of his wage; if, however, he is not compensated with leave, the employer shall pay him an amount additional to his basic wage equivalent to 150% for the days of work.

Article 86 of the Labour Law:

If an employee resigns from service because of illness before completing the first 45 days of sick leave and the Government physician or the physician appointed by the employer confirms the cause of resignation, the employer must pay to the employee the wages owing to him for the remaining portion of the first 45 days referred to above.

- **Leave**

- Maternity leave

Article 30 of the Labour Law:

A woman employee is entitled to maternity leave with full pay for a duration of 45 days including the period preceding childbirth and the period following it, provided that the duration of her continuous service with the employer is not less than a year. Maternity leave shall be with half pay if the woman employee has not completed the said period.

A woman employee may, on the expiry of the maternity leave, remain absent from work without pay for a maximum period of one hundred consecutive or non-consecutive days if such absence is due to illness that does not permit her to return to work and the illness is confirmed, by a medical certificate issued by the medical authority designated by the competent health authority or attested by the latter authority, as being the result of the pregnancy or childbirth.

The leave provided for in the preceding two paragraphs shall not be computed as part of "other leave".

Article 55 of the Federal Civil Service Act:

A female employee shall be granted special leave on full salary for a period of 45 days for childbirth as well as child-care leave for a period of 15 days on full salary.

### Sick leave

Article 82 of the Labour Law:

An employee who falls ill due to causes other than a work injury must report his illness within two days at most and the employer must take the necessary steps to have him examined medically without delay in order to verify his illness.

Article 83 of the Labour Law:

1. An employee is not entitled to any paid sick leave during the probationary period.
2. If an employee spends over three months in the continuous service of the employer after the completion of the probationary period and falls ill, he becomes entitled to sick leave of not more than 90 consecutive or non-consecutive days for each year of service, computed as follows:
  - (a) For the first 15 days, with full pay;
  - (b) For the next 30 days, with half pay;
  - (c) For subsequent periods, without pay.

Article 50 of the Civil Service Act:

Sick leave for a period not to exceed seven days shall be permissible on the basis of a certificate issued by a doctor or a treatment facility and attested by a competent Government authority. If the period is greater, permission for leave shall be based on a medical report of the competent medical committee of the Ministry of Health. The employee must report his illness within the first two days thereof unless there is a compelling excuse for not doing so. A decision establishing sick-leave rules and procedures shall be issued by the Council of Ministers.

### Unpaid leave

Article 57 of the Act regulating civil service in the federal Government:

The competent minister may grant an employee special leave without pay in addition to the periodic leave to which he is entitled for a period of one month per year whenever there exist serious grounds for granting the employee such leave.

### Child-care and nursing leave

Article 31 of the Labour Law:

During the 18 months following the date of childbirth, an employed woman who nurses her child shall be entitled, in addition to the established rest period, to two other intervals each day for that purpose, each of which shall not exceed half an hour. The two additional intervals shall be considered part of working hours and shall not give rise to any reduction of pay.



Leave for the period of waiting (*'iddah*)

Article 56 of the Civil Service Act:

A woman employee whose husband dies is granted special leave on full salary for a period of four months and ten days from the date of his decease.

Leave for accompanying a spouse

Article 54 of the Civil Service Act:

A husband or wife may be granted special leave without pay if one of them is authorized to travel abroad. Such leave shall not exceed the duration of the stay of the authorized spouse abroad. The duration of such leave shall be reckoned as part of the period taken into consideration for the purposes of seniority and for computing a pension or retirement benefit.

Article 58 of the Civil Service Act:

The competent minister may grant an employee leave with full pay for a period not to exceed two months if circumstances require him to accompany his spouse, one of his children or parents or any person to whom he is related by cognation or descent, for treatment outside the country. Such leave may also be granted to a wife or to a husband in the absence of the wife, to accompany children aged 10 years or less for treatment within the country. Such period may be extended for an additional similar period should circumstances so require. If the period is greater than four months, the matter shall be referred to the Council to decide as it sees fit.

Leave to perform the religious duty of the hajj

Article 87 of the Labour Law:

An employer shall grant to an employee, once during his service, special leave without pay for the performance of the hajj pilgrimage, which shall not be reckoned among his other leaves and shall not exceed 30 days.

