



United Arab Emirates

**Statement of
Her Excellency
Dr. Maitha Salem Al Shamsi
Minister of State
The United Arab Emirates**

**Committee of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against
Women**

Geneva 5 November 2015

Mr. President,

Distinguished members of the Committee, and dear attendees,

It gives me as well as the accompanying delegation pleasure to present to you today the National Report of the United Arab Emirates under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We would like to avail this opportunity to convey to you the best greetings of the Government and people of the United Arab Emirates.

I am pleased to inform you that the UAE delegation today includes many members who participated in the preparation of this report from various institutions and ministries concerned with women. We have been all keen to ensure that the delegation represents all sectors in the country so that they can look closely at the nature and the mechanism that the UAE adopts to discuss its second and third reports on CEDAW Convention. This would also help the delegation to be directly familiar with your comments and inquiries, which would be translated on the ground based on various scopes and competencies.

Mr. President,

The UAE became a party to the Convention in 2004 and presented its first periodic report in 2008. Becoming a party to the CEDAW, and presenting our report to you today, reflects the long-term commitment of the United Arab Emirates to achieving Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women.

This commitment is reflected in our support for realizing the human rights of women and girls at the international level.

The UAE was elected to serve on the Executive Board of UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, for two terms, from 2013-2015 and 2016-2018. The UAE has contributed more than USD 12 million to UN Women since 2012. In addition, the UAE will fund the opening of a liaison office for UN Women in Abu Dhabi.

My country supports the international efforts to achieve equality in the enjoyment of the right to education of girls, which is essential to women's empowerment. Through organizations such as Dubai Cares, a philanthropic organization working to improve children's access to quality primary education in developing countries, the UAE is helping to make the right to education a reality around the world. Working in

partnership with organizations such as UNICEF, Dubai Cares has helped millions of children in more than 30 countries to go to school.

The UAE is also part of the international efforts to end sexual violence in conflict. The Foreign Minister of the UAE, HH Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, is a Global Champion of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, and the UAE is one of the 155 countries to have signed the "Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict." In 2013, the UAE committed with USD 1.5 million contribution, jointly with the United Kingdom, to support the Government of Somalia's efforts to combat sexual violence in conflicts. At the Global Summit on Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict, in London in June 2014, the UAE announced an additional USD 1 million to support the UN in strengthening the capacity of affected countries to address this issue.

At the domestic level, the Government of the UAE believes that the empowerment of women is fundamental for our development as a modern and progressive society. Women participate on an equal basis in every facet of civic, economic and political life in the UAE. This commitment, however, dates back to the vision of the late founding father and first president of the UAE, Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. It can also be attributed to the efforts of HH Shaikha Fatima bint Mubarak "Mother of the Nation- Chairwoman of the General Women's Union, Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation and President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood. HH Shaikha Fatima has exerted many efforts during four decades to allow all opportunities to empower women and strengthen their capacity in line with the strategic requirements for sustainable development of the United Arab Emirates.

Anyone who has followed the path of the UAE Renaissance can clearly recognize the pioneering role of HH Shaikha Fatima bint Mubarak, who continues to emphasize the importance of women's participation in all economic, social and environmental aspects of life, in a manner that ensures their dignity, freedom and equality.

Our commitment to women's equality is also reflected in the UAE's Vision 2021 National Agenda, which aims at protecting women from all forms of discrimination be that at work environment or within society. Such agenda will continue to help the Emirati women achieve ever-greater empowerment in all spheres.

The updated National Strategy for Empowerment of Emirati Women in the UAE for 2015-2021 was launched by Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak on March 8 2015, International Women's Day. The strategy provides a framework for government, private sector and civil society organizations to rank the UAE among the most advanced countries in the area of women's empowerment, noting that all contents of this strategy are consistent with relevant international conventions.

Her Highness has expressed confidence that such strategy, which complements the National strategy in terms of objectives and goals for achieving progress to women,

would help in shaping the future we aspire for our country and people. This can be achieved through partnerships with governmental and federal institutions, civil society organizations, and regional and international organizations and bodies. Her Highness has also expressed confidence that such strategy provides a framework for these institutions and organizations to develop their work plans and programs in order to rank the UAE among the most advanced countries in the area of women's empowerment and entrepreneurship.

