



**Convention on the Rights
of Persons with Disabilities**

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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**Consideration of reports submitted by States
parties under article 35 of the Convention**

Initial reports of States parties due in 2011

Oman*

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I. Introduction

1. The Government of the Sultanate of Oman is honoured to submit its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The report describes the machinery for implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman. It should be read together with the core document which the Sultanate prepared according to the guidelines on the form and content of reports to be submitted by States parties to the international human rights treaties and submitted on 11 April 2013.
2. The individual is the primary focus and cornerstone of the United Nations system. The Sultanate of Oman — whose culture is rooted in the values of Islam, tolerance and justice — accords high priority to and respects human dignity.
3. The Government of Oman views the universal periodic review of international instruments which the State has ratified as a constructive mechanism that provides States with an opportunity to regularly review progress concerning the protection and promotion of human rights, including the rights of persons with disabilities. Hence, the Sultanate of Oman avails itself of the present opportunity to present its achievements in this regard.
4. In a relatively short time, Oman has established the necessary national legal structure to embed human rights principles in general in its national institutions and legislation. The Sultanate strives to develop the highest possible standards for protecting and promoting human rights. It seeks to guarantee these rights based on its cultural and social values, drawing on the experience and best practices of the Member States and the technical expertise of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in capacity-building.
5. The Sultanate of Oman has taken steps to include in the Basic Law of the State (Constitution) and in its laws the fundamental human rights principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On 30 March 2008, the State signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. On 5 November 2008, Royal Decree No. 121/2008 ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities was promulgated and entered into force. Thus, the Convention officially entered into force in the Sultanate in 2008. Under article 35 of the Convention, the Sultanate is obliged to submit periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities through the Secretary-General of the United Nations in which it provides details of the measures it has adopted and the progress that it has achieved in implementing the Convention.
6. The Government has adhered in the present report to the guidelines on the form and content of reports to be submitted by States parties to the international human rights treaties (HRI/GEN/2/Rev) and the guidelines on treaty-specific documents to be submitted by States parties under article 35, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD/C/2/3). The present report includes an introductory section describing the general status of the implementation of the Convention by Oman, with a particular focus on relevant laws and policies and how they are implemented.
7. A joint action committee comprising relevant governmental units and civil-society organizations was established on 29 December 2012 to facilitate the compilation of the present report under the joint chair of the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The committee's 220 members are drawn from 20 legislative, judicial and executive governmental departments and community groups concerned with persons with disabilities. The committee solicited the views of a broad segment of non-governmental organizations and academic institutions and the public as part of its

information collection effort. The State is endeavouring to harness all its resources to fully uphold its obligations under the Convention, despite the economic, social and statistical problems which it faces. It needs time to overcome these problems and will pursue this through the comprehensive plans and mechanisms it has developed, guided by the recommendations of the Committee and related principles.

8. The Sultanate of Oman takes this opportunity to affirm its fundamental commitment to the international treaties, conventions and instruments to which it has acceded and which it is bound to uphold under article 10 of the Basic Law of the State. It affirms its belief in the importance of continuing the purposeful dialogue with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as indicated by its participation in workshops which are held in various States that are signatories to the Convention or concerned with it and in which Committee members lecture. It seeks to comply as much as possible with the periodic report mechanism and content requirements to ensure, in line with the principles and values of Omani society and respect for the rights covered by the provisions of the Convention and its content and purposes.

9. The Sultanate provides essential services to persons with disabilities consistent with the type, degree, and permanency of the disability and with the social circumstances, wishes, choices and rights of persons with disabilities. It seeks to remove obstacles facing persons with disabilities and to facilitate and provide opportunities for them to develop their abilities, secure their rights, discharge their responsibilities, participate in planning and the making of decisions about their affairs and contribute to the development of society.

10. The results of the most recent population census held in 2010 and a number of studies and surveys show that persons with disabilities account for 3.2 per cent of the Omani population (55.6 per cent males and 44.4 per cent females).

11. The Sultanate seeks to help persons with disabilities to communicate with others using augmentative communication and assistive technologies including sign language, lip-reading, Braille, tactile communication, display of text, large print texts, easy-to-use multimedia, written and audio augmentative technologies and alternative modes, means and formats of communication in plain language, human readers and easy-to-use information and communication technology.

12. The Sultanate has taken numerous measures, as detailed below, to prohibit exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability that has the purpose or effect of weakening or blocking the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms provided in the Basic Law of the State or in any other legislation in respect of the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or other domains. This also includes denial of reasonable accommodation.

13. The Government attaches the utmost importance to rehabilitating persons with disabilities., providing them with multifaceted services to enable them to regain, acquire or develop their physical, mental, vocational, social, psychological or economic capacities and to use them to become independent. It further seeks to fully integrate persons with disabilities in all aspects of life on an equal basis with others.

Reservations to the Convention

14. The Sultanate of Oman has no reservations to the articles of the Convention.

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

15. The Government of Oman has not yet signed the optional protocol and is studying it.

II. General provisions of the Convention

Articles 1-4

General provisions of the Convention

16. The Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 63/2008, guarantees the following general rights and principles:

16.1 Equality in the enjoyment of all human rights and basic freedoms in the civil, social, economic, humanitarian and political domains without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability, type of disability or sex.

16.2 Respect for the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities, including their freedom to make choices for themselves independently, unless their disability prevents them from exercising that freedom.

16.3 The right of persons with disabilities to marry and to found a family on the basis of the full consent of the intending spouses.

16.4 The right of persons with disabilities to freely express their opinions, with due consideration being given to their views when decisions are made that affect them, the aim being to ensure their full, effective participation in society.

16.5 Respect for difference and the acceptance of persons with disabilities as a part of human diversity and humanity.

16.6 Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and for their right to preserve their identity.

16.7 Equal opportunity for persons with disabilities on a par with others without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability or type of disability.

16.8 Ensuring the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms through the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility.

16.9 Equality between men and women with disabilities and others.

16.10 Protection of the best interest of persons with disabilities in respect of all decisions and measures pertaining to them, regardless of the entity that issues or implements the decisions and measures.

16.11 The State ensures that persons with disabilities enjoy all civil, social, economic, humanitarian and political rights and fundamental freedoms fully, effectively and without discrimination between them and others. The State is committed to creating favourable circumstances for persons with disabilities in all areas of their lives based on respect for their human dignity.

16.12 The State guarantees, at a minimum, the rights of persons with disabilities that are provided in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other relevant international instruments and prohibits any action or practice that conflicts with the provisions of such instruments.

16.13 The State also guarantees that it will provide equipment and devise measures to create an inclusive and accommodating environment. This includes adjustment of environmental and social conditions and communication vectors, the and the provision of assistive equipment, tools and devices to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise their rights and freedoms on an equal basis with others. If accessibility is lacking, the law provides for reasonable temporary measures or modifications to accommodate persons with disabilities until full accessibility is

achieved to enable them to enjoy and exercise all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others.

16.14 The Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 63/2008, also points to the need to adhere to engineering specifications that allow persons with disabilities access to the public services which they frequently use. The law also provides that public means of transportation must facilitate the movement of persons with disabilities at airports and ports and on roads.

17. The Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act — which was promulgated in 2008, the same year in which the Sultanate ratified the Convention — states : “The term “‘person with disabilities” means a ‘disabled’ person who is affected by a deficit in his/her sensory, physical or mental faculties which is congenital or stems from a genetic factor, disease or accident and which limits the person’s ability to function normally in life compared to others of the same age, such that the person requires care and rehabilitation in order to function in life”.

18. The Sultanate dealt with the definition of the term “a person with disabilities” when it participated in the discussions and drafting of the Convention according to the approaches.

First approach

19. The term “disabled” or “handicapped” is restricted to a person afflicted with a specific disability in a bodily organ or limb that renders the person unable to adapt to society in a normal fashion, i.e., the person cannot meet the requirements of functioning normally in life commensurate with his or her age, sex, and social and cultural characteristics due to an injury or inability to perform physiological or intellectual functions. The various types of disabilities — such as intellectual, hearing, visual, physical, and learning — are included in the scope of this meaning.

Second approach

20. The term “disabled” does not apply exclusively to a person with a specific disability in a bodily organ or limb. It also covers any condition that impairs an individual’s normal functioning in society even if the disability does not affect an organ or limb. Hence, a disabled person is defined according to this approach as an individual whose potential to hold and be promoted in a suitable job according to International Labour Organization Conventions Nos. 100 and 111 has been considerably reduced due to a physical or intellectual deficit recognized by law. A person may be socially withdrawn and isolated, a condition that renders him or her unable to fit in with members of the surrounding community even if that person is physically healthy. This meaning of disability therefore covers behavioural disorders and cultural dissonance. A disability need not have a single cause. Rather, it may be the outcome of a series of medical, genetic, cultural and social factors, which can differ depending on the society and the time. Thus, according to this definition, a person with a disability may be an individual whose disability renders him or her unable to adapt to society.

Third approach

21. This approach is based on the definition in the Convention (art.1, para. 2) namely: “Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.

Fourth approach

22. As mentioned above, the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act defines a person with disabilities as “a person who is affected by a deficit in his/her sensory, physical or mental faculties or a deficit that is congenital or stems from a genetic factor, disease or accident that limits the person’s ability to function normally in life compared to others of the same age, such that the person requires care and rehabilitation in order to function in life”. This definition justifiably covers both cause and effect, which is consistent with the definition in the Convention.

23. The Children’s Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 22/2014 (25 May 2014) defines a disabled child as “a child who has a deficit in his/her sensory, physical or mental faculties that is congenital or stems from a genetic factor, disease or accident that limits the child’s ability to function normally in life and to participate fully and effectively in society on an equal basis with others”. This definition is also consistent with the definition in the Convention.

24. The basic principles laid down in articles 1-4 of the Convention regarding protection of the rights of persons with disabilities are reflected in Omani laws concerning public policies and national development plans and related implementing regulations, as reviewed below.

A. Legislation

25. The Basic Law of the State, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 101/96, provides fundamental safeguards for individuals in various areas, including the guarantee that aid for citizens and their families will be provided in the event of an emergency, sickness, disability or old age, in addition to the following:

25.1 The Basic Law of the State represents the constitutional framework of the Sultanate of Oman and defines the principles and way forward for society, the overall structure of the State and its system of governance. The preamble of the Basic Law states the objectives and purposes of the law, which include building a better society and establishing the foundations of peace, security, justice and cooperation among different governments and peoples.

25.2 The Basic Law of the State has precedence over all other laws, legislative enactments and measures. Articles 72, 76 and 80 of the Basic Law state that it will be applied without prejudice to the implementation of treaties or agreements into which the Sultanate has entered with other countries or international institutions and organizations and that international treaties and agreements become part of Omani legislation upon their ratification.

25.3 The Basic Law of the State (chap. II) sets out the type of government and governance system. Under article 9, “Governance in the Sultanate shall be based on justice, consultation and equality and citizens shall have the right to participate in public affairs”.

25.4 The Basic Law of The State (chap. II) sets forth the guiding principles of government policy, including the following:

25.4.1 Compliance with international and regional instruments and treaties and with the generally recognized rules of law in a manner conducive to the promotion of peace and security among Governments and peoples;

25.4.2 The family is the basis of society and the law shall regulate the means for protecting it, preserving it as a legal entity, fostering its ties and values,

caring for its individual members and creating the right conditions for the development of their aptitudes and abilities.

25.4.3 The Government guarantees that assistance will be provided to citizens and their families in cases of emergency, sickness, disability and old age under the social security system. The Government also supports public burden sharing in the aftermath of disasters.

25.4.4 The Government is concerned with public health and the prevention and treatment of diseases and epidemics. It seeks to provide health care to every citizen and it promotes the establishment of government-supervised private hospitals, clinics and treatment facilities pursuant to the rules prescribed by law. It also acts to conserve the environment and protect it from pollution.

25.4.5 The Government enacts laws for the protection of the employee and the employer and regulates labour relations. All citizens are entitled to engage in the work of their choice within the limits of the law. Compulsory labour may not be imposed on any person, except as required by law for the performance of a public service in return for fair pay

25.4.6 Education is a key element for the progress of society and is fostered by the Government, which acts to expand and universalize education. The aims of education include creating a generation that is physically and morally strong. The Government provides general education, works to combat illiteracy and encourages the establishment of private schools and institutes under its supervision pursuant to the law.

26. The Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act regulates legal, social, health, educational and employment aspects of the care of persons with disabilities based on provisions that provide legal guarantees. Chapter 2 of the law is dedicated to the rights of persons with disabilities. The following implementing regulations and decisions have also been issued in connection with the aforesaid Act:

26.1 Ministerial decisions to form the National Committee for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled. The Committee is chaired by the Minister For Social Development. Its members include representatives of the relevant government agencies, the private sector and rehabilitation centres as well as persons with disabilities. The Committee, which has commenced its proceedings, considers and designs plans and programmes to provide for the care, rehabilitation, employment and advancement of persons with disabilities. It has formed eight specialized subcommittees to implement the Convention. The members of the subcommittees are drawn from the entities represented in the aforesaid Committee.

26.2 Ministerial decisions to form specialized subcommittees concerned with: health services; education; training, qualification and employment; sports for persons with disabilities; information; financial matters; an appropriate an environment without barriers; and transportation and communications. These subcommittees, which are chaired by the undersecretaries concerned with the aforementioned areas, are represented on the National Committee for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled.

26.3 The implementing regulation regulating the activity of the National Committee for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled.

26.4 The implementing regulation establishing rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities.

- 26.5 The implementing regulation for the issuance of a disabled person's card.
- 26.6 The implementing regulation exempting from customs duties rehabilitation equipment and devices imported by rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities or by persons with disabilities for their personal use.
- 26.7 The implementing regulation for the employment of persons with disabilities in the government sector.
- 26.8 Royal Decree No. 131/2008 ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Sultanate played a prominent role in Gulf, Arab and international organizations in respect of the drafting of the Convention before it was passed by the United Nations General Assembly.

27. The Social Security Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 87/84, as amended, includes articles on persons with disabilities. It grants a monthly social welfare pension to persons shown by a medical examination to be unable to perform any work or to have a diminished capacity to perform appropriate work due to a disease or disability. The Act provides assistance to persons with disabilities who can be trained to perform productive work suited to their condition in the framework of livelihood projects. It also provides for the granting of soft loans to persons with disabilities under lending programmes.

28. The Civil Service Act and the implementing regulations provide for employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in government institutions based on their qualifications. The Act also treats a government employee who becomes disabled during or on account of work, guaranteeing the employment rights of such employee as a person with disabilities.

29. Under the Omani Labour Act, persons with disabilities must comprise 2 per cent of the labour force of private enterprises with 50 or more workers. The Act incentivizes employers to employ persons with disabilities by equating a worker with disabilities to two foreign workers in the Employment Register as part of the policy of replacing foreign workers with Omani workers. The joint committees of the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Manpower are working assiduously at the highest level to ensure the employment of as many qualified persons with disabilities as possible in various facilities.

30. The Social Insurance Act guarantees the rights of private-sector workers if they become disabled during or on account of their work.

31. The Pensions Act grants a deceased pensioner's brother, if he becomes disabled, a share of his testator's pension, regardless of his age, in exception to the rules of the Act.

32. The regulations and decisions regulating social assistance provide persons with disabilities with compensatory devices, wheelchairs and devices which they may require at the Government's expense. They also provide for renovations and modifications to be done in the homes of persons with disabilities to facilitate their mobility and use of domestic appliances.

(ii) Educational services

33. The Ministry of Education, in coordination with the Ministry of Social Development, provides educational services and creates a supportive environment for persons with disabilities in schools. The schools run integration programmes and provide educational resources and staff who are trained to deliver such programmes taking account of the condition and needs of their students with disabilities. The goal is to provide children with disabilities with an education in their own environment that is on a par with that offered to their peers in keeping with the principle of "education for all". This gives their families a sense of equality and shields them negative feelings and attitudes toward their children. The

aptitudes and abilities of children with disabilities are assessed so that the right conditions can be created in schools to allow these children to pursue their studies.

34. The Specialized Committee on Education for Persons With Disabilities has been formed. It is chaired by the Undersecretary for Instruction and Curricula of the Ministry of Education and includes members from relevant agencies.

