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| **The Sultanate of Oman’s Speech****Delivered by His Excellency Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Said Al-Saidi****The Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs****The Third Universal Periodic Review for the Sultanate****Palace of Nations - Geneva 21 January 2021** |
| **Your Excellency the President,** |
| On behalf of the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman, I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the distinguished Council and in particular to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Troika members from the Republic of Malawi, the Republic of Uzbekistan, and Ukraine.I am pleased to congratulate Her Excellency Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Fiji for taking over the presidency of the Human Rights Council for the current year. |
| It is a pleasure for us to be with you today to share with you the progress we have made since the Second Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights that was conducted on 5 November 2015 and our achievements so far in the field of human rights. Despite the current difficult conditions that the world is going through as a result of the outbreak of the Corona pandemic (Covid 19) and the challenges it caused, the Sultanate of Oman committed to be present within the council to present its third report. This clearly confirms Oman's constant commitment to abide by and fulfill its international obligations and to protect and promote human rights. |
| There is no doubt that the dialogue that we are engaging in with you today in the course of the Universal Periodic Review represents a favourable opportunity for the Sultanate of Oman to promote its efforts in the promotion and protection of human rights. |
| The Sultanate of Oman, since commencing the process of preparing its first report, has paid the utmost care and attention to these reports, and has respected the Universal Periodic Review system and its noble goals that provide the opportunity for states to review, evaluate and develop their national laws and measures relating to human rights, in order to align them with international standards. Based on this conviction, the Council of Ministers in the Sultanate of Oman formed a ministerial committee whose membership includes all ministries and government bodies concerned with human rights, and tasked it with preparing the periodic report and supervising the study and implementation of recommendations that are the result of discussing its national reports within the framework of the Universal Periodic Review. |
| In accordance with this approach, the Council of Ministers decided, in its session 22/2016, to task the legal committee of the ministerial committee, to follow up on the recommendations that the Sultanate accepted when discussing its second periodic report. 169 (one hundred and sixty-nine) recommendations were accepted, in whole or in part, out of 233 (two hundred and thirty-three) recommendations which were received in the second round of the review, and (28) twenty-eight recommendations were acknowledged, whereas (36) thirty-six recommendations did not reach the unanimous approval threshold. The legal committee held a series of meetings in this context, and also organized a number of workshops and forums with many civil society institutions and government bodies in the Sultanate, in order to discuss their proposals on the best ways to follow up on the results of the review and the process of preparing the third report, in a collective and collaborative method, in form and content. |
| **Your Excellency the President,** |
| At the beginning of last year, my country faced a terrible tragedy for the people of Oman. On 10 January of last year, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, may God bless him and grant him peace, passed to the mercy of God, he was the founding father of modern Oman, and he is the cause of the international place Oman currently enjoys and its role in establishing the foundations of peace, security, justice, and cooperation between different countries and peoples. He was also a promoter of human rights and respected regional and international conventions, treaties, and rules of international human rights law. |
| This tragedy was a great challenge to all the various units and authorities of the state and to the effectiveness of the Basic Statute of the State, and with the grace of God, Oman has proven to the whole world the robustness and solidity of its legal and institutional structure. This is because the implementation of the procedures stipulated in Chapter One of the Basic Statute of the State relating to the transfer of power in order to ensure a peaceful and smooth transfer of power, took place within a few hours, starting from the announcement of the vacancy of the throne and then the meeting of the Royal Family Council and the Defense Council to confirm the person His Majesty the Sultan recommended in his letter, and ending with the performance of the oath stipulated in article (7) of the of the Basic Statute of the State by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in a joint session of the Council of Oman and the Defense Council, in order for him to exercise his legal powers as the head of state. |
| **Your Excellency the President, Ladies and Gentlemen,** |
| I am pleased to inform your esteemed Council of the fact that on the 11th day of this month, a new Basic Statute of the State was promulgated, it affirmed, as stated in its preamble, that it was promulgated to strengthen rights, duties. and public freedoms, to support the institutions of the state, and to emphasise the principle of Shura. The provisions of the new Basic Statute of the State put in place a specific and stable mechanism for the transfer of the power in the Sultanate. The statute also affirmed the principle of judicial independence and the rule of law as a basis for governance, in addition to affirming the role of the state in ensuring that citizens and residents of the Sultanate enjoy more rights and freedoms, the most important of which are: |
| * Equality between women and men and caring for children, persons with disabilities, young people, and the youth, and that the judiciary is independent and there is no authority over judges in their rulings except for the law.
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| * Compulsory education until the stage of basic education, encouraging the establishment of universities and scientific research, and nurturing creative and innovative people.
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| * The right to life, human dignity, a secure life, and the inviolability of private life for every human being.
