

Statement of the Sultanate of Oman delivered
By
His Excellency Sheikh Mohammad Ben Said Ben
Seif Al Kalbani
Minister of Social Development
And
Head of the Delegation

On the occasion of the review of the combined second and third national periodic reports of the Sultanate of Oman – UNOG- 3rd November 2017

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Madam Chairperson,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the Committee of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Distinguished guests,

It is a great honor for me and for the members of the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman to hold this constructive dialogue with you on the second and third periodic reports of the Sultanate concerning the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in accordance with international obligations and pursuant to the provisions of article 18 of the Convention.

I would like to start by conveying to you the greetings of the government of my country, the Sultanate of Oman, and the best wishes for success to you personally as professional experts and to your esteemed Committee in supporting women's development and advancement.

It is my great honor to address this esteemed committee and outline a number of measures taken by the Sultanate in order to enforce the Convention at the national level, and refer to the progress made by the Sultanate in areas related to women's empowerment since the review of its first report on 4 October 2011.

I also seize this occasion to reiterate my country's firm and continuous commitment to support human rights issues in general, and women's rights in particular, embodying thus visions pursued by the Sultanate since the dawn of the blessed renaissance and enriching its role as described in the speeches of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said - May God protect him-

The dialogue with your esteemed Committee today falls within the scope of the constructive dialogue on this report and is undoubtedly an opportunity for the Sultanate's delegation to benefit from your international experience in assessing our efforts to promote and protect the rights of women in our country.

It is an honor for me to preside over this delegation, encompassing representatives of a number of governmental and private bodies in the Sultanate and mandated to discuss its national report before your esteemed Committee, reflecting thus the great importance it attaches to the provisions of the Convention and its sincere determination to cooperate with the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in order to achieve its optimal enforcement. Allow me, in this regard, to introduce the members of the delegation:

- His Excellency Abdullah Nasser Al Rahbi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the

United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

- Dr. Hilal Mohammed Al Rashdi- Judge of the Court of Appeal/ Advisor at the Office of the Head of the Administrative Judicial Council.
- Mrs. Maisa Zahran Al Raqaishi- Head of the General Prosecution.
- Dr. Badriya Khalfan Al Yahyai- Education Expert at the Office of the Minister of Education.
- Mr. Jamal Salim Al Nabhani- Advisor and First Secretary at the Ministry of Legal Affairs.
- Mr. Mubarak Ali Al Rahbi- Head of the Minister's Office at the Ministry of Development.
- Dr. Yahya Mohammed Al Hinai- General Director of the family Development Department at the Ministry of Social Development.
- Mrs. Hamida Sloum Al Shukairi- Director of the Department of Modernization and Quality Assurance at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.
- Dr. Fatma Ibrahim Al Hinai- Director of the Women and Children Health Department at the Ministry of Health.
- Mrs. Jamila Salim Jadad- Director of Women's Affairs at the Ministry of Social Development.
- Mrs. Aida Shamis Al Hashimi- Head of the Women Committee at the General Federation of Oman Trade Unions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished Members of the Committee:

- The elaboration of the second and third periodic reports is continuous efforts: In compliance with the recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women as stated in the concluding observations of the Sultanate's initial report reviewed in 2011 and calling upon the submission of the combined second and third periodic reports in October 2015, the National Committee for the Follow-up of the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women worked on the elaboration of a comprehensive report underlying the efforts undertaken between November 2011 and December 2015.

The National Committee adopted an action plan for the elaboration of the report as a continuous process, involving all relevant parties. In order to implement this plan, many events took place in 2012 and the following years. Workshops and training courses were held for government and private sector stakeholders on the mechanism of the report's elaboration. These efforts coincided with the discussion of the comments of the International Committee on the Sultanate's initial report and the replies to them, and the discussion as well of several annual

reports at periodic meetings of the Committee concerning the level of progress made in favor of women in various areas.

We reiterate that, with a view to expanding the discussion and making observations on the second and third national reports, the Committee held a panel discussion on 8 October 2015 in the context of the Omani Women's Day celebrations, where participants reviewed the final draft of the second and third national reports of the implementation of the Convention, including representatives of both Councils in Oman (the Consultative Council and the State Council), relevant representatives of government, civil society organizations, and the judicial authority in the Sultanate.

The report submitted to you reflects the efforts deployed by the National Committee, which includes representatives of the relevant ministries, governmental institutions and civil society, as mentioned above.