35. As of end 2012, three State special education schools were in operation in addition to 127 special education classrooms in regular compulsory-education schools serving 5,246 male and female students with disabilities.

36. Regarding public services, 61 persons with disabilities received occupational rehabilitation services in 2012 at the Centre for the Care and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Khawd.

(iii) Work and employment

37. Regarding work and employment, as of end 2012, there were 659 institutions that were providing employment services to persons with disabilities in the Sultanate.

38. The Sultanate of Oman is a developing country that is developing its regions in a balanced manner. Persons with disabilities in the Sultanate comprise 3.2 per cent of the population. They generally continue to face difficulties and obstacles in accessing their basic rights. The Government of Oman is constantly expanding the share of resources allocated to persons with disabilities. It has strengthened measures to realize the rights of persons with disabilities as provided for in current laws, thereby creating the conditions in which these persons can enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others.

39. The Government of Oman acknowledges and is earnestly working to apply the principle of “reasonable accommodation” set out in article 2 of the Convention. Moreover, provision is made in the relevant laws, legal regulations, public policies and other measures for the practical application of the principle of reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities.

40. Under the above-mentioned legal provisions concerning policy, the Government of Oman has formulated a series of special supportive policies to create the conditions for persons with disabilities to enjoy and exercise all human rights and basic freedoms on an equal basis with others. For example, the Government applies article 9 of the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act, which requires government and public-sector agencies and employers that employ 50 or more workers to fill 2 per cent of their positions with persons with disabilities who have been so nominated by the Ministry of Manpower. This is a quota system for persons with disabilities in the public and private sectors. Under a positive preference policy, a person with disabilities who is hired is counted as two persons for purposes of the Omanization of the private sector to encourage the intensive employment of persons with disabilities. The Government also provides policy support and tax breaks for persons with disabilities who set up their own businesses. It has adopted a preferential system that gives priority to serving persons with disabilities who use public service facilities. Oman Air provides persons with disabilities with a 50-per cent discount on the price of airline tickets for domestic and foreign travel. Governmental subsidies enable needy persons with disabilities to participate in various social security schemes.

(iv) Social life

41. In order to facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in social life without barriers, the Government has introduced mandatory standards, to which all builders in the Sultanate must adhere, for the construction of barrier-free facilities and the conversion of existing facilities to barrier-free facilities. The Government has also

introduced support for the individualized conversion of the homes of persons with disabilities into barrier-free homes to facilitate their freedom of movement based on need and disability type.

42. Supporting and helping persons with disabilities are traditional Omani virtues. The Government has widely encouraged a humanitarian ethos in society. It has worked hard to promote a view of persons with disabilities that is compatible with a modern, civilized society and to build an environment in which persons with disabilities can participate equally in the life of society. It has also initiated a major series of diverse activities on a broad scale to aid persons with disabilities. The populace has gradually become imbued with an understanding of and respect for persons with disabilities and take the initiative in assisting them.

43. The series of preferential policies and support measures pushed forward by the Government with the aim of providing “reasonable accommodation” to persons with disabilities has been universally accepted by society and is consistent with the common rights and interests of society as a whole.

44. A key outcome of the implementation of the above-mentioned legislation is the generation of positive change in the attitudes of society toward persons with disabilities and greater concern and understanding on the part of decision makers regarding the cause of persons with disabilities and the need to prioritize rights over welfare protection. These developments have encompassed both the public and private sectors.

45. The Omani Government believes that persons with disabilities can play a pivotal role in advocating for themselves and speaking out about the difficulties they face, their needs and characteristics and protection of their rights and interests. Accordingly, persons with disabilities have been incorporated in committees concerned with the affairs of the disabled and in drafting and amending relevant laws. Representatives of persons with disabilities and organizations concerned with them have been invited to take part in this process to enable the opinions of persons with disabilities to be heard directly. A National Observation Committee has been formed to monitor the enforcement of the Convention and to prepare the present report.

III. Specific provisions of the Convention

Article 5 Equality and non-discrimination

46. The general policy of the Sultanate of Oman towards acts of discrimination in any form stems first of all from the religious injunctions observed by the population, who view discrimination as contradictory to Islam and consider the practice of discrimination a sin, and secondly from the laws which entrench this principle and consider discrimination a punishable act that is contrary to public morals and ethics.

47. Laws, particularly the Basic Law of the State and other relevant laws, establish clear rules and procedures to give effect to the provisions of the Convention, which ensure that all individuals, including persons with disabilities, enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis in all fields of public life without discrimination.

48. This orientation is affirmed by Basic Law of the State, Chapter Three, which covers general rights and duties. Article 17 states that “all citizens are equal before the law and are equal in rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination between them on the grounds of gender, origin, colour, language, religion, sect, domicile or social status”. Under this provision, all citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to litigate before all courts in

the Sultanate. The aforesaid Law also guarantees a number of constitutional controls in the area of justice, the judiciary, the law and the regulation of the judicial authority. Under article 9 of the Law, "Governance in the Sultanate shall be based on justice, consultation and equality. Citizens shall have the right to participate in public affairs in accordance with this Basic Law and the requirements and conditions stated herein". Article 12 states that justice and equal opportunity among Omani citizens are the pillars of society and guaranteed by the State.

49. Legal provisions in force in the Sultanate concerning the administration of justice and the prohibition of discrimination against any group of people on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, status or any other grounds of discrimination apply to all individuals and to the Government and its agencies and institutions. The Government, as represented by its institutions, guarantees the prevention of all forms of discrimination and is required by law to abstain from engaging in any discriminatory activity or practice. Under article 59 of the Basic Law of the State, "The rule of law is the basis of governance. Rights and freedoms are guaranteed by the integrity of the judiciary and by the integrity and impartiality of the judges". Under article 25, "Litigation is a right that is protected and guaranteed to all people. The Law shall state the procedures and conditions necessary for the exercise of this right. The Government shall guarantee, to the extent possible, the reconciliation of litigants and the speedy adjudication of cases".

50. The Government seeks to set the highest example in combating all forms of discrimination. Governmental institutions and agencies act accordingly by abstaining from any act or practice that implies, encourages, supports or protects discrimination regardless of its source. Thus, under article 80 of the Basic Law of the State, "No agency of the Government may issue rules, regulations, decisions or instructions which contravene the provisions of laws and decrees in force or treaties and agreements that constitute part of the law of the country".

51. It should be noted that the Sultanate has never enacted any laws or measures conducive to discriminatory practices that would have to be repealed or amended. The Sultanate, since its revival, has applied a political, judicial and social order that is based solely on justice and equality. The Sultanate uses all means to entrench these values in Omani society.

52. Many other laws require that reasonable accommodation be provided to persons with disabilities. For example, under the Code of Criminal Procedure, a translator who possesses a good command of sign language must participate during the interrogation of a criminal suspect who is deaf or mute, and such circumstances must be noted in the record. If a blind or deaf accused has not been assigned a defender, the court must appoint a lawyer for him. The lawyer must provide legal aid to defend the accused in all types of proceedings and in courts at all levels. These measures, which the Sultanate has adopted to provide accommodations to persons with disabilities, guarantee equal opportunity and treatment between persons with disabilities and others.

53. Omani legislation, particularly the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act (No. 63/2008), guarantees privileges and rights to persons with disabilities in the area of education that take into account their physical and mental characteristics and needs. Omani legislation also provides assistance and accommodations to persons with disabilities in the areas of preventive health care, medical treatment, employment and vocational rehabilitation.

Article 8

Awareness-raising

54. Raising awareness among persons with disabilities and raising the general public's awareness of persons with disabilities is a long-term process. Under the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act, article 11, "The agencies concerned with social, athletic and cultural activities must act to facilitate the participation of the disabled in local, regional and international sport camps and sporting events and provide means for enriching their cultural life". Article 13 of the Act provides for the formation of a National Committee for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled. The Committee has formed a Media Subcommittee comprising media and journalism organizations (the Subcommittee's purviews are defined in Attachment No. 1). The Internet site of the Ministry of Social Development (www.mosd.gov.om) provides information and services for persons with disabilities. Each year, the Government launches public-awareness campaigns in conjunction with activities that are planned and organized around International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Arab Day of Persons with Disabilities, Arab Deaf Week, White Cane Day for the Blind, the Special Olympic Games and the Special Sports Olympiad for persons with intellectual disabilities. Lecture tours are also organized to raise awareness about persons with disabilities.

55. Activities that educate students in how to help persons with disabilities are held in the schools and universities. They involve competitions and exhibitions to familiarize students in this regard. In recent years, diverse activities have been held to enhance students' awareness of the need to respect the rights of persons with disabilities.

56. The Sultanate has undertaken large-scale efforts to familiarize its population with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It has published the Convention officially in a separate publication and in a braille version for visually impaired persons. Since the Convention was ratified, it has published articles on the Convention in daily, weekly and monthly newspapers. Omani Television and Radio have broadcast reports on the Convention on their news programmes in conjunction with a number of events, meetings and seminars. Associations concerned with persons with disabilities have held four seminars on the Convention, during which discussions were held with groups representing persons with disabilities on issues relating to the Convention.

Article 9

Accessibility

57. Under the Disability and Care Rehabilitation Act, article 10, the relevant government agencies must take the necessary measures to ensure that persons with disabilities benefit from public services by:

57.1 Ensuring compliance with engineering specifications for public places, highways and buildings, places of worship, leisure centres, shop entrances, parking spaces and other facilities frequently used by the disabled.

57.2 Providing public transport to facilitate the movement of persons with disabilities at airports, ports and on highways.

57.3 Requiring government agencies to provide a barrier-free environment, including barrier-free buildings, roads, transportation, information and communications to promote the cause of persons with disabilities; expediting the construction of barrier-free facilities and the conversion of existing facilities into barrier-free facilities; providing access to all public, private and civil facilities through the implementation of laws and legal regulations; and establishing

measurements and standards for the construction of buildings with barrier-free environments to strengthen the basic framework for creating a barrier-free cultural environment.

57.4 Designing all equipment and products to provide for accessibility and formulating a Guide to Consideration of the Needs of Persons with Disabilities When Formulating Standards.

57.5 Adopting measures to correct construction activities that do not meet barrier-free accessibility standards.

57.6 Ensuring that special-education schools, social welfare projects, rehabilitation centres, public service facilities and elderly care institutions catering to the needs of persons with disabilities in the Sultanate have carried out barrier-free construction or conversion of existing facilities to barrier-free facilities. Almost all passenger station, airport and transit areas in Oman have been constructed as barrier-free facilities or converted into barrier-free facilities. News broadcasts in sign language have begun to be introduced. Some hotels offer sign language services. Visually and hearing impaired persons are provided with low-cost audio text and print messages through mobile communication services. Libraries provide audio reading materials for blind readers at universities (Sultan Qaboos University). Some institutions have introduced services for persons with disabilities through programmes that convert between spoken, visual and written modes of communication.

57.7 Formulating regulations on barrier-free construction and a plan for barrier-free construction work pursuant to the Disability and Care Rehabilitation Act. The Government is in the process of formulating such regulations to promote barrier-free construction and raise the standard of construction, management and services in the governorates. This will ensure that persons with disabilities and the elderly can enjoy equal and full participation in the life of society. It will also provide greater convenience for members of society in general.

58. The National committee for the care and rehabilitation of the disabled formed a Specialized Subcommittee to Address the Creation of a Barrier-Free Environment.. The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Housing chairs the Subcommittee, whose functions and purviews are specified in Attachment No. 2.

59. The agencies responsible for authorizing the granting of construction permits have formulated technical accessibility requirements for all facilities, institutions and commercial establishments to enable access thereto by persons with disabilities consistent with international accessibility standards for persons with disabilities, including:

59.1 Refrainment from issuing a permit for any public or private building unless the building has all facilities needed to permit the use of the building by persons with disabilities.

59.2 Compliance with the general requirements concerning the use by persons with disabilities of public buildings and buildings designated for them, including compliance with provisions and rules issued to ensure that the interior and exterior spaces of buildings accommodate use by persons with disabilities.

59.3 Allowing persons with disabilities and associations concerned with them to express their views regarding barriers that impede them in connection with the issuance of permits for public or private buildings and to propose suitable recommendations and solutions.

59.4 Provision of facilities in public buildings for use by persons with kinetic disabilities, particularly building entrances, doors, corridors, lifts and lavatories.

59.5 Submission of recommendations and advice to real estate companies and consulting firms regarding the configuration of public buildings and facilities in line with the requirements of persons with disabilities; and the encouragement of such companies and firms to use current technologies for this purpose.

59.6 Holding of workshops on issues relating to accessibility for persons with disabilities.

59.7 Notification of consulting firms and design and implementation contractors of the need to provide the necessary facilities to accommodate persons with disabilities in projects that are implemented.

59.8 Formulation of technical requirements that must be met when approving designs for buildings intended for the use of persons with disabilities.

Article 10

Right to life

60. Both the law and the national policies guarantee the right of persons with disabilities to life, survival and development through a number of measures and mechanisms, including the following:

60.1 Children, including children with disabilities, may not be deprived of the right to life by legislation or executive measures or by the will of any person. The death penalty is not imposed on children, and children may not be killed, even for reasons of compassion, nor may they be incited to commit suicide. A mother who kills her child, even where the motive is to avoid dishonour, is punished and anyone who causes the death of a child by error or neglect is punished with the aim of protecting the child's right to life.

60.2 The protection of children includes protection of the fetus, which may not be aborted unless a legally qualified doctor determines that the life of the expectant mother is endangered and believes that an abortion is the only way to save her life, provided that the abortion is conducted before the seventeenth week of pregnancy. Any person who otherwise performs or assists in an abortion is punished.

60.3 The foundation for the protection of children is enshrined in the rules prescribed in Omani legislation to ensure that the child is born into a legitimate family based on free and equal choice. The Basic Law of the State, article 12, provides that: "The family is the basis of society and the law shall regulate the means for protecting it, preserving its legal existence, fostering its ties and values and caring for its individual members and creating the right conditions for the development of their aptitudes and abilities". This provision is intended to cover care for all members of the family without discrimination on the grounds of disability.

61. The fetus and the expectant mother have numerous rights, the substance of which is indicated in the present report in the context of the review of the Personal Status Act, the Civil Status Act and other laws.

62. The following legislation and implementing measures concern the right to life, survival and development:

62.1 The Basic Law of the State clearly states that "the Government protects and respects human rights". The Government affirms that the right to life is a fundamental human right. The Criminal Code stipulates relatively severe punishments for the crimes of murder and causing bodily harm that endangers or

harms the lives, health and security of citizens. The general principles of the Civil Code provide that “citizens shall enjoy the rights of life and health” and that “the legitimate rights and interests of persons with disabilities shall be protected”. Article 11 of the Judiciary Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 90/99 provides for a body tasked with settling disputes relating to the consistency of laws and regulations with the Basic Law of the State and ensures that the provisions of the latter are not contravened.

62.2 There are many decisions and measures intended to guarantee the life, survival, development and best interests of the child, including the following:

62.2.1 Ministerial Decision No. 3/2002 reconstituting the National Anti-Smoking Committee, in which WHO and UNICEF participate along with the relevant governmental bodies.

62.2.2 Ministerial Decision No. 8/2002 performing the Committee to Combat Child Malnutrition.

62.2.3 Ministerial Decision No. 39/2001, article 2, which prohibits the sale of cigarettes and other tobacco products to anyone under 18 years of age and punishes anyone who contravenes that provision.

62.2.4 Ministerial Decision No. 33/2000 establishing the Department for Primary Health Care in the Ministry of Health and a Special Family Service Department that includes a birth spacing section.

62.2.5 Ministerial Decision No. 54/2000 forming the National Committee for the Protection of Breastfeeding and Ministerial Decision No. 55/98 regulating the marketing of breast milk substitutes.

63. The statistical tables and data contained in the present report on the accomplishments of the Ministry of Health show the achievements made in this area. We refer here to the role played by the Ministry of Education through the health, social and psychological services available in government and private schools in general and basic education (first through twelfth grades) and to the role of the Ministry of Social Development in its supervision of nurseries and offering of awareness-raising programmes and seminars.

Article 11

Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies

64. Under the Basic Law of the State, the Government guarantees aid for citizens and their families, including persons with disabilities in the event of emergency, sickness, disability or old age in accordance with the Social Security Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 87/84. The Government also seeks public burden sharing in the aftermath of disasters.