Article 53 of the Civil Service Act:

Employees shall be granted, once during their service, leave for a period of 21 days on full salary, payable in advance, for the performance of the hajj pilgrimage.

Annual leave

Article 75 of the Labour Law:

Employees shall, during each year of their service, be granted annual leave, which shall not be less than:

- (a) Two days per month if the employee's length of service is greater than six months and less than one year;
- (b) Thirty days per year if the employee's length of service is greater than one year.

In the event of termination of an employee's service, he shall be entitled to annual leave for the fractions of the last year.

Article 76 of the Labour Law:

An employer may determine the starting date of annual leave and may, if need be, divide the leave into two parts at most, provided, however, that a decision to divide the leave shall not be valid in the case of leave established for minors.

Article 77 of the Labour Law:

The annual leave period is deemed to include holidays established by law or by agreement and any other periods owing to sickness if they occur during that leave and are considered as part thereof.

Article 47 of the Civil Service Act:

Employees shall be entitled each year to periodic leave on full salary, payable in advance upon their taking such leave, for the following periods: (1) 60 days per year for persons occupying grade 4 and higher posts; (2) 45 days per year for persons occupying other posts. Such leave shall be authorized only upon the successful completion of the trial period and employees shall not be entitled to periodic leave for a period spent on study leave. An employee shall be granted periodic leave only upon a request by him. Leave authorization for under-secretaries and assistant under-secretaries shall require the approval of the competent minister and that for other employees, the approval of an under-secretary.

Emergency leave

Article 46 of the Civil Service Act:

(1) Emergency leave is leave by reason of a supervening cause for which advance notice is not possible. An employee may not absent himself from work by reason of an emergency for a period greater than six days in a single year, nor may the duration of such leave on any single occasion exceed one day. Immediately upon returning from emergency leave the employee must submit to his chief a statement of the causes that required his absence. The chief shall have the right to accept or reject the reasons for the absence. If he rejects them, a deduction shall be made from the employee's total salary. (2) An employee shall be granted three days' leave in the event of the death of a relative up to the third degree.

Article 87 of Act No. 23 of 1976 concerning labour law in the non-governmental sector:

An employee shall be entitled to leave with full pay as follows:

- (a) Three days in the case of his own wedding;
- (b) Three days in the event of the death of his spouse or any of his relatives, up to the fourth degree;
- (c) Three days in the event of the death of a first-degree relative of his spouse and one day up to the fourth degree;
- (d) One day in the event of the birth of a child of his own.

In such cases the employer shall have the right to request from the employee documents substantiating the events referred to.

Study leave

Article 52 of the Civil Service Act:

The competent minister may, upon approval by the Council, grant an employee a study leave with salary including allowances, with the exception of the transfer allowance, for the study period decided. Such leave may be granted with the same pay for any other period if the reports received about the employee so require. Such study leave shall be taken into account in respect of entitlement to increments and promotion. Approval may be granted, by decision of the minister, for the employee to participate in study lectures, studies or examinations, in accordance with the rules defined in the implementing regulation.

Sabbatical leave

Article 62 of the Civil Service Act:

An employee may be granted sabbatical leave on full salary, based on the approval of the competent minister, in order to engage in research, studies, work or missions coming under the fields of culture, art, literature, science or mathematics, neither related to the Government authority to which the employee belongs nor ending in his obtaining any practical qualification relating to study or training, based on a request by the authorities concerned. The Council shall lay down the rules governing such leave.

- **Requirement for facilities to establish a day-care centre**

Article 1 of Council of Ministers Decision No. 19 of 2006, on day-care centres in ministries, public institutions and Government offices and agencies, provides as follows:

In the headquarters of ministries, Government offices and agencies and other public agencies and institutions, day-care centres attached thereto shall be established to provide care for the children of women employees working therein if the number of married women employed therein is 50 or more or the number of female employees' children in the age group ranging from newborn infants to 4 years is 20 or more.

Under article 2 of the same Decision, institutions in which the number of married women employees or the number of children falls short of that mentioned in article 1 may together open joint day-care centres.