- Ratification of the amendment to paragraph 1 of article 20 of CEDAW: At its periodic meeting on 22 May 2017, the Committee for the Follow-up of the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women examined the ratification of the amendment to paragraph 1 of article 20 of the CEDAW Convention in the context of its discussion of the replies to the list of issues. It recommended the ratification of the amendment as it is an internal procedure in the work of the Committee that is not inconsistent with the content of the Convention and the laws of

the Sultanate. The recommendation has been submitted to the Cabinet and the subsequent legal procedures in this regard are being followed up in coordination with relevant bodies such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Cabinet, the Consultative Council and the Council of State.

- Adherence to international conventions on human rights and reservations on some of them: The Sultanate submitted its comprehensive national report on human rights in the framework of the second Universal Periodic Review of the Sultanate, which took place in Geneva on 5 November 2015. A total of 168 recommendations were accepted by the Sultanate (fully or partially), 37 recommendations were not supported, and 28 recommendations were noted. The accepted recommendations regarding the rights of women in the public and private sectors in all fields were 44, which confirms, the sincere determination of the Sultanate to promote women, work towards their advancement and grant them more rights in accordance with the society and circumstances. The Sultanate also confirmed that it has reexamined its adherence to a number of International agreements on human rights, as well as the withdrawal of reservations formulated when adhering to a number of conventions, including reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. In this regard, the Sultanate agreed in principle to taking legal action to adhere to the following conventions:

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.
- Approval to withdraw its reservation to paragraph (4) of article 15, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The necessary procedures provided for in the Basic Statute of the State to adhere to those conventions are under way.

The Sultanate also discussed the third and fourth periodic reports on the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in January 2016, which reflects the Sultanate's keenness to fulfill its international obligations resulting from the adherence to human rights conventions, and its cooperation with the committees concerned with following up the implementation of these conventions.

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed members of the Committee

- The Role of the Parliament in monitoring the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: The specialized committees of the State Council, "the Social Committee", and "the Social Services and Development Committee" of the Consultative Council and the two legal committees of the two Councils give particular attention to following up the implementation of international conventions on all human rights, which were

ratified by the Sultanate and urging Ministries and governmental bodies to follow up on their implementation. In this context, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is of particular importance given the political importance of the role of women in society and development.

- The concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): The Sultanate has disseminated the concluding observations of the International Committee on the Sultanate's initial report to governmental agencies (the Cabinet, the State Council and the Consultative Council), and the judicial authorities. The Cabinet has disseminated the concluding observations to all pertinent Ministries as well to ensure their implementation through the plans and programs of action of the relevant Ministries and governmental institutions and civil society. The combined second and third periodic reports contain a review of the measures and actions taken to implement those recommendations.
- The observation concerning the submission of written information to the Committee on the measures taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 28 and 45 within two years: In 2014, the Sultanate provided written information on measures taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 28 and 45 (related to violence against women and reform of laws on women). The Sultanate has not yet received a response from the Committee.
- The core document: The Sultanate worked on the preparation of the common core document in 2013. The Committee on the

Rights of the Child called upon the Sultanate to update the core document when discussing the combined third and fourth national reports on the rights of the child in Geneva (2016). The Sultanate has therefore set up a committee of the parties concerned with following up the implementation of human rights conventions and the submitted reports to the international committees for reviewing and updating the core document. The final draft is being prepared for submission to the governmental and legislative bodies.

- Omani Women's Day: Celebrating women's day in Oman is considered one of the most prominent achievements of women in the era of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said –May God protect him- This occasion is celebrated annually on the 17th of October since 2010. Omani Women's Day is observed with many grand events related to women and the family, which includes a forum on women's empowerment issues, honoring leading women in special ceremonies. This occasion is celebrated in all the governorates of the Sultanate.

The Sultanate's celebration of Omani Women's Day has been appreciated in the Gulf region and by many regional and international organizations, and praised in a number of their periodic and specialized reports.

The celebration of this year 2017 was under the slogan "Women and the family economy". On this occasion, the Cabinet affirmed in its statement that "the Sultanate's celebration of Omani Women's Day, which was organized based on the directives of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said- May God protect him- reflects the attention and importance given to Omani women, enabling them to assume their role in

society, and reaffirms the position of women as partners in the national work alongside men. The Omani women's successes in public and private work have multiplied, and they have played constructive roles in literature and in various economic, social, artistic and other fields, in addition to their fundamental role in education and enhancing family unity and social structure. Omani women have a growing role in serving the country contributing in all work fields, in addition to their interest in establishing a good family, caring for children, and their desire to improve productivity in their work.