65. The National Emergency Management System Plan applies to all residents, including persons with disabilities, who are endangered by a natural or other disaster.

66. The Government supports the efforts of relief organizations that provide aid to all groups of the population without discrimination through the Oman Charitable Organization and other voluntary efforts.

Article 12

Equal recognition before the law

67. Under the Basic Law of the State, all Omani citizens are equal before the law. Persons with disabilities enjoy the same rights as other citizens in political, economic, cultural and social respects and in family life. The rights and dignity of persons with disabilities as citizens are protected by law. None of the laws of the Sultanate exclude the capacity of such persons as subjects of the law.

68. Under the general principles of the law, a citizen has the capacity for civil rights from birth to death and enjoys civil rights and assumes civil responsibilities in accordance with the law, and all citizens are equal as regards their capacity for civil rights. The Sultanate is especially concerned with the rights of persons with disabilities to enable them to surmount the challenges they face. The Criminal Code provides that a mental patient who causes harmful consequences at a time when he is unable to recognize or control his own conduct, upon verification and confirmation through legal procedures, does not bear criminal responsibility. If a mental patient who has not completely lost the ability to recognize or control his own conduct commits a crime, he may be given a lighter or mitigated punishment. Any hearing or visually impaired person who commits a crime may be given a lighter or mitigated punishment or be exempted from punishment. Persons with disabilities may enjoy preferential treatment in such areas as taxes and administrative fees. The special preferential provisions made for persons with disabilities may not be regarded as discrimination against others.

69. Persons with disabilities who require assistance may engage in civil legal actions through a proxy. Persons with no capacity to undertake actions, including persons with disabilities, may, pursuant to the relevant provisions of the Civil Procedure Code, have present their guardian or custodian to act on their behalf pursuant to the legal provisions applicable thereto. The guardian, as the legally appointed proxy of the person with disabilities, protects the person and the person's property and other legitimate rights and interests. To prevent misuse of such modes of aid, the general principles of the Civil Code provide that a guardian who fails to carry out his responsibilities as a guardian or harms the legitimate rights and interests of the person for whom he is acting must bear liability. If he causes damage to the person's property, he must pay compensation for the damage, and the judicial authorities may annul his eligibility to be a guardian. A proxy who fails to discharge his responsibilities and brings harm to the person whom he represents must bear civil liability.

70. The Omani Penal Code promulgated by Royal Decree No. 91/2003 provides for the following:

70.1 Accused persons must be informed of their legal rights in a language which they understand and be given an opportunity to explain their legal, physical, psychological and social status.

70.2 A victim in need of specific care or housing is presented to a competent authority and placed in a medical or psychiatric rehabilitation facility, a care facility or a designated residential centre.

70.3 The necessary protection is provided when necessary to a victim or witness.

71. Persons with disabilities have access equal to that of others to bank loans, real-estate mortgages and other forms of financial credit based on legal guarantees according to the regulations of the relevant banks. Omani law does not contain any discriminatory provisions in this regard against persons with disabilities. Such persons enjoy status equal

to that of others in respect of the acquisition and inheritance of property and the distribution of an estate to its heirs.

Article 13

Access to justice

72. Under article 59 of the Basic Law of the State, “The rule of law is the basis of governance in the State. Rights and freedoms are guaranteed by the integrity of the judiciary and the integrity and impartiality of the judges”. Article 60 provides that the judiciary is independent, that its authority is vested in the courts, whatever their type and instance, and that the courts pronounce their judgements in accordance with the law. Article 61 provides that there is no authority over judges in their decision-making other than the law and that they may not be removed except as prescribed by law. No one may interfere in cases of law or in matters of justice, and such interference is an offence punishable by law. Under article 71, any failure or delay by competent public servants to execute judgements is an offence punishable by law, and the judgement beneficiary in such cases is entitled to bring criminal actions directly to the court.

73. The Sultanate guarantees that persons with disabilities have protection at all stages of legal actions. Under the criminal procedures, an translator with a good command of sign language must participate in the interrogation of a criminal suspect who is hearing impaired, and such circumstances must be noted in the record. Courts at all levels must accept and review without delay actions brought by persons with disabilities. Such actions must be heard and settled in the courts of first instance to reduce the burden and cost of litigation for persons with disabilities. Verdicts in Braille or large print must be made available to persons with visual impairments so requiring. All levels of public prosecutor offices are instructed to improve their supervision of prisons, detention centres and reform-through-labour institutions, and they must safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of persons with disabilities who are detainees or undergoing reform and rehabilitation.

74. The Sultanate guarantees the offer of legal aid and assistance to persons with disabilities. The criminal procedures require the courts to appoint lawyers to defend blind or deaf persons who have not appointed a lawyer.

75. The Sultanate works to enhance awareness of the need to respect persons with disabilities at all levels according to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act to improve legal awareness of the protection of persons with disabilities and awareness of the various modes of interacting with them.

Article 14

Liberty and security of person

76. The Basic Law of the State guarantees rights and freedoms without any type of discrimination. Under article 17 of the Law, “All citizens are equal before the law and are equal in rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination between them on the grounds of gender, origin, colour, language, religion, sect, domicile or social status”.

77. Civil rights and freedoms are provided in the Basic Law of the State and protected under the relevant laws, including the Omani Penal Code. The Code punishes infringements of such rights and freedoms and provides for the punishment of civil servants who arbitrarily curtail the freedom of individuals, disclose confidential information acquired during the course of their work, enter homes without the occupants’ consent, abuse their power, extract confessions or information or engage in slander.

78. Any person who violates the sanctity of a religion, burial ground or funeral is also punished, as is any person who abandons a child in a state of need, fails to pay maintenance for a child, interferes in a child's guardianship, neglects or indecently assaults a child or incites a child to engage in fornication. All offences against individuals or their property are punished in order to protect the rights of the relevant persons, including offences to dignity or privacy through incitement to suicide, compassionate killing, curtailment of freedom, servitude, slavery, threat, abuse or any prejudice of rights.

79. It is prohibited by law to prejudice any right or freedom provided in Omani legislation. Anyone whose rights or freedoms are prejudiced may seek redress through the courts. In addition, the Office of the Public Prosecutor may bring a general action if such offences come to its knowledge, even if no one has lodged a complaint about them.

80. Omani law recognizes the rights of children, including the rights of persons with disabilities as mentioned above. The enforcement of the law and the fact that no provision of the law may contravene the rules on punishment and victim compensation are based on the rule of law as the basis of governance in the Government (art. 59 of the Basic Law). Although there are no precise statistics on the number of offences committed, the penalties imposed or the compensation awarded in this regard, we can confirm that such offences occur so rarely as to be negligible.

81. Under the Basic Law of the State, a citizen's personal liberty is safeguarded and may not be infringed, and no citizen may be detained without the authorization or decision of a competent court. Illegal detention and illegal deprivation or restriction of a citizen's personal liberty by other means are prohibited, as is the illegal searching of a citizen's person. No unit or individual may use violence, threats or methods involving the restriction of personal liberty to coerce a person with disabilities to do labour.

82. The Rules for Social Welfare Institutions for Persons with Disabilities, issued by the Ministry of Social Development, require special protection of the rights and interests of persons with disabilities against violation in different cases. Likewise, in the prisons, the human dignity of a prisoner may not be humiliated, and his or her personal safety, lawful property, right to defend, petition, complain and accuse and other rights may not be violated unless they have been deprived or restricted according to law if.

83. The liberty and personal security of citizens, including persons with disabilities, are equally protected under the law. Personal liberty may not be deprived on the grounds of disability regardless of the circumstances.

84. Omani prisons give full consideration to the physiological and psychological characteristics and physical strength of persons with disabilities, providing corresponding care in such aspects as management, reform, life and work, providing:

84.1 Basic medical care services to prisoners in general, including prisoners with disabilities, giving them regular physical examinations, providing treatment to prisoners who become ill and safeguarding the right of prisoners to medical and health care.

84.2 Reform and treatment programmes and psychological guidance to correct and treat prisoners with disabilities who exhibit negative psychological tendencies.

84.3 Medical treatment for prisoners with disabilities out on bail who have serious illnesses and who meet the conditions.

84.4 Appropriate care and assistance for prisoners with disabilities who face problems relating to their disability while they serve their sentence

Article 15

Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

85. Article 20 of the Basic Law of the State, article 192 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Omani Penal Code cover the penalties imposed for abuse, torture or indecent assault addressed in article 15 of the Convention. We note the following in this regard:

85.1 Studies show that the methods for punishing children, including children with disabilities, in Omani families vary and depend on the schooling and educational attainment of the parents. Families who have some schooling and education usually adopt appropriate methods of punishment, such as reprimanding the child, or temporarily withholding spending money or denying the child participation in recreational programmes. Families with the lowest educational attainment resort to means of punishment that include shouting, reprimand or beating.

85.2 The Ministry of Social Development is working assiduously to develop a strategy for protecting children, including children with disabilities, from all types of abuse and to establish mechanisms for reducing abuse, receiving complaints and taking follow-up action. The Ministry of Social Development has been joined in these efforts by the Ministry of Health and the Royal Oman Police. This strategy is now being gradually implemented and its results are being monitored.

85.3 Radio and television programmes that deal with social issues have been launched to raise awareness of the negative results of maltreating children. The programmes receive complaints about maltreatment from individuals and children, listen to their views and have experts on hand who are university professors or physicians to respond to their queries. Examples of programmes that play an active role in this respect include "The Family Affairs Programme", the radio and television programme "Khas Jiddan" (Very Special) and the television programme "Multaq al-Sighar" (Meeting Place for Youngsters).

85.4 A survey was conducted on a sample of 50 families of varying educational and social backgrounds in several areas of the governorate of Muscat to ascertain how children are treated and how and why they are punished, including the number of instances of abuse by type, particularly sexual abuse. The survey findings showed no sexual abuse, perhaps owing to Omani society's adherence to religion and traditions.

85.5 The Ministry of Social Development is conducting a broad study on the methods of punishment used within the family with a view toward boosting protective and awareness-raising measures as a means of prevention.

85.6 The law currently punishes physical and bodily harm with stringent penalties. Schools, institutions that provide services to persons with disabilities and parent councils also conduct campaigns to publicize the negative consequences of maltreating children. Furthermore, school regulations prohibit and punish any beating of students, including persons with disabilities, and the relevant ministries monitor the conduct and behaviour of persons who provide services to them.

85.7 Violence against children is not prevalent in Oman. The legal measures that have been implemented focus on prohibiting torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of children, including children with disabilities.

85.8 Oman is a signatory to the Convention against Torture and strictly fulfils the obligations of the Convention concerning the prohibition of torture. Under article 26

of the Basic Law of the State, “No medical or scientific experiment may be conducted on anyone without his freely given consent”. The Sultanate prohibits the conduct of medical experiments and biological and medical research on humans. It provides special protection to persons who have lost the capacity to safeguard their own rights and interests, including persons with low intellectual capacity and mental patients. The Sultanate also prohibits the trial on patients suffering from mental conditions of new medicines and treatment methods that are unrelated to the treatment of their condition.

Article 16

Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse

86. The State guarantees the provision of appropriate and necessary support for a person with disabilities who is an accused, victim or witness in all stages of arrest, investigation, trial and execution. It guarantees such a person the right to be heard and to be provided conditions appropriate to his condition and needs. If he has an intellectual or mental disability, he must be accompanied by his personal physician, or a specialist physician must be appointed for this purpose. Thus, such a person is entitled to health and social protection and assistance and specialized technical support when necessary and must be accompanied by a lawyer who defends him in the investigation and trial stages. If he has not chosen a lawyer, the Office of the Public Prosecutor or the court is responsible for appointing one for him. In this case, the lawyer must have expertise in dealing with persons with disabilities according to the rules established in the Code of Criminal Procedure regarding the appointment of lawyers.

87. Regarding the right not to be compelled to give testimony or to confess guilt and the right to examine witnesses, under the Basic Law of the State, article 20, no person may be subjected to physical or mental torture, inducement or degrading treatment, and the law prescribes punishment for any person who commits any such act. Any statement or confession proven to have been made under the pressure or threat of torture or assault is also invalid. The Basic Law of the State, article 22, prohibits the infliction of any physical or mental harm on the accused. The Penal Code, article 181, provides that any public servant who inflicts on a person blows of a severity not permitted by law for the purpose of obtaining a confession to a crime or information on a crime shall be punished in addition to any legally prescribed punishment for the infliction of degrading treatment, abuse or harm.

88. Article 189 of the Code of Criminal Procedure provides that the accused person shall in no way be made to take an oath or be compelled or induced to give responses or make certain statements. Under no circumstances shall the silence of the accused person or his failure to respond be construed as a confession, nor may he be punished for false testimony in respect of statements which he makes to deny the charge against him. Under article 192 of the same Code, any statement or confession made as a result of torture or coercion is invalid.

89. Under article 104 of the aforesaid Code, the Office of the Public Prosecutor must hear the testimony of witnesses requested by adversaries in order to prove guilt or innocence. Under article 110 of the Code, adversaries may examine witnesses. Under article 194, the accused may at any time request that such witnesses as he deems appropriate be heard or request a specific investigation procedure.

90. Under article 41 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, “A person may be arrested or detained solely by order of the competent authority, and an arrested person shall be treated in a dignified manner. It shall be forbidden for law enforcement officers and any person with public authority to resort to torture, coercion, inducement or degrading treatment in

order to procure or prevent the giving of statements during evidence gathering, the preliminary investigation or trial”.

91. The Omani Penal Code punishes the dereliction of family duties, such as abandoning a minor in a state of need, failing to provide maintenance, interfering in the guardianship of a minor or neglecting a minor or a person who is incapacitated (arts. 212 to 217).

92. The Omani Penal Code severely punishes indecent assault, for which the penalty is increased if the offence is against a child under 15 years of age, or against a physically or mentally deficient person, or if the offender is an ascendant of the victim, or is responsible for the child’s care, or has authority over the child, or is a domestic servant of any of the aforesaid persons (art. 218).

93. The Omani Penal Code punishes incitement to prostitution, engagement in prostitution and the management of a place of prostitution. The punishment is increased if the offence of incitement is against a child under 18 years of age (arts. 220 to 222).

94. The Omani Penal Code punishes the commission of public sexual scandals (art. 224) and severely punishes persons who harm another person’s life, dignity or body, including incitement to suicide or assisted suicide. In such cases, the penalty is increased if the victim is a child under 15 years of age. Killing is also punished, even if done out of compassion at the request of the victim (arts. 240 and 241). Deprivation of personal liberty, servitude, violation of the sanctity of the home, threat, menace and abuse are severely punished (arts. 256 to 269).

95. The Omani Penal Code punishes offences committed against the property of the victim and sets forth the penalties imposed for offences involving narcotics and psychotropic substances. The penalty is increased wherever children are involved.

96. The criminal prosecution agencies (the police and the Office of the Public Prosecutor) receive all complaints concerning any offence and must pursue them. Anyone who suffers direct personal injury as the result of a crime may bring a civil action before the court that examines related criminal action without discrimination (art. 20 of the Code of Criminal Procedure).

97. Under article 28 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, any person who witnesses the commission of an offence or knows that an offence has occurred must promptly report the offence to the Office of the Public Prosecutor or law enforcement officers. Under article 29, civil servants in general are required to do the same. Article 30 requires law enforcement officers to investigate crimes and gather evidence.

98. Under article 33 of the aforesaid Code requires law enforcement officers to receive reports and complaints concerning any crime and to take the necessary action.

99. Legal guardians or guardians may submit complaints about any maltreatment of a child, including a child with disabilities; this right is also available to any child over 15 years of age. There is no legal provision that prevents persons under that age from seeking recourse through the courts. However, such persons must be represented before the courts or the Office of the Public Prosecutor by their legal guardian or guardian.

100. The obligation to report maltreatment of children it is also incumbent upon teachers and physicians, both as public servants and as ordinary individuals. The Omani authorities have no knowledge of any such crimes that have not been prosecuted or of any difficulties in prosecuting such crimes. The regulations on private education schools, general education schools and nurseries lay down conditions for premises and teaching equipment in order to protect the child against injury, maltreatment, neglect or exploitation.