- **Holding of judicial office**

Article 18 of Federal Law No. 3 of 1983 concerning the judiciary, as amended:

Anyone holding a judicial office in the federal courts must satisfy the following conditions: he must:

1. Be a full-fledged Muslim;
2. Be a citizen of the State of the United Arab Emirates;
3. Be not less than 30 years of age in the case of presidents and judges of the federal courts and courts of first instance and not less than 35 years of age in the case of judges of the federal courts of appeal and the president and judges of the Federal Supreme Court;

4. Have obtained a licence in sharia or in law from a recognized university or higher institute;
5. Have completed, in judicial or legal work in a court of law or in equivalent posts in the office of the public prosecutor or fatwa and legislation departments, in teaching the sharia or law in a recognized university or higher institute, in the legal profession or in other legal work considered as equivalent to work in the judiciary, as defined by the Supreme Council of the Federal Judiciary, periods not less than the following:
  - (a) 20 years, for appointment to the office of president or judge of the Federal Supreme Court or president of a court of appeal;
  - (b) 14 years, for appointment as judge of a court of appeal;
  - (c) 10 years, for appointment as class A judge;
  - (d) 8 years, for appointment as class B judge;
  - (e) 4 years, for appointment as class A assistant judge;
6. Have exhibited good conduct, enjoy a good reputation and not have been convicted in any court of law or disciplinary body of an offence violating honour or trust even if he has been rehabilitated or the disciplinary sanction taken against him has been expunged;

and the appointment of class B associate justices shall be for a probationary period of one year.

The Government is making efforts to amend the law with a view to permitting access of women to the bench. The new draft Judiciary Act is advancing in accordance with constitutional procedures towards approval in the near future. In addition, some of the Emirates that apply the local judicial system have taken steps to permit women to assume posts in the judiciary. Such is the case in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

The legal environment favourable to the participation of United Arab Emirates women in the labour market has helped to bring the country's women to the highest levels and posts in ministries and the various Government agencies. Their participation has reached approximately 59 per cent of the volume of the citizen labour force, 30 per cent of this figure being in top leadership posts involving decision-making. Women also occupy approximately 60 per cent of all technical posts, including medicine, nursing, pharmacy and teaching, and 15 per cent of the teaching staff at United Arab Emirates University.

Women's participation in economic life is not confined to Government posts, for they have come to play an active role in the private sector as businesswomen. The volume of investments in women-run businesses is estimated at approximately 14 billion United Arab Emirates dirhams, such enterprises being run by more than 11,000 women throughout the State.

The State in fact encourages women to work and produce from home through "productive families" projects and there is a trend towards issuing commercial licences to women for work at home, thus helping them to achieve a balance between their family responsibilities and their economic aspirations.

It is essential to point out here, with regard to paragraphs 1 (f) and 2 (a) of the article under discussion, that women have the right, in case the nature of their work conflicts with pregnancy or presents a danger for pregnancy or the foetus, to be transferred from their job or take sick leave from work, as in the case of women employed in radiology departments attached to medical services, whose working conditions are monitored during the period of pregnancy and who are transferred to other jobs until delivery.

## **Article 12: Health care**

### *Summary of the provisions of the Convention*

Article 12 of the Convention calls upon States Parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care, emphasizing the need to ensure appropriate health services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-partum period.

### *Measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates*

As of the founding of the new State, the Constitution of the United Arab Emirates took up the question of the right to health, according it maximum importance. Article 19 provides:

The community shall guarantee its citizens health care and means of prevention and treatment of diseases and epidemics. It shall encourage the establishment of public and private hospitals, dispensaries and treatment facilities.

Moreover, local laws regulate, whether in the field of labour or in that of immigration and nationality, the commitments that must exist for the requisite health care for immigrants to the country.