Mr. President,

The UAE has implemented a number of initiatives to strengthen the enjoyment of human rights by women in line with the UAE constitution and the Human Rights Convention. For example, the Cabinet issued a decision in December 2012 on the mandatory membership of UAE women on the Boards of Directors of Federal bodies, companies and institutions. In May 2015, the Cabinet adopted a decision to establish the UAE Gender Balance Council to ensure that Emirati women continue to play a leading role in all work spheres and contribute in supporting the UAE position locally and internationally. The establishment of the UAE Gender Balance Council aims at reducing gender gap in all UAE sectors. It also aims at achieving gender balance in decision-making centers, as well as strengthening the position of the UAE in the Global Competitiveness reports in the area of gender gap at workplace, and considering the UAE as a reference to gender balance at work.

In February this year, the UN Population Fund and the UAE's Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood organized in Abu Dhabi a consultative meeting of experts on "Reproductive health and the health of mothers, infants, children and adolescents as a priority to save lives during humanitarian cases". The meeting was held to look at ways to give mothers access to quality maternal health care in crises to contribute to the next global strategy of the UN's Every Woman, Every Child initiative.

Our achievements in eliminating discrimination are reflected in global rankings and statistics. The UAE ranked 40th in the world in the 2014 UN Human Development Index, 20th in the world in the 2015 World Happiness Report, and 43rd globally on the UN's gender inequality index in 2013.

Mr. President,

The UAE has significantly succeeded in reducing the rate of maternal deaths, which is the lowest in the region and one of the lowest in the world, according to the World Health Statistics 2015 report. The maternal mortality rate in the UAE is now eight in every 100,000 live births, down from 16 in 1990. Infant mortality has dropped from 14

per 1,000 live births in the UAE in 1990 to seven for each 1,000 births in 2013, and under-5 mortality rate more than halved from 17 for each 1,000 live births in 1990 to eight for each 1,000 in 2013. Health care is free for all UAE nationals and there is a compulsory health insurance scheme in place in Abu Dhabi to cover all residents.

According to the World Economic Forum's 2014 Global Gender Gap Report, the UAE has essentially reached equality between men and women in educational attainment as well as health and survival. 95% of female high school graduates go on to pursue higher education (compared with 80% of the male students). Women constitute 71.6 per cent of the students in government universities and 50.1 per cent of the students in private universities and colleges. They constitute 43 per cent and 62 per cent of students studying for master's degrees and doctorate degrees in private and government universities respectively. Women constitute 70% of college graduates in the country. This figure is considered among the highest in the world.

Women occupy 66% of public sector jobs - one of the highest proportions worldwide, including 30% of senior leadership positions associated with decision-making roles. Women hold 60 per cent of the technical jobs in medicine, teaching, pharmacy and nursing. Twenty-one thousand women are employers.

The UAE's policies, with respect to the contribution of women in economic activities, are based on the confidence that women's participation in such activities is vital for achieving development and is not just talking about rights and freedoms. It is necessary for all to enjoy this right without discrimination because of gender or sex.

Female business owners account for 10 per cent of the total private sector in the Emirates. They run projects worth 40 billion dirhams. Female business owners constitute 15 per cent of the members of the boards of directors of the chambers of commerce and industry in the country.

These rankings and statistics demonstrate our achievements in improving the general situation of women in the Emirates. However, such statistics provide only part of the picture.

Mr. President,

Women have reached high levels of a prestigious scientific and academic capacity and have achieved practical eligibility and efficiency in the areas of technical and technological development. This has enabled women to participate positively and actively in all areas of sustainable development and various work sites. It also helps in

the implementation of the national strategy for innovation over the next seven years, including many vital development sectors that focus on creativity and innovation in making the future.

Emirati women also work with high capacity, efficiency and competence within national cadres working in the field of outer space research under the UAE Space Agency System. This is besides working in new development strategic sectors based on knowledge, creativity and innovation, including renewable energy and nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and the manufacture and launch of satellites, the technology of aviation industry, and the technology of military arms industry.

Emirati women have also entered the military and police corps and promoted up to the rank of brigadier in the armed forces. In addition, a female judge and two female prosecutors were appointed in the Judicial Department in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, as well as ten female prosecutors in Dubai in 2008.

Based on the confidence of HH Sheikha Fatima that the advancement of women requires a kind of social cohesion and awareness of the importance of having an organized solidarity by women in community, it has become necessary for civil society institutions to exist. Such institutions play a pioneering and leading role in advancing the issue of women's contribution in the development process. This is also significant to protect women's rights and help them overcome any social and cultural obstacles they might encounter.

In this context, women have emerged in a number of these institutions. The proportion of women membership in civil society organizations has reached about (54%) for 73 out of 134 active institutions, including Women, humanitarian, professional, public and cultural categories.

In conclusion, my accompanying delegation and I would be happy to receive your questions and comments and respond to them clearly and transparently. It is also real pleasure for us to receive your suggestions and recommendations.

Thank you all....