101. Legislative measures cover the reporting and investigation of any crime. The competent authorities perform their work as required by the administrative measures in effect and also monitor and supervise enforcement. The safeguards provided under the existing law make it possible to prosecute anyone who violates the law and suffice in view of the current circumstances and available resources, particularly as Omani social traditions prohibit and deplore the maltreatment of children, including children with disabilities, regardless of whether it occurs inside or outside the home.

102. Article 222 of the Penal Code punishes any person who runs a place of prostitution or fornication or who assists in setting up and managing such a place. Article 221 also punishes anyone who engages in prostitution or fornication, whether or not in return for payment. Article 223 punishes homosexuality and lesbianism. Article 224 punishes public sexual scandals and the printing, distribution, acquisition or display of nude photographs, messages or other scandalous items unless such action is for a scientific purpose or in a scientific context and is not directed at anyone under 18 years of age.

103. There is no discernible exploitation of children in Oman in pornographic displays or photographs, which would be contrary to public morals, tradition and religion. Such exploitation is not permitted by law, and offenders are punished for incitement to fornication.

104. The Sultanate protects workers with disabilities from exploitation, violence and assault. No unit or individual may use violence, threats or methods involving the restriction of personal liberty to coerce a person with disabilities to perform labour under the Labour Law in effect.

105. The laws of the Sultanate provide that a person with disabilities who has been subjected to harm through violence may file a complaint with an organization representing persons with disabilities. The organization must protect the rights and legitimate interests of persons with disabilities and investigate and address the complaint. A victim of violence may also report such a case and lodge a formal accusation with the relevant agency or court.

Article 17

Protecting the integrity of the person

106. The Government respects the personal and mental integrity of persons with disabilities. It encourages persons with disabilities to have self-respect and self-confidence, to strive to improve themselves and to be independent. Guardians of persons with disabilities must respect the wishes of those whom they act as guardians. The right of persons with disabilities to receive information must be respected.

107. The Sultanate protects the right to autonomy of persons with disabilities in respect of reproduction. A woman has the right to reproduce in accordance with her circumstances, health condition and status.

108. Omani legislation guarantees the personal safety of citizens belonging to all groups under the Omani Penal Code and the Basic Law of the State, article 26, which states: "No one may be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation".

109. The Omani Penal Code, article 242, prohibits abortions.

110. Many associations registered with the Ministry of Social Development monitor the enforcement of laws concerning persons with disabilities and defence of their rights.

Article 18

Liberty of movement and nationality

111. In all countries, the nationality law is a key law that defines citizenship with far-reaching impact. The Basic Law of the State is no exception. Article 15 thereof stipulates: “The Law shall regulate nationality, which may be forfeited or withdrawn solely within the limits of the law”. Under article 16 of the same Law, “Citizens may not be deported, expelled or prevented from returning to the Sultanate”. This provision covers all citizens, including persons with disabilities.

112. The Omani Nationality Act does not allow for dual nationality for reasons of principle connected with social values, traditions, experiences, interests, the sense of belonging to the homeland and its determinants. Nonetheless, Omani nationality may, as required by the circumstances, be combined with another nationality pursuant to a royal decree.

113. In order to preclude statelessness and protect innocent children from statelessness, the Omani Nationality Act grants nationality to anyone born in Oman or outside Oman to an Omani mother and unknown father, to anyone whose father is and Omani who has lost his nationality, to anyone born in Oman of unknown parents, and to anyone born in Oman who adopts Oman as his regular domicile and whose father was also born in Oman but lacked Omani nationality at the time of the offspring’s birth and remains in that situation.

114. The Omani Nationality Act gives primary consideration to the nationality of the father. It nonetheless grants the mother a role in the transfer of nationality to the children. However, this role is held and reserved and used only when the law does not permit the father to transfer his nationality to his children. In Oman, there has never been any case of nationality being denied on grounds of disability, nor of movement in and out of the country being restricted on such grounds.

115. The Omani Nationality Act grants Omani nationality to the minor children of a naturalized Omani father without restriction or condition. This provision provides for the will of the father to supplant the will of the minor children to ensure a uniform nationality within a single family. Such children may renounce their Omani nationality within one year of attaining majority age.

116. Upon being granted Omani nationality, a naturalized Omani is entitled to exercise political rights in the Sultanate, such as the right to vote in elections for the Consultative Council and the municipal councils and, a fortiori, civil rights, such as the right to hold public positions, receive an education, work, etc.

117. Under Ministerial Decision No. 96/88, article 2 (implementing regulation concerning children requiring care and foster care) issued by the Ministry of Social Development, any person who finds a new-born child of unknown parentage must immediately hand the child over to the nearest hospital, health centre or police station or to the regional governor. The aforesaid authorities must accept the child and compile a report on the circumstances in which the child was found, including the name and address of the person who found the child and the time and date. Article 3 of the Decision requires the child undergo an immediate medical examination. Article 4 requires health institutions to notify the competent authorities that a family must be arranged to care for the child. Under article 8, the alternative family and the competent authority must agree on the choice of a four-element name for the child, and the competent authorities must be requested to issue a birth certificate for the child. Under no circumstances may the birth certificate or birth register state that the child is of unknown parentage; nor may the child bear the name or surname of the head of the household (lest the process turn into an adoption). The family’s tribal name may be added at the end of the child’s name. The birth certificate must not

indicate that the child was born out of wedlock, which is consistent with concern for protecting children, including children with disabilities.

118. The obtainment of a birth registration is a fundamental right. New births in households are constantly registered by the competent agency in the Sultanate pursuant to the relevant provisions in the Civil Status Act concerning the child's right from birth to a name, right to Omani nationality and right to know his or her parents and consequently be cared for by them as is their duty under the aforesaid Act. Unregistered births are uncommon, particularly births of children with disabilities. In Oman, there has never been any case in which a person was refused registration on the grounds of disability.

Article 19

Living independently and being included in the community

119. Omani laws provide for persons with disabilities to enjoy rights equal to those of other citizens in respect of family life. The laws encourage relatives and guardians of persons with disabilities to strengthen the capacity of persons with disabilities to live within the family and to use social services and family assistance services like other members of the family where circumstances permit. In addition, the Government provides services in the areas of life care, rehabilitation, training, employment, culture, leisure, sports, medical treatment and other areas to the various groups in society and promotes the construction of barrier-free facilities in communities and barrier-free roads, public buildings and residential buildings or conversion thereof to barrier-free.

120. Persons with disabilities also receive services that provide them with better opportunities for independent living and social integration. The Government actively promotes the conversion of the communities and homes of persons with disabilities into barrier-free environments, achieving a high satisfaction rating among persons with disabilities in the governorates and provinces of the Sultanate. Five associations concerned with persons with disabilities have been established. They have 15 branches located throughout the Sultanate that provide care and cultural, leisure and sports activities, thus expanding the social participation of persons with disabilities.

121. The Government guarantees as much as possible the right of persons with disabilities to life, survival and development by facilitating the provision of basic needs — including food, housing, health care, social, and psychological care and other care — and empowering persons with disabilities to exercise their rights to education, work and recreation, their rights to use public facilities and services, obtain information and freely express their opinions and other fundamental individual and general rights and freedoms.

122. In order to enable persons with disabilities to participate and become integrated in society, the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act, article 11, requires agencies concerned with social, athletic and cultural activities to accommodate the participation of persons with disabilities in local, regional and international sports camps and competitions and provide means of cultural enrichment for persons with disabilities”.

123. The Ministry of Social Development provides appropriate equipment in the homes of persons with disabilities who are able to bear the costs thereof. It also provides compensatory aids and equipment free of charge. The Ministry runs many awareness-raising and educational programmes for persons with disabilities and their families to educate them in dealing with disabilities. Civil-society institutions, including associations concerned with persons with disabilities, help provide compensatory aids and equipment and awareness-raising and educational programmes.

Article 20

Personal mobility

124. The Government ensures that persons with disabilities enjoy freedom of movement and freedom to choose their place of residence. The Sultanate has no legislation that restricts the freedom of movement of individuals, including persons with disabilities.

125. The Government and transportation companies have issued the necessary instructions to accommodate the movement and transportation of persons with disabilities, including designating places for them in means of transportation of all classes and types and reducing fares for their air travel and external land and sea travel by at least 50 per cent. The relevant agencies have adopted the necessary measures to accommodate the use by persons with disabilities of public and private transportation designated for public service, roads, wharfs, transit areas and public places. A Transportation and Communications Subcommittee emanating from the National Committee for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled was established under Ministerial Decision No. 58/2010 (Transportation and Communications Committee). The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transportation chairs the Committee, which has multiple functions (see Attachment No. 3), including providing for the use of current technology and services to improve the conditions of persons with disabilities.

126. Action is being taken to require all public service agencies to provide the necessary means, equipment, trained personnel, information, communications, and other services, including electronic services and emergency services, to accommodate interaction with persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others and to facilitate the use of public services by persons with disabilities.

127. The Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act, article 10, requires the relevant government agencies to take the necessary measures to ensure that persons with disabilities benefit from public services, including:

127.1 Ensuring compliance with engineering specifications for public places, roads and buildings, places of worship, leisure centres, shop entrances, parking spaces and other facilities frequented by the disabled.

127.2 Providing public transport to facilitate the movement of persons with disabilities at airports, ports and on roads.

128. The National Committee for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled facilitates the obtainment of rehabilitation and compensatory devices and aids by persons with disabilities and the elimination of impediments to the use of public services by the disabled pursuant to the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act, article 14 (d).

Article 21

Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information

129. Under the Basic Law of the State, article 29, "Freedom of opinion and expression, whether spoken, written or in other forms, is guaranteed within the limits of the law". This general provision also covers persons with disabilities.

130. The Government guarantees respect for the evolving capacities of persons with disabilities and their right to preserve their identities and express their views freely in all matters affecting them. To this end, it ensures that persons with disabilities are represented on committees concerned with their affairs. It gives due consideration to their views according to their age and maturity on an equal basis with others. The Government provides

age-appropriate and disability-appropriate information and assistance to persons with disabilities concerning the exercise of these rights.

131. The Government guarantees protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities in all its policies and programmes.

132. The Government provides information to persons with disabilities using appropriate, easy and accessible modes to ensure they have information and enjoy freedom of expression. It provides accessible information to persons with disabilities about mobility aids, devices and assistive technologies, including new technologies, and other forms of assistance, support services and facilities.

133. The Government supports the use by persons with disabilities of sign language, Braille and all other modes of accessible communication, depending on the disability type, to obtain information.

134. The Government has devoted considerable attention to sign language to enable persons with hearing impairments to communicate with others in an easy, accessible manner. It published and distributed the Omani Sign Language Dictionary and has developed a number of programmes in this regard, including a programme to support the dissemination of sign language in the Sultanate. Eleven courses and workshops were held to introduce the dictionary and disseminate sign language throughout the Sultanate. These courses and workshops targeted persons who work with persons with disabilities, relevant government and private-sector employees, the families and friends of hearing-impaired persons, persons who deal with the hearing-impaired, such as police officers and officials of courts, ministries and government bodies, the hearing-impaired, their friends and citizens desiring to learn sign language.

135. Oman Television arranged for sign language interpreters of the Ministry of Social Development to provide simultaneous sign language interpretation of news broadcasts and several social programmes and events.

136. The Government has published the sign language to unify and standardize its use in the Sultanate and harmonize it with Arabic sign language. Oman Television has begun introducing sign language news programmes. The Government has included a “Technical Know-How Support System for Information Accessibility, Display and Application for Persons with Disabilities” in its Science and Technology Enabling Plan as a primary national programme. The system has been incorporated in multiple Internet sites, including the e-government systems the Sultanate has begun to apply.

137. Regarding braille, the Government has published the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act in braille and distributed it to visually-impaired persons and associations and institutes concerned with the disabled. Other publications have been printed in braille and braille classes have been held.

138. There have been many successes regarding information accessibility for the blind, including the development of screen-reading software for the blind, a high-speed braille printer, a digital assistant for the blind, a Bluetooth wireless screen-reading device and an Internet voice-activated search function. Most of these aids are available for the visually impaired, or in associations for the visually impaired or in centres concerned with educating and rehabilitating the visually impaired.

139. The Government promotes information accessibility through technology for the design of accessible websites and the development of testing standards for the design of websites accessible to persons with disabilities.

140. The Government promotes capacity building for persons who deal with persons with disabilities, including government and non-governmental institutions to qualify them to communicate and interact with persons with disabilities in all fields. It also promotes training in the rights recognized in the Convention for specialists and staff who work with persons with disabilities to enable them to better provide the assistance and services guaranteed by those rights.

141. Various media are used to raise social awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, promote respect for those rights and strengthen awareness of the capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities.

Article 22

Respect for privacy

142. The legal principles founded on the Basic Law of the State protect the freedom and confidentiality of citizens' correspondence. No individual or institution may violate the freedom and confidentiality of a citizen's correspondence for any reason. Personal privacy is protected during legal disputes. Civil procedures provide for the confidentiality of evidence involving personal privacy. If such evidence must be presented, it may not be produced in an open session of the court. Any person who violates personal privacy is prosecuted and may be sued for defamation. In serious cases, the perpetrator is subject to a penalty of imprisonment.

143. Omani laws also protect the privacy of the health records of patients, including persons with disabilities. A person who divulges or publicizes a patient's personal details without the patient's consent, thereby harming the patient, is liable for tort. Medical staff must ensure medical confidentiality for patients and not divulge their personal information.

144. In judicial practice, a citizen whose right of privacy has been violated may seek to establish the violator's civil liability for tort on the grounds of violation of the right of reputation. A citizen, including a person with disabilities, may also directly petition the competent court for compensation for psychological harm caused by an act that violated his or her right of privacy.

Article 23

Respect for home and the family

145. Omani laws protect the right of all marriageable persons, including persons with disabilities, to start a family and to freely choose a partner. Marriage based on an arbitrary decision is prohibited, as are any other acts of interference in the freedom of marriage. To ensure that both parties engage in marriage entirely of their own volition and with their full consent, the law requires both parties to register the marriage in person.

146. All citizens, including persons with disabilities, are entitled to form a family. The Government is responsible for broadly disseminating, through the health agencies, information on reproductive health to citizens, including persons with disabilities. Health-care services are provided to persons with disabilities during pregnancy and around birth at their homes. Oman has developed basic standards for the design and construction of health units that have been reviewed by persons with disabilities to ensure that they are barrier free.

147. The Government stresses protection of the rights of persons with disabilities within the family on an equal basis with others, regardless of sex, ethnicity, wealth of the family and religion. The family and guardians of children with disabilities must assume their

responsibilities as guardians to protect the rights and legitimate interests of persons with disabilities.

148. The Government provides life care, special rehabilitative care, technical qualification and training, and services in the areas of culture, leisure, sports and physical fitness to persons with disabilities through the social support and assistance provided under relevant laws, through which it encourages associations, the private sector and individuals to establish training facilities and shelters for persons with disabilities.

149. The Government guarantees the provision of the necessary rehabilitation, training and support for families of persons with disabilities. It respects the family as the natural living environment for such persons and provides circumstances suited to the care of persons with disabilities within the family, resorting to alternate shelters only as a last resort.

Article 24

Education

150. The right to education is a basic human right which every citizen must enjoy without discrimination, as affirmed in the Basic Law of the State promulgated by Royal Decree No. 101/96, international instruments and declarations and national and comparative legislation.

151. The Ministry of Education has increased its concern for students with disabilities as it has with other students based on its realization that the educational services which it provides to Omani students will not only benefit the students but will also have a positive impact on educational outputs in the Sultanate.

152. Persons with disabilities are provided educational services to fulfil their right to educational and rehabilitative care and two enable them to exercise their natural right in society with all their skills and creativity.

153. A Subcommittee for the Education of Persons with Disabilities was formed under the National Committee for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled pursuant to Ministerial Decision No. 169/2013. The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education chairs the Subcommittee, which performs multiple functions in this area (see Attachment No. 4).

154. The Ministry of Education has striven to provide educational services to children with disabilities through special education schools. Such schools seek to train children with disabilities and provide them with vocational training based on their capabilities and on carefully developed plans and special programmes designed to integrate them into society and prepare them for life. These schools include:

(i) Amal School for the Hearing Impaired

155. The school was opened in academic year 1980/81. It educates hearing-impaired children of both sexes. Its educational goals include:

155.1 Providing educational services two deaf students to equip them with academic skills suited to their capacities and level of attainment.