The country's health institutions—i.e., the Ministry of Health, with the participation of the General Authority for Health Services of Abu Dhabi Emirate, the Department of Health and Medical Services in Dubai, the medical services of the armed forces and the medical services of the petroleum companies, together with private-sector health institutions—have expanded their base of services to cover all parts of the country, on the basis of the concept of health care as the fundamental approach to high-quality health services including comprehensive therapeutic care, prevention, booster treatment and rehabilitation. The features of health strategy in the United Arab Emirates are therefore based on:

- The provision of comprehensive health care, both primary and specialized, to the entire population of the country;
- Increased life expectancy through the lowering of mortality and prevalence of disease;
- Continued eradication of communicable diseases, especially the childhood diseases at which the national vaccination programme is aimed, as well as new and exotic diseases;
- Early detection and optimal treatment of chronic diseases;
- Targeted programmes aimed at population segments having economic and social importance, in particular mothers, children, school students and youth, as well as the elderly, persons with special needs and professionals;

- Provision of a unified technical data and information base for the planning, follow-up and assessment of health performance in the country, together with participation in the working manpower programme and the training of that manpower in specialized technical and administrative institutes;
- Establishment of specialized centres and therapeutic/diagnostic units, such as open heart surgery units; organ surgery and transplant units; renal lithotripsy units for the treatment of kidney stones, in which shock waves, rather than surgery, are used; units for examining the heart and arteries by means of catheterization; and dialysis units for patients with chronic end-stage kidney failure.
- Development of health strategies, establishment of accurate criteria and specifications for health facilities and the providing of those facilities with state-of-the-art high-technology equipment in order to keep abreast of current developments and scientific achievements;
- Concern with preventive and booster programmes through the development of strategies aimed at fighting epidemic and contagious diseases, and with programmes intended for specific segments of society, such as children, mothers and school students.

It should be pointed out here that the Ministry of Health in the United Arab Emirates offers maternal and child health-care services whereby follow-up of pregnant women is provided through the maternal and child centres and units in the primary health-care centres, in addition to health establishments and general hospitals and those specializing in gynaecology and obstetrics, where follow-up of pregnant women takes place from the onset of pregnancy to the eighth month. Thereafter the woman is referred to the hospital where the childbirth will take place, In the event that any unnatural symptoms appear and in cases of high-risk pregnancy, the health-care doctors immediately refer a pregnant woman to a specialized hospital for follow-up of the pregnancy under constant medical supervision. Ministry of Health statistics indicate that from 1993 to the present 100 per cent of all births have taken place under the supervision of health-care personnel. This is the advancement achieved in the United Arab Emirates in the field of health care provided to women that is documented in the international reports.

Health institutions in the United Arab Emirates have established a group of services designed to preserve the health of pregnant women, some of which are the following:

- Complete medical examination including weight and height measurements and a dental check-up;
- Laboratory studies (urine, for sugar and protein; and blood, for haemoglobin, Rh factor, hepatitis B, complete blood picture and AIDS);
- Checking of the viability and natural growth of the foetus within the womb (ultrasound imaging of the uterus, auscultation of foetal heart rate);
- Preparation for natural breast feeding by means of the necessary consciousness-raising;

- The offering of the necessary treatment for certain simple occurrences, in addition to vitamins and mineral salts.

Maternal care is not limited to the period of pregnancy, but extends to the post-partum period, during which the mother returns to the health centre to make sure that there are no childbirth-related complications and also for support and encouragement for natural breast feeding, not to mention the care provided to the baby. The United Arab Emirates, through its health institutions, avidly promotes education and awareness concerning various diseases likely to affect women's health. Consequently, health efforts are not limited simply to care of pregnant women, but also involve enhanced awareness and direct monitoring for many diseases, including breast cancer, osteoporosis, AIDS and others.

### **Article 13: Social and economic life**

#### *Summary of the provisions of the Convention*

This article calls upon States Parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in areas of economic and social life.

#### *Measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates*

### **Social security**

Inasmuch as social security is one of the most important social services provided by the United Arab Emirates to its citizens in the area of social welfare, the State has sought to pass laws to guarantee it, one of which is Act No. 13 of 1972, on social security. The Act regulates social assistance and defines the groups entitled to aid, who include widows, divorced women who have not remarried, women whose husbands have abandoned them for a year without monetary support and who have been unable to ascertain their place of residence, women over 40 years of age who have not married, women citizens who have married non-citizens, and others. The law makes the social aid granted sufficient to support families who benefit from it, inasmuch as the minimum aid is 4000 dirhams per month.