- The Education Policy Document in the Sultanate: The Education Council of the Sultanate of Oman adopted the Education Policy Document, which was blessed by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said –May God protect him-. The document is a reference for building educational policies and guidance for the continuous development of education in all its phases and paths.

The document comprises 10 main sources and principles, including: International treaties and conventions, and 16 principles that reflect general educational objectives, including education on human rights and obligations, education for sustainable development, education for peace and understanding, etc. And we believe that the adoption of this philosophy and the work to achieve it will play a role in disseminating and strengthening the principles and values of human rights in general, and women's rights in particular.

Madam Chairperson,

- Equality in education: The Sultanate of Oman has achieved gender equality in primary and secondary education. In fact, the Gender Equality Index shows an increase in favor of girls from grade 1 to 12. The percentage of gross enrollment in pre-school education for females in the academic year 2015-2016 was 54.6%, the percentage of enrollment in public and private schools was 95.4% for the educational stages 1-6 and the net enrollment rate for grades 7-9 was 95.7%, while the net enrollment rate for grades (10-12) was (85.3%).

Women accounted for 54% of all admissions in higher education institutions inside and outside the Sultanate in 2016. The number of female who graduated from higher education institutions increased by 93% in 2016 compared to 2012. Women accounted for 59.3% of the total of graduations from institutions of higher education in 2016.

- Health and reproductive health of women: The number of Omani doctors increased in 2016, and women account for 61% of them. Life expectancy at birth for females rose from 78 to 79 years in the period from 2012 to 2016 (a higher life expectancy than for men estimated at of 74.5 and 74.7 years respectively for the same period).

The miscarriage rate dropped in 2016 to 9.7 per 1,000 women aged between 15 and 49 compared to 10.8% in 2012. The number of women visiting prenatal care clinics increased by 16.4% from 2012 to 2016. The average number of visits was 5.9 per pregnancy. The maternal mortality rate decreased from 17.8 per 100,000 live births in 2012 to 13.4 in 2016. In comparison, the average of births under the supervision of a specialist medical increased from 98.6 in 2012 to 99.5 in 2016.

- Birth spacing: The data indicate that the rate of new frequencies at birth spacing clinics in the period 201-2016 reached 9.7 and that housewives are more likely to go to spacing clinics than working women.
- Increase of the role of women in the political sphere: The Sultanate granted women the right to vote and stand for election in 1994. In 1995, women's participation as candidates was noted, in addition the report sets in detail their contribution and role in the elections. In 2012, Omani women competed in elections to municipal councils. Four women were elected to municipal councils. Before the second round of the municipal elections, the Ministry of Social Development, in cooperation with the Omani Journalists Association and the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), held a training course to support female candidates in their campaign to the second round of the elections to municipal councils. Consequently, these elections held in December 2016 resulted in the victory of 7 women, and the percentage of female voters in municipal councils increased from 28.6% in the first round to 46% in the second round. The report referred earlier to the efforts of the Ministry of Social Development in holding training courses to build women's capacities and skills in the electoral process of the Consultative Council and the municipal council. And I am pleased to inform you that the government tends to increase the participation of women in electoral boards during future sessions as special provisional measures aimed at accelerating equality between men and women.
- Legal culture of women: The Ministry of Social Development, in cooperation with civil society organizations, is making

efforts to improve the legal culture of women, since there are many women who are not aware of their basic rights according to the laws in force.

In an attempt to enhance the legal culture among members of the Omani society, and women in particular, the Ministry of Social Development issued explanatory notes (Women in Omani legislation) on the laws related to women for the period 2012-2014, which were launched on the Omani Women's Day, including the Reconciliation and Reunification Act, the Trafficking in Persons Law, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Omani Penal Code, the Civil Status Code, the Nationality Law, the Prisons Act, the Civil Transactions Act and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. All these laws ensure women protection.

Women's Economic Participation: The Sultanate recognizes that the advancement of women's rights begins with their economic participation. Therefore, the government has encouraged the participation of women in the economic development process and provided them with various forms of support and encouragement, such as training, counseling, financial and marketing support. There are also many women who run their own businesses from their homes. And efforts are under way to create new employment opportunities for women in the tourism and private education sectors and to increase the number of training programs for girls. The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry is an active partner in these efforts.