155.2 Integrating deaf students within the social framework of society and interacting with them on an equal basis with others.

155.3 Rehabilitating deaf students practically, technically and educationally to work in fields suited to their capabilities and capacities in order to build their future.

155.4 Providing insight to the families of hearing-impaired persons as to the causes of their children's disability and familiarizing them with the best methods for interacting with their children.

155.5 Building self-confidence in deaf students and helping them accept their disability by improving their social relations with members of their communities.

156. Students admitted to the Amal School for the Hearing Impaired must:

156.1 Be between the ages of 5 and 8. Students up to age 10 may be admitted with the approval of the competent authorities in the Ministry if there are places for them.

156.2 Have a hearing impairment and not have any other impairment.

156.3 Have an IQ of 70.

156.4 Undergo a medical examination before being admitted to the school.

157. There are two educational levels in the Amal School For The Hearing Impaired:

157.1 Preparatory level: It lasts for two years, during which students with impaired hearing learn to pronounce letters and words using ear phones to take advantage of their residual hearing. They also use models and pictures to connect words with their meanings.

157.2 Basic education level: grades 1-4, grades 5-10 and post-basic (grades 11-12). The students are taught the basic education curriculum after it is modified and adapted according to each student's capabilities and aptitudes.

(ii) Cognitive Education School (Tarbiyah Fikriyah School)

158. The Ministry of Education established the Cognitive Education School in academic year 1984/85 to provide preparatory and primary educational and rehabilitation services to students with intellectual disabilities. Such students, which must meet admission requirements, have below-normal intelligence, cannot absorb the academic curriculum taught in the regular schools and are behind their cohorts behaviourally, particularly regarding self-reliance and coping with the stresses of their age group. They thus require special educational, health, psychological and social care. Consistent with current educational trends in the care of children with intellectual disabilities, the Ministry of Education's Special Education Department partially mainstreams students with intellectual disabilities. For this purpose, it has established special education classrooms that are attached to the regular primary schools in the Sultanate.

159. The Cognitive Education School seeks to help students feel secure, become self-confident, develop language and mathematical skills, acquire general information, develop fine motor skills and prepare for practical life. The students are trained in an occupation suited to their aptitudes. The curriculum taught in the school is based on the basic education curriculum with modifications to accommodate the students' mental aptitudes.

(iii) The Omar bin al-Khattab Institute for the Blind

160. The Omar bin al-Khattab Institute for the Blind opened in academic year 1999/00. It provides educational services to the visually impaired based on a philosophy that blindness is not an impairment in all fields of life but rather a factor that motivates innovation and excellence surpassing that of sighted persons. The Institute's mission is to provide the blind with knowledge to help them interact with members of their community, learn social customs and become inculcated with religious and moral values. The Institute supports mental health through activities and programmes serving the blind throughout the Sultanate (excluding blind students who enrol in public schools). It provides its students with assistive devices, white canes, textbooks printed in braille and a talking library with publications, booklets and tapes for developing awareness. The library is for their use and the use of others. The Institute also has a boarding division for students who live outside the governorate of Muscat. The division runs after-school activities and holds evening

reinforcement classes. The Institute also employs educators to care for young students. During academic year 2008/09, the first class of twelfth grade students graduated from the Institute.

161. The Ministry of Education has sought to provide educational services for hearing and cognitively impaired students. During academic year 2005/06, the Ministry implemented a Mainstreaming Programme for students with hearing and intellectual disabilities in classrooms attached to general basic-education schools in the governorate of Batinah North and Dakhiliyah. The Programme is run at two schools in each educational governorate. The Ministry has continued to provide educational services to all students with hearing and intellectual disabilities. The Mainstreaming Programme was expanded in academic year 2006/07 to cover four other educational governorates selected according to available population statistics and the survey reports of the governorates' educational directorates. The Programme aims to provide special-education services to as many hearing and intellectually impaired students as possible throughout the Sultanate and to improve the public attitudes toward persons with such impairments.

162. The Learning Disabilities Programme provides appropriate educational services to students with learning disabilities in the basic-education schools instead of transferring such students to special-education schools. The Programme began operating in academic year 2000/01 in two schools in the governorate of Batinah. It was expanded in academic year 2008/09 to serve one school in each educational district. The Programme aims to boost the effectiveness of education by providing appropriate educational services to students with learning disabilities in regular classrooms to develop their academic and social performance, reduce dropouts, keep students in the school environment and not isolate them from their cohorts, which could occur if they were placed in special-education schools.

163. The Speech and Language Disorder Treatment Programme provides diagnostic and therapy services to students with speech and communication disorders. The Ministry of Education has implemented the Programme in the following stages:

163.1 In academic year 2004/05, the Programme began to be implemented at the Amal School for the Hearing-Impaired in the governorate of Muscat with the setting up of speech and language disorder treatment rooms.

163.2 In 2006/07, the Programme was expanded to provide services to students at the Omar bin al-Khattab Institute for the Blind, several schools where the Learning Disabilities Programme and the Mainstreaming Programme are being implemented and the special-education schools.

163.3 During academic years 2007 to 2009, the Programme was upgraded with devices, equipment and software for the treatment of speech and communication disorders, and the Programme services continued to be expanded in the schools of the governorate of Muscat.

163.4 A concept has been developed for expanding the Programme to cover all educational directorates by the end of academic year 2011/12.

163.5 Diagnostic services were introduced for students with learning disabilities, hearing impairments, visual impairments and intellectual impairments based on a series of cognitive, diagnostic and academic tests, observations and the use of assessment scales.

163.6 Several students who obtained a general special-education certificate were trained in coordination with the Ministry of Health and UNICEF to work in the ear mould pouring industry.

164. The Ministry of Education mainstreams students with disabilities in regular schools after studying their cases to ensure educational inclusiveness. This allows persons with disabilities opportunities to fully participate in all daily activities, paving the way for them to live a normal life.

165. Educational mainstreaming allows for close comradery among students with disabilities and their counterparts. The classroom provides a broad range of learning opportunities. It is where students learn lessons about mutual acceptance and support. Mainstreaming is therefore more than just letting persons with disabilities into the classroom. It also promotes social change, which ensures equal educational opportunities for all children. Thus, education socializes students while developing their skills as much as possible.

166. Educational mainstreaming plans grant students who do not have disabilities opportunities to become familiar with their cohorts with disabilities. They share the classroom just as they will share the broader fields of life. Mainstreaming benefits not only persons with disabilities, but also their companions on the long road of life. It also fosters such values as participation and friendship, which young people urgently need.

167. In developing educational mainstreaming plans, the Ministry of Education seeks the following:

167.1 Creation of an educational environment, school programme, human resources and educational means.

167.2 Renovation of school buildings to enable persons with disabilities to move and have access to all places, including classrooms, leisure activity halls and lavatories.

167.3 Implementation of the necessary administrative modifications.

167.4 Flexible class periods and tests.

167.5 Flexible school hours.

167.6 Fostering of participation and teamwork.

167.7 Promotion of communication among families and between families and the school, including the school administration and teaching staff.

167.8 Creation of a common dynamic that involves constant changes in educational methods and the use of educational administrative and technical tools. Such tools must be present at the centralized level and at the decentralized level in the directorates in the governorates and provinces. Consideration must be given to the adoption of advanced educational curricula and to the development of administrative and staff performance.

167.9 Reprogramming of instructional methods to enable students at various levels use the academic materials provided to them. This requires resources and innovation on the part of teachers.

167.10 Efforts to train and prepare educational staff in higher educational institutions and universities and to promote their role in conducting evaluation and follow-up.

168. In 2005/06, the Ministry of Education — convinced of the need to keep pace with the developments and major expansion occurring in education in general and education for the disabled in particular, and aware that a large segment of children require special-education services and care — mainstreamed persons with hearing impairments and intellectual disabilities in regular schools. It did so to provide special-education services to

as many students with disabilities as possible throughout the Sultanate and to provide educational opportunities to students with disabilities for social and educational growth together with regular students. The Ministry also seeks to improve attitudes toward persons with disabilities among regular students, teachers and members of society in general.

169. To help ensure the success of mainstreaming, the Government employs teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or braille. It also trains professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training incorporates disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials for supporting persons with disabilities.

170. Under the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act (No. 63/2008), article 7, the Government guarantees “the provision of educational services to disabled persons consistent with their sensory, physical and mental capacities” to enable them to obtain a general education, higher education, vocational training and adult education without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To achieve this objective, the government guarantees the provision of reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities.

171. The Ministry of Education actively develops special education schools. The Government, as necessary, sets up special education schools (classes) with the aim of implementing compulsory education for children and youngsters of school age with visual disabilities, hearing and speech disabilities and intellectual disabilities. As regards special education, the Government combines cultural education and instruction in work-preparation skills with due attention to meeting the physical and mental needs of students with disabilities. Teaching based on disability classification and individual instruction are offered to meet the individual needs of students with diverse disabilities. Curriculum design, teaching plans and teaching materials are tailored to the particular characteristics of children with disabilities.

172. Following are data on the number of students with disabilities:

1. There are 1,190 students with hearing, visual and intellectual impairments in basic education and post-basic education, which is 97.3 per cent of the total number of students with disabilities who are enrolled in the schools.
2. There were 228 male and female students in the Amal School for the Hearing Impaired in academic year 2010.
3. There were 319 male and female students in the Cognitive Education School in academic year 2010.
4. There were 96 male and female students in the Omar bin al-Khattab Institute for the Blind in academic year 2010.
5. The number of students with learning disabilities totals 680.

173. There are 127 basic-education public schools in the Sultanate offering special education classrooms and educational mainstreaming for different types of disabilities. Attachments 5-11 show the names of the schools that participate in mainstreaming, the numerical distribution of children with disabilities in the governorates of the Sultanate, the incidence of disabilities, the distribution of children according to age group and statistics on the number of schools, students and teachers involved in the Learning Disability Programme.

Article 25 Health

174. Under the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act (No. 63/2008), article 5, “Persons with disabilities shall enjoy the preventive and therapeutic health care provided by the State, which includes rehabilitation and compensatory devices to assist with mobility, movement, education, training etc. according to the rules and procedures issued by decision of the Minister after coordination with the relevant agencies”. The Government at all levels is responsible for providing special assistance to cover primary medical care for persons with disabilities through the Omani health care system and public-health services to achieve equality in the provision of primary health-care services. The Government further supports persons with disabilities by guaranteeing them the option of obtaining reliable, effective, free primary health-care services.

175. A Subcommittee Specialized in Health Services for Persons With Disabilities was formed under the chair of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health. The functions and purviews of the Subcommittee are specified in Ministerial Decision No. 82/2010 (see Attachment No. 12). Agencies concerned with disabilities provide a mechanism for the prevention and early treatment of birth defects and participate in the following prevention efforts aimed at controlling the incidence of disabilities:

175.1 Expanded Immunization Programme: The Programme was initiated in the Sultanate of Oman in the late 1970s. It provides a number of preventive inoculations against diseases that cause permanent disabilities, such as polio, rubella, meningitis and blindness caused by vitamin A deficiency. Polio cases dropped noticeably from 335 in 1979 to zero as of December 1993; 99.9 per cent of children are inoculated against 13 infectious diseases. These inoculations are provided free of charge to all residents and persons who visit health institutions. Health institutions monitor cases in which it is too late to administer inoculations to ensure the full inoculation of the population.

175.2 Maternal and child care: In 1990, the Ministry of Health began to provide folic acid to women in the first trimester of pregnancy to reduce foetal nervous system abnormalities and cleft. The Ministry also undertook in 1996, in cooperation with the Ministry of Trade, to fortify white flour with folic acid and iron for the same reasons. In 1999, the Ministry of Health introduced a congenital and genetic malformation reporting and registration system. It also recommended conducting ultrasound examinations of pregnant women during the eighteenth through twenty-fourth week of pregnancy for the early detection of congenital malformations of the fetus. The Ministry of Health has always dedicated major concern to the health of mothers and children. It has issued information guides on inoculations, maternal and foetal care during pregnancy and natal and post-natal care. Medical teams takes measurements of the length, weight and head circumference of new-borns and examine them for any apparent genetic defects, such as congenital deformities, cleft palate and heart murmurs. The teams conduct a detailed examination of the legs and other parts of the body for the early detection of birth defects and congenital diseases to facilitate early interventions to limit disabilities.

175.3 Early examination of children: In 2001, the Ministry of Health began to examine new-borns for the early detection and treatment of hearing impairments. The Ministry has made efforts to provide Echo-Screen Hearing Screeners and trained employees in all Omani hospitals to test the hearing of new-borns. The Programme has evolved significantly since that time. In 2002, the Ministry began to implement an Integrated Disease Management Programme for children under the age of five. In this Programme, the child is fully evaluated to detect physical and

mental diseases. The examination of new-borns' thyroid hormones was initiated in 2005, as congenital thyroid deficiency is a cause of intellectual and physical impairment.

175.4 School Health Programme: This Programme began in 1972. Initially, it covered schools in the Muscat governorate. It was then expanded to keep pace with the rapid development seen in the revival of the Sultanate in all areas, particularly education and the construction of schools throughout the Sultanate. The School Health Programme currently evaluates the physical and mental condition of students when they register to enrol in school. This includes a vision and hearing examination, a clinical examination of all bodily systems, a speech evaluation and a general cognitive evaluation. The school health team continues to provide these services as the child progresses through the various educational levels. Inoculations of students are also administered and monitored under this Programme.

175.5 Genetic Disease and Premarital Examination Programme: The Sultanate, represented by the Ministry of Health, is concerned with building families and a society that are free of genetic diseases and congenital deformities, most of which contribute to high rates of disability, disease and mortality. In 1995, the Ministry of Health conducted a national survey of genetic blood diseases targeting children under the age of five. Based on the survey results, two clinics were established for genetic diseases and premarital examinations in the 1990s. These clinics are currently present in most primary and secondary health-care institutions. A trained medical team in the clinic advises persons wishing to marry. It tests them for genetic blood diseases and sexually-transmitted diseases and counsels them based on the test results. Persons who test positively for a genetic or sexually-transmitted disease are advised of the need for the other party to be examined to ascertain that the other party is free of such diseases before a commitment is made. Advice and counselling is also provided to protect against and treat these diseases.

175.6 Vision Health Programme: The National Vision Health Care (Blindness Protection) Programme began in 1982 with eye examinations for all school students and for residents of villages and neighbourhoods where trachoma is prevalent. This Programme is currently implemented through the School Health Programme. When a child registers for first grade, the child's eyes are examined for diseases and to determine visual acuity. Students are also tested in the seventh and tenth grades to determine visual acuity and to treat general vision problems preventively. All school health workers in Oman have received training in all methods of prevention, treatment, and documentation of all vision health activities. In November 2012, Oman was acknowledged by the WHO to have eliminated trachoma.

175.7 National Programme for the Care of the Elderly: The elderly, particularly persons with disabilities, have enjoyed considerable concern on the part of the Government based on its belief in the need to provide a decent, self-reliant life free of disability for the elderly. This concern was reflected in the start of a National Programme for the Care of the Elderly in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Development. The Programme was officially inaugurated on 30 October 2011. It is currently offer in most primary health-care institutions in all governorates. It is run through a special clinic staffed by a trained medical team in each institution. It provides comprehensive services to the elderly (age 60 and above). A joint team of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Development conducts periodic visits to evaluate the situation of elderly persons and provide health and social services, basic needs (including wheelchairs, hospital beds, etc.) and financial support (social security) as needed.

176. The Ministry of Health requires that medical treatment services be provided to all population groups, including persons with disabilities, in the primary, secondary and tertiary health-care institutions. These services have been expanded through the training of health staff (public health nurses), who conduct periodic home visits to provide medical treatment and rehabilitation care. In 2012, Al-Massarrah Hospital was opened. It provides first-class integrated mental-health treatment and rehabilitation services to patients, including social rehabilitation, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech therapy, nerve therapy and psychological rehabilitation. It seeks to reintegrate patients in society as independent, active persons and to prevent them from incurring any disabilities. In February 2013, a stroke unit was established in Sultanate Hospital to rehabilitate and limit disabilities among stroke victims.