### **The right to obtain loans, mortgages and financial credit**

Banking institutions in the United Arab Emirates do not discriminate between men and women in their financial dealings. The laws established by the Central Bank lay down general conditions to guarantee loans. For example, a women is granted loans guaranteed by her salary and no further guarantees are demanded of her. Women have the right to obtain credit cards, just as they have the right to engage in a commercial activity. The official statistics for 2002 show that the number of women managers in the commercial sector in Dubai was no less than 3223, as compared with 1325 in Abu Dhabi and Al-'Ayn during the same year. With regard to participation in business activities, the 2003 statistics reveal the existence of 10,409 commercial licences granted to women. The statistics also give the percentages for women employers (40.5 per cent), business partners (48.1 per cent) and general managers (11.45 per cent) and indicate that 48 per cent of working women work in the field of trade and 42 per cent in various professional jobs, while 9.6 per cent provide specialized services and 0.3 per cent are employed in industry.

### **Participation in recreational and sports activities and cultural life**

The United Arab Emirates has devoted considerable attention to recreational, sports and cultural phenomena, providing parks, gardens and recreational areas to be

frequented by individuals and families living in the country. In view of the special position occupied by women in the United Arab Emirates and the desire to respect their privacy, a number of facilities have been set aside exclusively for ladies, including the following:

- Ras Al-Akhdar Ladies' Beach;
- Al-Sharia Ladies' Park;
- Al-Raha Ladies' Beach;
- Women's clubs in the country's different Emirates;
- Women's gardens and parks;
- The organization of ladies' days, festivals and other recreational activities in public parks or gardens.

As far as sports are concerned, the State, through the relevant institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, has introduced physical education into school programmes in addition to encouraging the formation of women's sports teams. It should be mentioned that the United Arab Emirates recently hosted the first Arab women's soccer championship.

The United Arab Emirates also encourages the culture and literature movement and opens the way for its citizens, male and female alike, to take part actively in the country's cultural life. The country boasts a number of women of letters and women artists and authors among its citizens, and membership in the writers' union and cultural clubs is open to women.

#### **Article 14: Attention to rural areas**

##### *Summary of the provisions of the Convention*

This article calls upon States Parties to take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and to strive to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas.

##### *Measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates*

The United Arab Emirates has sought, through its development programmes plan, to include remote regions. The Ministry of Social Affairs has thus opened social development centres in a number of remote areas to ensure that its services reach the broadest possible spectrum of the population. In addition to the centres, which provide care and social security, women's associations and their branches support that activity through attention to education, consciousness-raising and the provision of care to women in those areas.

Moreover, the Ministry of Education has opened schools for boys and girls in remote regions as well as adult-education and illiteracy-eradication programmes, in which women's associations participate.

With regard to access to agricultural loans and credit, the law grants women rights equal to those of men in that area provided that they own agricultural land registered in their name. They also have the right to avail themselves of the agricultural marketing programmes offered by the State in support of farmers.



It must be pointed out here that the United Arab Emirates Government strategy has included 21 topics divided among six main sectors, one of which relates to the development of remote areas. The aim is to invest in human resources in remote areas in order to empower them and strengthen their capacities as well as to improve the standard of living in those areas and provide them all basic services on a par, in terms of quality, with those in the cities. This led to the establishment, on the one hand, of a ministerial committee on the development of remote areas, to be responsible for the planning and supervision of the implementation of remote area development projects in all sectors, and on the other hand, of specialized local committees, as required, to assist in defining local needs and facilitate implementation operations.

#### **Article 15: Equality before the law**

##### *Summary of the provisions of the Convention*

This article provides that the States Parties must accord to women equality with men before the law and affirms the need to accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men.

##### *Measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates*

The laws of the State of the United Arab Emirates do not distinguish among its citizens on grounds of sex. Sometimes, in fact, women's distinctive character is respected in what amounts to positive discrimination in their favour. Moreover, despite the fact that the sharia is the general framework that governs civil transactions, women have full capacity to manage their financial affairs, including the conclusion of contracts and the administration of property. In Islam, for 14 centuries women have enjoyed a financial status that is completely independent from that of men and full legal capacity that is in no way inferior to that of men. They have the right to possess all kinds of property, whether real estate, chattels or liquid assets, exactly like men, and to dispose of what they own in the various ways established by law. They have the right to buy, sell, barter, give, bequeath, loan, borrow, share, speculate, donate, pledge, lease, etc., and their dispositions take effect by virtue of their own will, nothing therein depending on the approval of a father, spouse or brother.