According to the statistics of 2016, the percentage of women participation in the civil service increased to 47% from 44% in 2013 of the total governmental jobs, and in the private sector it

reached 24%. The Sultanate also developed a number of mechanisms supporting the participation of women in the economic life through the Al-Raffd Fund by the Royal Decree 6/2013 and the General Authority for Development in 2012, making it a leading platform to support Omani entrepreneurs of both sexes. The center is part of a large government strategy that embraces and supports small and medium-sized Omani enterprises to help drive the Omani economy forward and create new jobs in the Omani market.

Civil society and private sector institutions and their role in the empowerment of women: Omani women's associations are considered institutions supporting the efforts exerted in the field of empowerment of women and are working to enhance their capacities and skills in various aspects. These associations are spread throughout the Sultanate's governorates. In mid-2017, there were 62 associations. And based on the recommendations of the Omani Women's Forum, 21 buildings were constructed during the years 2011-2016 for Omani women's associations. The cost of each building is RO 500,000, which is approximately one million and three hundred thousand dollars, in addition to buildings previously established.

The establishment of the remaining associations, based on the instructions of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos- May God protect him- is currently being completed. Moreover, the private sector, through its projects and training and rehabilitation programs, supports projects implemented by government agencies in the framework of enhancing women's capabilities and empowerment. In 2011, General Federation of Oman Trade

Unions achieved great success in favor of women's participation in the public and private sectors. It also made a qualitative contribution to women's active participation in trade union activity.

- Development strategies related to women: The Ministry of Social Development in cooperation with partners and with the participation of UNICEF office in the Sultanate worked on elaborating a strategy for social action and preparing a number of sectoral strategies related to women, children and persons with disabilities, taking into account gender mainstreaming. Gender indicators and gender-responsive budgets are the basis for the operational plans of these strategies for the years 2016-2025. Some ministries, such as Health Ministry, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Agriculture, have also developed long-term strategies, including issues related to the development of the situation of women in various fields.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Members of the Committee

Protection and reporting services and the transfer of victims of violence and abuse: The Ministry of Social Development has introduced a special department for family protection by ministerial decree No. 330/2012, which deals with the development of family protection plans. The department serves the following categories: (women needing permission for marriage - Children at risk of abuse - cases of human

trafficking or family abuse). The reporting services are one of the main pillars of the protection system. To this end, a free telephone line has been set up to report cases of violence and abuse, based on trained national cadres working to transfer cases and guide them to the best way to address their problem. Institutional mechanisms have been established to deal with cases of violence and abuse. The Ministry of Social Development by virtue of the Child Law is in charge of setting up "Child Protection Committees" that receive complaints and reports on cases of violence, exploitation, abuse and other violations against the rights of the child and girl child. The members of these committees act in their judicial capacity to enforce the provisions of the Children's Law. These committees are responsible for the protection of children of both sexes. The Ministry of Health and Education has taken many measures to protect abused women and girls through cases that reach hospitals or health centers or are observed in schools.

As for the issue of female genital mutilation, the Ministry of Health, through its health centers, is making efforts to raise awareness about the harmful health practices, including female genital mutilation. It is important to mention that this process has not been included in the medical and dental profession noting that article 20 of the Child Law stipulates: (All persons, especially doctors, nurses and guardians, are prohibited from carrying out, promoting or assisting in traditional practices harmful to the health of the child.) The regulations shall determine what constitutes traditional practices harmful to the health of the child and the Ministry of Health shall take the necessary measures to raise awareness of the dangers of such

practices, knowing that the elaboration, completion and issuance of the regulations of the law is almost finished.

As for the children of Omani women married to foreigners, they are exempted from the requirement of obtaining Omani citizenship to enroll in higher education institutions under certain regulations, in coordination with the Ministry of the Interior and the Higher Education Admission Center; in order to provide access to higher education institutions in the Sultanate. In October 2015, the Minister of Health issued a ministerial decision 135/2015 regulating treatment abroad. And among the cases that could be sent for treatment abroad, are the foreigners who are married to Omani women and children of an Omani women and a foreign husband.

Finally, we would like to thank the members of the Committee for their attention, hoping that the interactive dialogue between the members of your esteemed Committee and the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman will be constructive for the welfare and prosperity of women in the Sultanate.

May Peace, Mercy and blessings of God be upon you,,,