177. The Ministry of Health began to provide rehabilitation services in 1982 when it introduced physiotherapy at Khawlah Hospital. The same year saw the inauguration of an orthotic and prosthetic department in the same hospital. Occupational therapy was first offered in the Sultanate in 1982 at Ibn Sina' Psychiatric Hospital, followed by Khawlah Hospital for the rehabilitation of children affected by diseases and bone injuries. Speech and language services began to be offered at Al-Nahdah Hospital in the late 1980s. Such rehabilitation services as physiotherapy and speech and language therapy are offered in most reference hospitals in the governorates, while orthotic and prosthetic services are limited to the governorates of Muscat and Batinah North. The provision of physiotherapy and speech and language services in the governorates has been expanded to cover most reference hospitals.

178. The Government promotes knowledge of the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities among medical workers by running workshops, compiling training materials and organizing lecture teams. The health system in the Sultanate prohibits forced medical treatment and care of any person, including persons with disabilities, without their prior, freely-given consent.

179. All health services are provided at no charge and without discrimination to persons with disabilities.

180. The Government attaches importance to the protection of the reproductive rights of persons with disabilities and provides them with special reproductive care. Health institutions communicate with persons with disabilities of marriageable age to educate them regarding reproduction. Efforts have also been stepped up to provide pre-natal services to prevent and reduce involuntary pregnancies.

181. The Ministry of Health is concerned with training staff to work in areas relating to persons with disabilities in order to increase the number of specialists who work with them.

Article 26

Habilitation and rehabilitation

182. Institutions concerned with persons with disabilities offer comprehensive social, medical, psychological and vocational programmes to rehabilitate persons with disabilities and help them adapt. Efforts are made to attract disability specialists. Employees have been sent abroad to obtain academic degrees that qualify them to work with the disabled in an optimal fashion. Centres have been furnished with the newest equipment and resources consistent with the needs of persons with disabilities. The following table shows government, civil and private centres that provide care to persons with disabilities:

<i>Government centres</i>	<i>Civil centres</i>	<i>Private centres</i>
Centre for the Care and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities	Association for the Care of Disabled Children	Specialized Autism Centre
Home for the Care of Disabled Children in Muscat	Omani Association for Disabled Persons	Integrated Autism Centre
Wafa' Voluntary Social Centres	Association for Early Intervention for Children with Disabilities	Muscat Autism Centre
Association for the Care of Disabled Children	Noor Association for the Blind	Centre for Rehabilitation Innovation
School for the Deaf	Amal Association	Hams al-Athir Rehabilitation Centre
Cognitive Education School	Omani Association for Persons with Hearing Impairments	Nibras al-Athir Rehabilitation Centre
Omar bin al-Khattab Institute	Omani Autism Association	Rawa' Rehabilitation Centre
Early Intervention Association		

183. The Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Education provide care to children with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Development does so through the following:

183.1 The Welfare Department in the General Social Welfare Directorate.

183.2 The welfare divisions in the general social development directorates in the governorates and the Home for the Care of Disabled Children (established in Muscat by Ministerial Decision No. 27/2002) provide care programmes to children with physical disabilities, paralysis of the limbs and cerebral palsy. They also provide appropriate rehabilitation on a case-by-case basis for children of both sexes between the ages of 3 and 14 years. These children receive social and medical care from physiotherapists and occupational therapists to help them overcome the difficulties which they face on account of their disabilities. Therapy is provided by physiotherapists and occupational therapists. The Home also trains families in methods for caring for their disabled children in the home. The Home for the Care of Disabled Children provides a number of services and activities, including the following:

183.2.1 Medical and health care and periodic examinations.

183.2.2 Physiotherapy and motor skills improvement on a case-by-case basis.

183.2.3 Therapy for developing fine motor skills and autonomy.

183.2.4 Ongoing social and psychological care programmes, psychological guidance and counselling programmes for children and their families, pre-school preparation for children and housing and food services.

183.2.5 Family care and training of families to help them implement rehabilitation programmes for their children.

183.2.6 Help in gaining admission for children to general-education schools on a case-by-case basis.

In 2012, 185 children benefited from the services offered by the Home for the Care of Disabled Children, including 107 males and 78 females, as follows:

<i>Services</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
Boarding	11	7	18
Day care	58	33	91
Family training	38	38	76
Total	107	78	185

184. The Wafa' Social Centres are government social institutions in the governorates that provide a variety of services to children with disabilities, depending on the case. These centres seek to provide support and care for children with disabilities to enable them, through activities and programmes, to adapt to their environment. These centres:

184.1 Provide psychological and social rehabilitation services for disabled children to prepare them for integration into society based on their potential and aptitudes and to enable them to benefit from the available community resources to that end.

184.2 Offer guidance and counselling for families with disabled children in all matters relating to the nature and requirements of their children's disabilities, methods for adapting to those disabilities and methods for properly channelling their concern for their disabled child.

184.3 Promote a spirit of participatory social action among members of the public, deliver the best services to children with disabilities, promote mainstreaming activities for such children and prepare the children to enrol in educational institutions.

The following table shows the number of children who have benefited from the services of the Wafa' Centres for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Children according to governorate and disability type:

<i>Governorate</i>	<i>Number of centres</i>	<i>Number of workers</i>	<i>Intellectual impairment</i>		<i>Hearing impairment</i>			<i>Impaired mobility</i>			<i>Visual impairment</i>		<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
			<i>Mild</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Deaf</i>	<i>Hearing impaired</i>	<i>Speech impairment</i>	<i>Cerebral palsy</i>	<i>Atrophy of muscles</i>	<i>Poliomyelitis</i>	<i>Blindness</i>	<i>Severe visual impairment</i>		
Muscat	1	20	5	2	4	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	49	65
Batinah North	4	107	33	100	4	13	3	44	2	0	3	1	52	255
Batinah South	1	21	0	37	5	0	0	33	0	0	1	0	34	110
Dakhiliyah	5	58	65	112	15	12	6	65	4	0	0	11	38	328
North Sharqiyah	4	60	65	65	4	14	9	31	3	3	1	2	78	275

Governorate	Number of centres	Number of workers	Intellectual impairment		Hearing impairment			Impaired mobility			Visual impairment		Other	Total
			Mild	Medium	Deaf	Hearing impaired	Speech impairment	Cerebral palsy	Atrophy of muscles	Poliomyelitis	Blindness	Severe visual impairment		
			South											
Sharqiyah	2	30	32	8	4	1	19	12	11	2	1	0	28	118
Buraymi	1	15	12	36	0	0	0	12	3	0	0	0	1	64
Dhahirah	1	20	5	39	2	2	3	9	2	3	0	0	0	65
Dhofar	3	75	56	54	42	36	5	74	6	14	6	3	80	376
Musandam	1	9	10	12	2	6	2	6	4	1	4	0	5	52
Total	23	415	283	465	82	84	48	288	35	24	17	17	365	1708

185. The Centre for the Care and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Khawd has, since being established in 1987, provided vocational, academic and cultural training and rehabilitation to persons with disabilities to enable them to enter the job market and become integrated in society. The goals of the Centre are to:

185.1 Train persons with disabilities from the age of 16 years in occupations appropriate to their abilities.

185.2 Offer educational programmes in support of the vocational training process.

185.3 Provide vocational training to persons with disabilities to enable them to secure a steady livelihood from appropriate work or individual or collective income-generating projects.

186. During training year 2011/12, the Centre provided training in administration, computing, handicrafts, metalworking and welding, carpentry, house painting, sewing and family education to 61 students, disaggregated according to disability and sex as follows:

	Mobility impairment		Hearing impairment		Other		Total		Total
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Number	16	5	17	5	9	9	42	19	
Total		21		22		18		61	61

187. In training year 2013/14, the Centre's role changed to caring for persons with intellectual disabilities. Other service providers include the following:

187.1 The vocational training centres of the Ministry of Manpower. Since training year 2012/13, they have accepted 116 persons with hearing and mobility disabilities.

187.2 Three centres for the care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, which are currently being prepared in the governorates of Dhofar, Dakhiliyah and Batinah North. They will provide quality specialized rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities.

187.3 Dar al-Iman, which opened in 2012 and provides care for the severely disabled.

187.4 Three units specializing in children with autism, which are currently being established in three governorates in the Sultanate to provide services to persons with autism.

187.5 A national, specialized centre for persons on the autism spectrum, which is currently being established as a reference centre for government and non-governmental centres that provide services to this population.

188. In addition, a workshop was established with financing from a private organization in the Home for the Care of Disabled Children to manufacture mobility aids for persons with disabilities to meet the care and rehabilitation needs of persons with disabilities.

189. The following civil organizations are concerned with the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities:

(i) The Association for the Care of Disabled Children

190. The Association for the Care of Disabled Children is a civil association that was established in 1991 by Ministerial Decision No. 19/91. It serves male and female children ages 5 to 14 years with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities, hearing disabilities and combined disabilities. The Association provides rehabilitation services through 11 centres located throughout Oman, including the Autism Centre and the Family Guidance Centre. These centres have admitted 421 males and females with disabilities. The Association's main services include:

190.1 Educational programmes for each separate disability.

190.2 Physiotherapy services for persons with mobility impairments.

190.3 Speech and language services for persons with hearing disabilities.

190.4 Educational programmes for persons with autism.

190.5 Family guidance services.

191. The Association offers rehabilitation programmes that seek to develop children's independence skills, mobility skills (through physiotherapy), social skills, language and speech skills, cognitive skills and knowledge. It also offers extracurricular and leisure activities.

(ii) The Early Intervention Association

192. The Association was established in Muscat in 2000. It specializes in providing care for new-borns with disabilities until they are six years of age. It currently delivers its services through a specialist centre staffed by specialists and aids who are qualified to deal persons with special, needs such as blindness or severe mental disability.

193. The centre delivers its services through the following programmes:

193.1 The Kindergarten Programme: It is based on the Montessori method for educational and recreational kindergarten activities.

193.2 The Physiotherapy Programme: It provides check-ups, assessment and therapy for new-born infants with special needs.

193.3 The Speech Therapy Programme: It is based on periodic visits by specialists to check and evaluate cases of children with speech and hearing issues and to then provide the necessary therapy sessions.

193.4 The Portage Home Visits Programme: It is based on the mother as the main child care provider and carried out through periodic educational home visits by specialists in this field to:

193.4.1 Expand the delivery of services to a larger number of children.

193.4.2 Expand the scope of service to all age groups catered to by the Association.

193.4.3 Raise public awareness.

193.5 The Family Support Programme: It consists of family support groups formed by the centre. Families of children with disabilities (such as Down's syndrome) meet and discuss their children's problems, exchange views and provide mutual support.

193.6 The Programme to Raise Awareness and Promote Support for the Cause of Persons with Disabilities: It conducts awareness-raising campaigns through educational programmes and the media to educate the different sectors of the public and involve them in supporting persons with disabilities.

193.7 The Training Programme: It aims to upgrade the skills of civil servants, both male and female, in the context of the annual training plans of the Ministry of Social Development.

194. Approximately 300 children and families have benefited from the services provided through the Association's programmes (kindergarten, home visits and the evaluation and rehabilitation unit). This high number has made it necessary to increase the number of employees working in the centre's programmes.

195. The Ministry of Social Development provides sports training for disabled children through the sporting activities of the National Disabled Sports Team and through training courses for volunteers.

196. The Ministry of Health, in association with the other relevant bodies, cares for disabled persons by providing preventive, therapeutic and rehabilitation services in a series of preventive programmes for healthy vision, growth monitoring, accident reduction and safety promotion, maternal and child care and immunization. The Ministry also provides physiotherapy services, artificial limbs and other needs depending on its resources and treatment through the countrywide health services network.

197. Several dialogue programmes have been held for children in which children with special needs participate.

198. The aims of the parent councils, according to the parent council regulations issued by Ministerial Decree No. 10/99, include caring for children with special needs and proposing programmes to develop their abilities to enhance their educational and social level.

199. It is evident from the above that children with disabilities obtain care, education, training, health care and rehabilitation services through programmes offered by multiple governmental and civil bodies. These services and programmes are currently coordinated by the National Committee for the Care of the Disabled. The Committee also conducts — through the agencies represented in it — public awareness-raising campaigns in the audio-visual and print media to counteract negative attitudes towards disabled persons, including children with disabilities.

200. The relevant civil associations, including the Early Intervention Association for Children with Disabilities, have assumed responsibility for developing a programme to rehabilitate and train female teachers and workers in the field of special education. This includes developing and reinforcing their knowledge and understanding of the primary role

which they play in the growth and development of the child. These associations have also made efforts to ensure that the training and rehabilitation team acquires appropriate higher-education qualifications (special-education diplomas) in partnership with the University of Nizwa. The first 30 female teachers graduated during 2007 through 2009 and currently work at the centre. The second batch of 45 female teachers graduated during 2009 through 2012 and is preparing in earnest to work at the centre.

Article 27

Work and employment

201. The Government's concern with work and employment for persons with disabilities is reflected in its formation of a committee chaired by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Manpower. A joint team formed by the committee with the Ministry of Manpower monitors this subject and searches for jobs suited to persons with disabilities in private-sector enterprises based on their qualifications and physical and intellectual abilities. In addition, the Ministry of Social Development has assigned two social workers to work in the Ministry of Manpower to monitor vacancies that appear in the Manpower Register and to channel qualified persons with disabilities to fill vacant positions. According to Manpower Register statistics, 659 persons with disabilities had been employed as of end 2012.

202. A Committee for Training and Employing for Persons With Disabilities has been formed. It is chaired by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Manpower and its members include representatives from relevant agencies, including the Ministry of Civil Service (Employment Department), Ministry of Manpower (Employment Department), Higher College of Technology, Professional Guidance and Field Training, Sultanate of Oman Police, General Directorate of Occupational Standards and the Development of Training Curricula, Association for the Care of Disabled Children, Noor Association for the Blind and a disability specialist from the Ministry of Social Development. The Committee's purviews include:

202.1 Planning rehabilitation and training for persons with disabilities.

202.2 Developing an integrated plan for the integration of persons with disabilities in rehabilitation, training and employment opportunities.

202.3 Monitoring the employment of persons with disabilities who have completed rehabilitation and training.

202.4 Providing information to rehabilitation and training centres on the labour market, available jobs and future prospects.

202.5 Developing rehabilitation and vocational training programmes through the preparation of studies on occupations and jobs that are compatible with new technologies.

202.6 Encouraging the private sector to expand the training and employment of persons with disabilities.

202.7 Proposing the holding of conferences, seminars and workshops concerning subjects within the Committee's purview.

203. A Subcommittee for Rehabilitation, Training and Employment was formed under the National Committee for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled. It is chaired by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Manpower and comprises the relevant agencies. Ministerial Decision No. 204/2014 (Attachment No. 13) specifies the functions and purviews of the committee.

204. Under the Disability Care and Rehabilitation Act (63/2008), article 9, “Government agencies and employers that employ 50 or more workers must hire a percentage of persons with disabilities who have been so nominated by the Ministry of Manpower based on the National Manpower Register to fill vacant positions or occupations. The aforesaid percentage shall be set with respect to government agencies by decision of the Civil Service Council based on the Minister’s opinion. It shall be set with respect to the private sector by decision of the Minister of Manpower. If a person with disabilities who has not been nominated by the Ministry of Manpower is hired, notice thereof must be provided within 30 days of the employment date so that the person employed may be counted within the stipulated percentage. A person who is hired according to the provisions of this article shall enjoy the rights and benefits established for other employees and workers”.

205. Private-sector employers that employ 50 or more workers must fill 2 per cent of their vacant positions or occupations with persons with disabilities who have been so nominated by the Ministry of Manpower Based on the National Manpower Register. In addition, one person with disabilities who is employed in any private-sector enterprise is counted as two persons for purposes of calculating the Omanization rate.

206. Regarding the employment of persons with disabilities in the public sector pursuant to the above-mentioned Act, the Civil Service Council decided in its first session held on 15 February 2009 that at least 1 per cent of announced vacancies must, for a period of three years, be filled by persons with disabilities. This percentage was increased to 2 per cent subsequently. Any person with disabilities may compete for any announced position. Under the Act, any person who is hired is entitled to enjoy all privileges and rights established for other employees. This provision was actually implemented during 2011, when a joint project of the Ministry of Social Development, International Labour Organization and Ministry of Manpower was implemented to increase training and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities through practical interim steps to integrate such persons in training in vocational training centres with others to expand the areas of their employment in the various sectors.