Article 159 of the Personal Status Act provides:

All persons are legally competent to conclude contracts unless such competence is stripped from them or limited by law,

and article 174 clarifies that the impediments to legal competence are insanity, feeble-mindedness and terminal illness.

Despite the fact that the legislator in the United Arab Emirates stressed that its citizens are equal before the law and that there is no discrimination based on sex, he accorded women a positive discrimination in the Code of Criminal Procedure (Act No. 35 of 1992), amended by Federal Act No. 29 of 2005, including the following articles:

Article 289:

The execution of a death sentence penalty against a pregnant woman shall be deferred until she gives birth and completes nursing in two hijri years, and she shall be imprisoned until the time of execution.

**Article 295:**

If a woman given a prison sentence is pregnant, the execution of the sentence may be deferred until she gives birth and a period of three months following childbirth has elapsed,

**Article 298:**

If a man and his wife are sentenced to imprisonment and they provide for a minor who has not reached the age of 15 years and have a known place of residence in the country, the execution of the penalty of one of them may be deferred until the other is released.

In addition, article 41 of the regulation for the implementation of Federal Act No. 43 of 1992, on the regulation of penal institutions, provides:

A mother who does not wish to keep her infant in the penal institution shall be permitted to see him twice a week outside of normal visiting hours during the two years of nursing and once a week after that period until he reaches the age of 7 years, as the administration of the penal institution sees fit.

**Article 16: Marriage and family relations***Summary of the provisions of the Convention*

This article calls upon the States Parties to eliminate discrimination against women in matters relating to marriage and family relations.

*Measures adopted by the United Arab Emirates*

The United Arab Emirates Personal Status Act includes provisions governing questions of betrothal, marriage, custody and inheritance. The sharia is the basic source for the provisions of the Act, inasmuch as it relates to matters clearly spelled out by the religion concerning which no debate is permissible. Despite the fact that the approval of the guardian is deemed a fundamental condition for the validity of a woman's marriage, the law has established controls regulating that question and guaranteeing the woman rights: a woman may, in the marriage contract, stipulate any conditions not prohibited by law and may rescind the contract in the event of a breach of the conditions.

It is stipulated as a requirement for marriage that the man be suited to the woman at the time of conclusion of the marriage contract, and this is a right of every woman.

A woman has the right to have recourse to the judge in the event that the guardian refrains from marrying a woman who has reached the age of 18, which is the legal marriageable age.

Agreement based on explicit or implicit acceptance of the offer is a necessary condition, with the contracting parties retaining their legal capacities at the time of conclusion of the contract.

As for the question of equality of rights and responsibilities during marriage and its dissolution, the sharia honours women and makes the man responsible for the financial support of the woman, whether his wife, daughter, mother or sister, not requiring the wife to support either herself or her family, even if she is wealthy. All the property she owns is for her alone and she is not required to provide for anyone.

In case one of them is the partner of the other in increasing wealth, the building of a house or the like, he or she has the right to recover from the other his or her share therein in the event of divorce or death.

Article 55 of the Personal Status Act specifies the rights of the woman with respect to her husband: not to prevent her from completing her education; not to prevent her from visiting her ascendants, descendants and siblings; not to interfere with her personal property; and not to harm her either materially or morally.

Despite the fact that a woman is not obliged to provide for children, something that actually constitutes a privilege in the woman's favour, she has reciprocal rights with her husband with regard to their care, education and proper upbringing pursuant to article 54 of the Personal Status Act.

As far as humanitarian and health care for the mother and child is concerned, the United Arab Emirates makes every effort to provide all services conducive to maternal and child welfare through the Ministry of Health's primary health care centres. In addition, women's associations engage in consciousness-raising regarding health, and the coming period will see the establishment of a supreme council on women and children, which has been approved by the Council of Ministers.

Subparagraph 1 (g) of the article under discussion calls for according women the right to choose a family name on an equal basis with men. Inasmuch as the sharia does not permit the relation of children to anyone but their parents, the laws of the State provide for the relation of the wife herself to her family and not to her husband's family.

Subparagraph (h), which relates to the financial status of the wife, sets forth the principle followed regarding the woman's independent financial status in accordance with the sharia.

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