207. The Government and the International Labour Organization have jointly implemented a project to develop training and employment programmes for persons with disabilities. The project is jointly funded by the Government and Agfund. Recommendations made in this regard are currently being implemented.

208. In the framework of the aforesaid project, 13 male and female social workers and employees of the relevant ministries (Social Development, Manpower, Education and Civil Service) participated in a workshop at the Torino Institute in Italy on the development of training and employment programmes for persons with disabilities. The workshop informed participants about the experiences of advanced countries in these areas.

209. New regulations have been established for projects that provide livelihood sources to enable family members and persons with disabilities on social security to improve their incomes. The regulations provide for the granting of non-interest-bearing loans to start projects that generate a monthly income. The beneficiaries begin to repay the loans in small instalments one year after starting their projects and may, in the case of successful projects, request loan forgiveness. Such projects are incentivized through contests in which the first prize exceeds the value of the loan. As of end 2012, 22 projects had benefited from such projects.

210. The right to work of persons with disabilities is protected. Discrimination by employers against persons with disabilities in the recruitment process is prohibited. Employers must provide working conditions and workplace safety commensurate with the physical conditions of employees with disabilities. It is also prohibited to discriminate

against employees with disabilities in respect of wages, salaries, promotion, granting of professional qualifications, remuneration and social insurances.

211. Employment services, including information on jobs, are provided free of charge to promote the employment of persons with disabilities. Male and female persons with disabilities are entitled to compete on an equal basis for other positions not included in the 2 per cent of positions designated for them provided they are suited to the job requirements.

212. The law guarantees persons with disabilities the right to join labour unions. No employer or work establishment may restrict or impede their ability to join labour unions.

213. Under the Omani Labour Law, an employer may not terminate an employment contract if the employee contracts an occupational disease or sustains a workplace injury during employment and is confirmed to have partially or completely lost his ability to work. Such an employee may be directed to participate in workplace injury rehabilitation.

214. The Government prohibits forced labour. It is a violation of labour-management laws and regulations for an employer to compel his workers, including persons with disabilities, to work by restricting their personal freedom during work. Persons who are directly responsible for such an offence are punished under the relevant laws. It is also prohibited for any person to use violence, threats or unlawful restriction of personal freedom to compel an employee to work.

215. Under royal hiring directives, all persons with disabilities who have earned university qualifications and diplomas are employed on an equal basis with others.

216. Under Royal Decree No. 98/2011, the Public Authority for the Manpower Register became responsible for matters relating to the employment of persons with disabilities. A committee to coordinate these matters was formed under the chair of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Manpower and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development with members drawn from the relevant agencies.

Article 28

Adequate standard of living and social protection

217. The Social Security Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 87/84 and amendments thereto guarantee persons with disabilities the right to social welfare in the form of a monthly pension. The Act grants pensions to persons proven by a medical examination to be unable to perform any work or to have a diminished capacity to perform appropriate work due to a specific disability or disease. As of end 2012, there were 23,164 cases of permanent disability or disease among persons up to the age of 59. The aforesaid pension is paid to the following persons:

217.1 Children with disabilities who require assistance, provided the disability is permanent or the disease requires ongoing hospital visits, special requirements, special food or special medicines not available in governmental pharmacies.

217.2 Persons between the ages of 18 and 60 who have a permanent disability or disease that prevents them from engaging in any work. In all cases, such persons may not have a regular income equalling the value of the social security pension to which they are entitled. Income below the pension amount is supplemented pursuant to the Social Security Act.

217.3 A disabled person who has received specific training suited to his capabilities but has not been able to obtain work for reasons that do not pertain to himself, even though he is suited to work, is paid a social security pension. In this case, the person must continue searching for work. In all cases, such a pension will not be paid if the

disabled person has a relative who is required to provide him or her with maintenance under the binding rule adopted in Ministerial Decision No. 53/2014.

218. The Social Security Act also provides for the granting of assistance to disabled persons proven suitable for training to perform productive work appropriate to their condition in the framework of livelihood source projects. Soft loans are also granted through lending programmes (for example the Sanad Programme).

219. The Civil Service Act and implementing regulations issued pursuant to it guarantee the employment rights of a government employee who becomes disabled during and on account of work.

220. The Social Insurance Act guarantees the rights of private-sector workers should they become disabled during and on account of work.

221. The Retirement Pension Act grants the brothers of a deceased pension holder a share of the pension of their brother who is their testator if they are stricken with a disability regardless of their age and in exception to the rules of the Act.

222. The regulations and decisions regulating social assistance guarantee the provision of compensatory devices, wheelchairs and artificial limbs to persons with disabilities who need them at the Government's expense.

223. Persons with disabilities are also provided assistance to pay water and electricity connection and consumption fees for their households, monthly allowances for their children enrolled in school and the cost of renovating and modifying their homes to accommodate their movement inside the home and facilitate their use of the appurtenances of their homes.

224. Under the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act, article 6, "The ministries shall assist with the provision of suitable equipment for the disabled in the homes of families unable to provide such equipment themselves pursuant to the rules and procedures issued by decision of the Minister".

225. Persons with disabilities are exempt from taxes on residential land. They also benefit from a variety of government housing programmes.

Article 29

Participation in political and public life

226. The State ensures that persons with disabilities are enabled to enjoy the right to participate effectively and fully in political, union and public life on an equal basis with others without any exceptional restrictions or conditions. The State creates a positive environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in managing public affairs on an equal basis with others. The State encourages persons with disabilities to participate in the formulation of policies, programmes and services concerning the disabled and on committees concerned with such matters either personally or through their relatives or the associations that represent them.

227. The Consultative Council Elections Act entitles every citizen, including persons with disabilities, to request to be registered in the electoral register upon reaching the age of 21 on 1 January of the election year, and to vote and stand for election to the Consultative Council. Thus, the right of election is a personal right of the voter guaranteed by the law.

228. The Consultative Council Election Act also provides for a member of the electoral committee to assist voters who are illiterate or unable to cast a ballot by placing a mark in the designated field next to the name of the candidate selected by the voter while another

member of the committee recites the name of the candidate selected by the voter, after which the form is handed over for placement in the ballot box.

229. The relevant agencies seek to emphasize, before the start of the electoral process, the need for the electoral committees to provide accommodations for persons with disabilities to enable them to participate in elections flexibly and easily by providing designated voting halls in each electoral district for persons with disabilities and giving priority to persons with disabilities in the voting process.

230. The Ministry of Social Development has issued an election guide booklet entitled “Help Me Vote” for persons with disabilities and electoral committees. The guide covers the requirements for the participation of persons with disabilities in elections to ensure their ability to participate in all elections. It has been distributed to associations concerned with disabilities, polling stations, election supervision authorities and persons with disabilities.

231. The Sultanate attaches importance to the role played by civil-society organizations concerned with persons with disabilities in organizing seminars to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in elections based on the type of disability and providing suitable resources for such participation and information on candidates.

232. The Government makes efforts to ensure that when laws, regulations, rules and public policies are formulated, persons with disabilities and their organizations are consulted on issues relating to their rights and interests and general efforts concerning disabilities. Persons with disabilities and their organizations are entitled to submit suggestions to relevant government units at all levels on such issues. They are represented on the National Committee for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled pursuant to the Disability Care and Rehabilitation Act. There are five associations concerned with persons with disabilities with 15 branches in the governorates. They advance the interests of persons with disabilities by mobilizing society in general to promote the employment of such persons. They function within the limits of the law, regulations and rules to represent and defend the common interests and legal rights of persons with disabilities.

233. Membership in associations that represent persons with disabilities is open to all. The competent ministry provides suitable state land plots at no charge or at nominal prices to such associations for the construction of headquarters for activities that serve persons with disabilities.

234. The State — including all government sectors in the public sector — guarantees that persons with disabilities enjoy all political rights, freedom of expression and the right to vote and stand for election under Omani laws on an equal basis with others. Electoral committees must provide reasonable accommodations, including sign language interpreters and braille ballots. They must guarantee persons with disabilities or their freely chosen representatives the right to vote by secret ballot in general elections or referendums.

235. The Government guarantees persons with disabilities the necessary freedom to establish associations or federations specific to each disability under the Civil Associations Act.

236. The Ministry of Social Development has published a voters’ guide for persons with disabilities entitled “Help Me Vote”. It includes all requirements and conditions for voting and standing for election and for providing an appropriate environment for persons with disabilities to participate at polling stations (Attachment No. 14).

Article 30

Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

237. Under the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act, article 11, “The agencies concerned with social, athletic and cultural activities must act to facilitate the participation of the disabled in local, regional and international sport camps and sporting events and provides means of cultural enrichment for persons with disabilities”.

238. The Government is committed to guaranteeing the participation of persons with disabilities, particularly children, in governmental youth centres and social and athletic clubs free of charge and to providing the accessibility required for that purpose. The State provides opportunities for the holding of mainstreaming athletic activities appropriate to the type and percentage of disability. It provides the necessary trained staff, equipment and athletic fields to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities in local and international competitions and activities. The competent agencies take the necessary measures to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities on the boards of directors of athletic federations and Olympic committees.

239. A Subcommittee for Sports for Disabled persons was formed by the National Committee for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled. The Subcommittee is chaired by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Sports. Its members include representatives of the relevant agencies. Its functions and purviews are set forth in Ministerial Decision No. 81/2010 (Attachment No. 15).

240. The Sultanate annually observes International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Arab Day of Persons with Disabilities and Gulf Week of the Deaf during which activities and festive performances are held for students of the centres, homes and schools for persons with disabilities and special-education schools. Competitions and exhibitions of works of calligraphy, paintings and photography by persons with disabilities are also held. Competitions and cultural and artistic exhibitions also held annually for persons with disabilities in the governorates and provinces.

241. Tourist site entry tickets and guide services are free of charge for persons with disabilities. Museums, art galleries, cultural centres, public parks and other public cultural facilities are open to persons with disabilities free of charge and provide barrier-free access.

242. The Government promotes “information accessibility.” Television channels and radio stations have started broadcasting programmes in sign language. Films and TV series are accompanied by sign language interpretation. There are a growing number of publications in braille. Audiobooks have been published. There is appreciable progress in the development of computer software for the blind, and there is a library at Sultan Qaboos University with braille reading rooms.

243. To date, the Sultanate has hosted two national para-games and two national special Olympic games. There are also national events for individual sports. The Sultanate began to participate in the Paralympics, Special Olympics, Deaflympics and individual sports events in which its athletes achieved outstanding results and maintained their leading positions in the number of both gold and silver medals.

244. There has been marked progress in sports activities for persons with disabilities through the Paralympics and the Oman Olympic Committee. The Amal Sports Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities was established. Persons with disabilities have been widely mobilized to participate in sports activities adapted to their conditions. Efforts have been made to develop and promote sports activities for both fitness and rehabilitation. Sports activities are held with the wide participation of persons with disabilities on the

occasions of national sporting events. A report on the activities and achievements of persons with disabilities is attached to the present report (Attachment No. 16).

IV. The situation of children and women

Article 6

Women with disabilities

245. The Sultanate stated the measures it has taken to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in its initial report which it submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in April 2009. It also provided data and information on measures and achievements concerning women with disabilities in its responses to the list of questions and issues which the aforesaid Committee submitted to the Sultanate in 2011.

246. Since the start of revival, the Omani Government has viewed women as an essential partner in social development and in the education of future generations of Omani citizens who will be responsible for the development of the country. Thus, all aspects of development that affect the life of human beings in Oman apply equally to men and women. Observance of this principle has yielded concrete results regarding the integrated development of the Omani society.

247. Omani women have the same rights and duties as men and receive equal pay for equivalent work in both the public and private sectors.

248. Successful development in any country requires cooperation and solidarity. The Omani Government dedicated special concern to establishing the Omani Women's Association, the first women's association in Oman, in 1970 at the start of the country's revival. Since then, the association has advanced the social, cultural and health conditions of Omani women on all levels and in all fields, including addressing illiteracy among women with dedication and persistence. There are 57 associations concerned with women. They undertake a number of activities in various fields to raise the awareness of women, including women with disabilities.

249. These achievements in the development of Omani women were possible only because of the aptitude of Omani women and ongoing government support of initiatives taken in this respect. The Omani Government spares no effort in encouraging women to occupy their proper place in society. Today women are involved in all activities, including political activities, and they stand for and vote in elections. Women also contribute to economic activities and hold posts in different departments. The rights and interests of women in marital and family relations are protected. Girls with disabilities are guaranteed an education. The Sultanate has always fulfilled its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, including women with disabilities, as a signatory thereto.

250. The Program Relating to the Development of Omani Women generally emphasizes five priority areas for the achievement of equality between men and women regardless of disability:

250.1 Safeguarding of the right of girls with disabilities to education to narrow the gap between boys and girls receiving education.

250.2 The provision of employment services and vocational and technical training for women with disabilities.

250.3 Gender equality: The concept of gender equality has become important in the lives of disabled women. Girls with disabilities are basically able to enjoy their rights in various activity areas according to their conditions. Women with disabilities have seen a sustained improvement in their employment situation and have become more entitled to hold positions in the governmental, non-governmental and private sectors.

250.4 Government provision of comprehensive health care, health education programmes and maternal and child care to women with disabilities.

250.5 Assurance of participation in sports and sports federations by females with disabilities, depending on their condition, to strengthen participation in sports activities at the national, regional and international levels.

251. The Sultanate works assiduously to address social problems affecting women or girls with disabilities. Women's associations work to surmount such problems and provide greater social protection for certain rights and interests of disabled women.

252. The Government constantly addresses — through relevant entities such as associations concerned with women — issues facing disabled women concerning the family, training, rehabilitation, employment and preparation for life carried out by disabled women themselves or by others.

253. Economic and social developments in Oman have improved the health of individuals, including disabled women. Health services and the treatment and prevention programmes delivered by the Ministry of Health have promoted the health of Omani women. The high educational level and awareness of individuals have contributed to the success of the Government's efforts to enhance the health of Omani citizens, which has reduced disabilities and increased health awareness among individuals in general and the family in particular in most sectors of society.

Article 7

Children with disabilities

254. The Sultanate provided detailed data and information on measures and achievements concerning children with disabilities in its combined third and fourth periodic report concerning the rights of the child submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in April 2013, including the percentage of disability among children, disabilities disaggregated according to type and governorate and other information and data.

255. The Government fully protects the rights of children with disabilities. Omani society has no hostile attitudes towards children with disabilities. On the contrary, such children are shown consideration and favour as a matter of social custom and morality. Regarding the right of children with disabilities to education, the schools admit children or juveniles with disabilities who are capable of learning and adapting to school life. When necessary, special education schools (classrooms) are set up to educate school-aged children with mild intellectual, hearing and visual disabilities, thereby promoting the cause of children with disabilities.

256. The Government seeks to increase the rate of rehabilitation of children with disabilities. It explores methods for supporting their physical and intellectual development and seeks to improve governmental and non-governmental rehabilitation institutions. The Government provides training and guidance to families and mothers of children with disabilities through the Portage Home Visits Programme.

257. Regarding the promotion of the cause of persons with disabilities, emphasis is placed on the need to give priority to developing salvage therapy and rehabilitation for children with disabilities. The Government, in collaboration with UNICEF, implements programmes and initiatives to raise awareness of the rights of children in general, including children with disabilities.

258. Regarding the right of children with disabilities to participate in decision-making, the parents or guardians must inform minors when making decisions about their rights and interests, taking into account the minor's age and intellectual development and listening to his or her opinion.

259. The Government upholds the principle of "children first", which it puts into practice by providing for the development of children based on the best rights of children. Such rights are provided in the Children's Act and include the following:

259.1 Under article 51, "A disabled child shall have all rights established under the provisions of this law without discrimination based on disability".

259.2 Under article 52, "The State shall guarantee the care and rehabilitation of a disabled child according to the provisions of the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act. The State and the guardian shall enable the disabled child to enjoy all of the care and rehabilitation services provided in the aforesaid act.

259.3 Under article 53, "The State shall conduct studies and research on disabilities for use in planning and raising awareness and reducing the problems of disabilities pursuant to the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act.

260. Children with disabilities not only enjoy the same rights as other children but also various special safeguards under the relevant laws and policies.

261. The Children's Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. 22/2014 guarantees rights for children, including children with disabilities. Omani laws view children with disabilities who are involved in or a party to legal actions without regard for their disabilities, save for the newly added rights of children with disabilities, which take into account their age, circumstances, conditions and best interests in order to protect them and deter any offence that might harm them.

262. The laws, including the Code of Civil and Commercial Procedures, cover aspects relating to consideration of the rights and interests of children, including children with disabilities (according to their conditions) in terms of:

262.1 Guardianship over them and the conditions and legal consequences thereof.

262.2 The care, management and investment of their funds and property and the conditions and legal consequences thereof.

262.3 Conditions precluding the imprisonment, for debt recovery purposes, of civilian minors under 18 years of age or of any person with a child under 12 years of age.

262.4 All relevant articles of the aforesaid Code seek the best interests of the child. For instance, the Code departs from the rule that applications or appeals are inadmissible if lodged by a person who is not a party in the proceedings or is incompetent to litigate when such applications or appeals are in the interest of a minor by allowing the minor or the minor's guardian or legal guardian to appear on behalf of the minor under the relevant legal provision.

263. The Sultanate cooperates continuously and effectively with various international, Arab and Gulf organizations concerned with children — such as UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Health Organization — in the design and implementation of many programmes

targeting children. Such cooperation is intended to fulfil the commitments of the Sultanate under international, Arab and Gulf conventions, treaties and agreements concerning persons with disabilities. The rights and freedoms articulated in the convention are actively discussed in assemblies for children and young people in schools, clubs and the Scout Movement among others.

264. The Juvenile Liability Act (No. 30/2008) addresses the liability of juveniles below the age of 18 years. It provides for all aspects of the care and welfare of juveniles throughout their processing in the justice system, from evidence collection to placement in a correctional and guidance facility managed by the Ministry of Social Development.

265. Based on the preceding, entities concerned with the affairs of disabled children seek to universalize and promote adherence to the right to equal rights. They stress the need for the legal guardians of children with disabilities to respect the rights of those children and to develop, in an age-appropriate manner, such children's awareness of their rights. These entities seek to ensure that guardians carefully choose the issues which they discuss with their children, how they will respond to their questions, and how they will discipline them consistent with the child's age and maturity, while nurturing their freedom of expression to allow them to communicate with others and interact with life in general, with an emphasis on the diversity of opinion in society as a reflection of the uniqueness of each child.

266. Entities concerned with children in general, including children with disabilities, have adopted general principles for the development of freedom of expression and opinion among children, including the following:

266.1 Deepening of the child's self-confidence.

266.2 Strengthening of the family's sense of belonging by listening to its ideas and having it participate in discussions of family matters.

266.3 Strengthening of the academic and educational attainment of children.

266.4 Surmounting of social and psychological difficulties, such as internal barriers which the child experiences during his life.

266.5 Strengthening of the child's social and school participation by cultivating his or her courage to express what is on his or her mind.

266.6 The State's concern for training children to think about what they would like to do with their lives as an operative component of their personality.

266.7 Training in decision-making by encouraging the parent to place the child in situations requiring decision-making resolve and initiative, encourage and help the child if the child falters and gently correct the child's mistakes to habituate the child to coping with difficult situations.

266.8 Preparation of the child for an autonomous life by: allowing the child freedom of expression, action, opinion and criticism and agreeing with his or her opinion; tasking the child to perform tasks suited to his or her age and health as stated above, including the child's participation in associations, e.g., the Child First Association and the Children's Parliament, which should be promoted through Arab partnerships; respecting the child's freedom of expression, which motivates the child to achieve excellence; emphasizing that teachers and parents must strive to understand, respect and discuss the child's questions and appreciate the child's creativity, not stunt it by focusing on technical errors, all of which greatly facilitates the development of the child's mental faculties.

266.9 Strengthening of the child's will, respect for his opinion and counsel, and making the child feel proud and important.

266.10 Urging of the child to seek knowledge as a way of increasing his or her stature.

266.11 Development of the child's independence, which allows him or her to achieve social acceptance; and helping the child gain self-confidence.

266.12 Developing the child's moral courage by making the child aware of his or her value and cultivating the child's self-confidence to enable the child to be honourable, courageous and bold in his views within the limits of decorum. This makes the child feel secure and gives him or her a sense of power and self-esteem rather than hesitation, fear and submissiveness.

266.13 The child's participation in all matters relating to him or her. The child's ideas about the methodologies and strategies used in the services which the child receives can be elicited and clarified. The child can participate in non-governmental associations, including the Child First Association. The Ministry of Social Development can participate in seminars and conferences on the fostering of a spirit of participation among children in general, including persons with disabilities, in preparation for the Children's Parliament. In addition, all entities responsible for providing services to children should adopt a participatory approach in dealing with children.

266.14 Encouragement of children with disabilities to participate in the children's conferences organized by the Ministry of Social Development and in the Adolescents' Dialogue.

267. The Ministry of Social Development promotes the right of children to participate in matters concerning them in coordination with other agencies based on each agency's purview through awareness-raising campaigns, seminars, meetings and workshops concerning education, development and health. The most recent workshop, which was organized by the Ministry of Social Development, addressed children-friendly cities. Children, including children with disabilities, participated in the workshop. They developed thinking skills by expressing their opinions on parks, the suitability of services to children with disabilities and municipal efficiency, sanitation, safety and environmental health. Children also express their views in matters that are decided in the municipal councils. By participating in conferences, children, including children with disabilities, demonstrate their knowledge and intellectual resources. The Ministry of Education nominates a group of children from all Omani governorates to whom it proposes programmes and projects. This activity provides children with a legal perspective on their needs.

V. Specific obligations

Article 31

Statistics and data collection

268. Under the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act, article 13 (b), the National Committee for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled is responsible for collecting, recording, classifying and continuously updating data and statistics on disabilities and for managing the exchange of such data and statistics for use on the broadest scale possible in developing care, rehabilitation, etc. plans and programmes.

269. The Government develops analytical and statistical systems concerning the disabled population. It works to enhance the confidentiality management of statistical data and prevent the disclosure of the personal information or data of the groups covered by the

statistics, including persons with disabilities, except when the relevant authorities request such information or data.

270. The last population census conducted by the Government in 2010 covers persons with disabilities. The Government also annually monitors the situation of persons with disabilities to obtain data on their geographical distribution, cause of disability, rehabilitation, employment, family situation and participation in society, all of which helps policymakers develop policies.

271. Statistics on rehabilitation, education, employment and social security are published in the Sultanate's social development reports.

272. The National Committee for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled has decided to conduct a comprehensive survey of persons with disabilities in the Sultanate to ascertain the actual number of such persons for use in planning services for them.

273. The following ministries and agencies maintain databases on persons with disabilities:

- Health
- Social Development
- Civil Service
- Manpower and the Public Authority for the Manpower Register
- National Centre for Statistics and Information

Article 32

International cooperation

274. The Government acts to harmonize national legislation, regulations and practices with international instruments concerning the rights of persons with disabilities to which the State is a party and to enforce them effectively.

275. The Government promotes the ratification of, or ascension to, the aforesaid instruments and ensures that they are enforced.

276. The Government helps prepare the reports which States are required to submit to the organizations and committees of the United Nations and regional institutions in fulfilment of their contractual commitments. When appropriate, the Government states an opinion in this regard with all due respect for the autonomy of such organizations, committees and institutions.

277. The Government cooperates with all organizations of the United Nations and League of Arab States, regional institutions and other countries' national institutions that are concerned with promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. The Sultanate participates in the following inter alia:

- Council of Arab Ministers for Social and Economic Affairs
- Arab Labour Organization
- International Labour Organization
- Special Olympics and Rehabilitation International
- International Paralympic Committee
- Arab Childhood Committee

The Government cooperates with all of these entities in areas concerning persons with disabilities.

278. The Government provides information on, and increases public awareness of, the rights of persons with disabilities and efforts made to combat all forms of discrimination against them, particularly discrimination on the basis of disability. It does so through education, the media and the press.

279. The Government receives complaints or petitions and refers them to the competent authorities within the limits of the law.

Article 33

National implementation and monitoring

280. The Ministry of Social Development has formed a National Monitoring Committee to Promote Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Committee's members include representatives of persons with disabilities, the Human Rights Committee, the Council of State, the Consultative Council, Sultan Qaboos University, the General Federation of Oman Trade Unions, the Lawyers Society, the Association for the Care of Disabled Children, the Omani Association for Disabled Persons, the Association for Early Intervention for Children with Disabilities and the Noor Association for the Blind. Under Ministerial Decision No. 124/2010 (Attachment No. 17), the Committee is responsible for coordinating the measures taken by the relevant departments. The organizations represented on the Committee jointly undertake, each within its purview, to protect the rights and interests of persons with disabilities.

281. The Committee develops an annual plan for its activities and efforts to explain the rights of persons with disabilities covered by the Convention. It distributes the Convention to all entities concerned with persons with disabilities.

282. The Committee conducts regular reviews of the implementation of, and compliance with, the Convention during its meetings pursuant to the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act. It also conducts reviews and fact-finding studies on safeguards for persons with disabilities and their interests and makes recommendations regarding enforcement of the Convention at the local level.

283. Persons with disabilities and their organizations are invited to be represented and to participate in and monitor measures adopted to safeguard their rights and interests and to monitor the entire Convention implementation process.

284. The transfer of monitoring of the implementation of the Convention to the National Human Rights Committee is being coordinated, as such monitoring more closely tallies with the Committee's purview.

VI. Challenges and future orientations

285. The challenges facing the Sultanate in providing for the needs of persons with disabilities are for the most part similar to the challenges facing most States in this regard. These challenges, which are important to mention in order to arrive at solutions for overcoming them, may be summarized as follows:

1. Legislative challenges.
2. Educational challenges.
3. Physical challenges.

4. Public space.
5. Society's view of persons with disabilities, and the view of persons with disabilities of themselves.
6. Poor coordination among governmental and non-governmental agencies regarding the provision of services.
7. Delay in the completion of the strategy for services for persons with disabilities.
8. The implementation of the Convention in respect of the rights to employment, education, health and a mainstreaming environment as well as civil and political rights requires budgets that may not be easily available in view of other social needs, which may outweigh implementation efforts.

(i) Legislative challenges and non-discrimination

286. The Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act (No. 62/2008) provides for policies and services for persons with disabilities. However, it must be amended to keep pace with the growing needs of persons with disabilities. The Council of State is currently revising the Act, taking into account the requirements of the Convention.

(ii) Educational challenges

287. The school environment and training of staff in special education are major factors in ensuring that persons with disabilities continue their education. There is therefore a need for a clear, understandable explicit policy that is accepted by teachers, schools and society at large. Measures are needed to provide for quality materials, ongoing teacher training, support personnel, sign language interpreting, other appropriate support services and accessibility to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. This requires parents and organizations concerned with persons with disabilities to be involved in the education process at all levels. It also requires time and considerable material resources. The current challenge of the Sultanate is to expand education to cover all disabilities and establish special-education schools in all governorates of the Sultanate.

(iii) Challenges in the employment of persons with disabilities

288. The rate of training, employment and hiring for government positions of persons with disabilities is moving toward the desired level. However, further measures are needed to create a culture that promotes the rights of persons with disabilities. Therefore, certain positions compatible with the conditions of persons with disabilities have been designated for them, as not all positions are suited to persons with disabilities. There is also the main challenge of creating a work environment that accommodates persons with various disabilities.

(iv) Social challenges

289. Society is duty-bound to help achieve social mainstreaming. Hence a greater focus is needed on awareness-raising programmes designed to foster a positive view of persons with disabilities.

(v) Challenges posed by a lack of statistical data on persons with disabilities

290. The statistics available on persons with disabilities are limited. Moreover, statistics on the number, distribution and disparities affecting persons with disabilities are interwoven with national demographic data on other groups in society. A new statistical framework is therefore needed to classify persons with disabilities in terms of type of

disability, geographical distribution, education level, place of residence, monthly income, marital status and dwelling with a view toward using the results of statistical analyses to enhance the services provided to persons with disabilities.

(vi) Challenges in ensuring a suitable environment and accessibility

291. The environment includes public areas and spaces. Assuring full accessibility is a major challenge facing all States, regardless of their economic advancement. It is enormously costly to develop and renovate urban infrastructure services to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities, comply with the Convention and standards of accessibility and easy access and eliminate existing barriers. All of this requires a national accessibility plan anchored in legislation.

(vii) Housing and transportation challenges

292. These challenges concern the provision of housing suited to persons with disabilities based on their specific disability and the provision of the necessary resources for this purpose. This also applies to available means of transportation, which are in no way considered friendly to persons with disabilities.

(viii) Financial challenges

293. Financial appropriations must be increased to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and ensure that they receive the services they require.

Personal challenges also face persons with special needs, including the following:

(i) Family problems

294. Families are often unable to meet the needs of their members with disabilities for financial reasons despite the support provided and despite their awareness of methods for dealing with persons with disabilities. The situation has the potential to upset relationships within the family.

(ii) Health problems

295. Disabilities often have challenging health repercussions. There is thus a need to enhance capabilities for the early diagnosis of disabilities.

(iii) Psychological problems

296. Persons with disabilities often feel deficient and sense that their families have a limited view of them.

Future orientations

297. The Government is seeking assiduously to overcome the challenges mentioned above in cooperation and coordination with the civil sector, private sector and families. For this purpose, it is developing a national strategy that identifies the weaknesses and strengths of efforts to provide for the rights of persons with disabilities as set forth in the Convention. The strategy includes a timetable with objectives that are linked to the financial budgets that must be provided to achieve each objective.

298. We believe that the measures mentioned in the present report and legislative and regulatory amendments harmonizing with the articles of the Convention will provide a foundation for compliance with all articles of the Convention. We are thus hopeful of being able to report the positive outcomes of our efforts in this regard in the second periodic report of the Sultanate of Oman.

Attachments and tables

Appendix 1

Under Ministerial Decree No. 262/2012 (Attachment No. 18), a working committee was formed to prepare the national report on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The committee is chaired by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Development and has the following members:

- Ministry of Social Development
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Legal Affairs
- National Committee for Housing (Ministry of National Economy previously)
- Ministry of Sports Affairs
- Ministry of Housing
- Ministry of Information
- Ministry of Higher Education
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Interior
- Central Bank
- Muscat Municipality
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Oman, representing the private sector
- Department of Special Care/General Directorate of Social Welfare
- Expert in the care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities
- Centre for the Care and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities
- Noor Association for the Blind

Attachments

- Attachment No. 1: Ministerial Decision No. 80/2010
- Attachment No. 2: Ministerial Decision No. 84/2010
- Attachment No. 3: Ministerial Decision No. 85/2010
- Attachment No. 4: Ministerial Decision No. 169/2013
- Attachment No. 5: Statistics on the numbers of schools, students and teachers in the Learning Disabilities Programme
- Attachment No. 6: Names of schools participating in the Mainstreaming Programme during 2007-2012

- Attachment No. 7: Numerical distribution of children with disabilities in the governorates of the Sultanate and the prevalence of disability among Omani children
 - Attachment No. 8: Numerical distribution of illiterate children with disabilities ages 10-17 years according to sex and area and extent of difficulty/disability
 - Attachment No. 9: Numerical distribution of children with disabilities in the governorates of the Sultanate and the prevalence of disability among Omani children
 - Attachment No. 10: Distribution of Omani children with disabilities ages 3-17 years who are enrolled in education according to sex
 - Attachment No. 11: Statistics on the number of schools, students and teachers in the Learning Disabilities Programme
 - Attachment No. 12: Ministerial Decision No. 82/2010
 - Attachment No. 13: Ministerial Decision No. 204/2012
 - Attachment No. 14: Elections Guide for Persons with Disabilities
 - Attachment No. 15: Ministerial Decision No. 81/2010
 - Attachment No. 16: The activities and achievements of people with disabilities in 2008
 - Attachment No. 17: Ministerial Decision No. 124/2010
 - Attachment No. 18: Ministerial Decision No. 262/2012
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