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| * Prisons are homes for reform and rehabilitation and they are subject to judicial supervision, and anything that is contrary to the dignity of a person or that endangers his health is prohibited.
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| * Emphasizing the state's approach to establishing a system of local governance, and the role that citizen-elected municipal councils play.
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| This statute also sets out a special chapter on the Council of Oman, which includes its legislative and oversight competences, and affirms its role and contribution to the comprehensive development of the nation. |
| It also provides for a special chapter on the judicial authority which states that judges enjoy complete independence and non-interference from any other party when exercising their functions, and considers such interference a crime punishable by law, in addition to confirming the role of the lawyer profession as a free profession that participates with the judicial authority in the achievement of justice, the rule of law, and ensuring the right of defence, with lawyers having all the guarantees necessary to exercise the right of defense before the courts. |
| **Your Excellency the President,** |
| The report presented before you shows the sincere efforts made by my country, the Sultanate of Oman, in order to implement the recommendations it accepted, which would enhance human rights in the Sultanate, and perhaps among the most prominent achievements made in implementing these recommendations are the following: |
| 1. Acceding to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by virtue of Royal Decree 46/2020.
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| 1. Acceding to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment by virtue of Royal Decree 45/2020.
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| 1. Acceding to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance by virtue of Royal Decree 44/2020.
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| 1. Withdrawing the reservation to article 15, paragraph 4 of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by virtue of Royal Decree 3/2019.
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| And based on the Sultanate’s relentless endeavor to complete the periodic reports required of it from treaty bodies, and to continue its efforts in following up on the implementation of the recommendations issued by it, it has during the period covered by this report (2016-2020), reviewed its periodic reports to implement the provisions of the following international agreements: |
| 1. Convention on the Rights of the Child.
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| 1. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.
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| 1. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
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| 1. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
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| Furthermore, on 9 May 2019, the Sultanate submitted the Amended Common Core Document on Human Rights, which forms part of the reports submitted by the State Parties and it reviewed its first voluntary national report for the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in July 2019. |
| **Your Excellency the President,** |
| Therefore, those who trace the path of comprehensive development in the Sultanate of Oman from 1970 until today will find that it places the Omani citizen as a pillar for the country, and proceeds in a progressive manner, as it believes that any development that is not based on the human being as its focus will inevitably fail and that its consequences will negatively affect society. |
| The National Human Rights Report in the Sultanate included the efforts made by the government to achieve the sustainable development goals, in accordance with the sustainable development agenda in Oman’s development plans and strategies, foremost among which is the Ninth Five-Year Development Plan (2016-2020) and Oman Vision 2040. |
| **Your Excellency the President,** |
| The Sultanate of Oman has repeatedly affirmed that it has the adequate legislation and institutions in place to protect human rights on its territory, and this is buttressed by the Sultanate’s report which showed a large number of legal instruments relating to the promotion of human rights, in addition to emphasising the availability of relevant institutions to support the enjoyment of human rights by Omanis and residents of the Sultanate, in compliance with international conventions, which, in accordance with the Basic Statute of the State, are part of the country's enforceable law. |
| **Your Excellency the President,** |
| There is no doubt that the right to education is one of the most important rights after the right to life, and providing it to members of society enables them to emerge from a state of ignorance to a state of enlightenment. In Oman, making this right available to Omanis and others has been a priority of the government since 1970, and this was represented by the endeavour to accelerate the pace of building schools throughout the Sultanate despite its rugged geographical terrain. However, this did not represent an obstacle to the dissemination of knowledge throughout Oman, in addition to developing the education curriculum to keep the pace with modern developments and promote a culture of human rights. |
| Now, after 50 years of development, the Sultanate supports the path of strengthening innovation within the national education goals, so that the student can keep pace with the scientific developments that the world is witnessing, especially in the technical field. |
| **Your Excellency the President, Ladies and Gentlemen,** |
| In the field of health care, the Sultanate relied on a national health strategy (Health 2050), and in order to confront the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, the Sultanate formed a supreme committee to deal with the pandemic, and the decisions of this committee contributed to containing this virus and limiting its spread, while preserving human rights, especially the right to healthcare for citizens and residents alike. One of the most important measures taken by the Sultanate to limit the spread of the pandemic is to provide free testing and treatment for all those infected with the virus who are residents and who do not have the ability to pay the cost of testing and treatment. The government also provided centres for institutional isolation for those who cannot isolate themselves in their homes. Keeping in mind that the Sultanate is striving, in coordination with the World Health Organization, to limit the outbreak of the pandemic, in addition to coordinating with vaccine manufacturers to obtain and provide it to citizens and residents in the Sultanate. Vaccination in the Sultanate began in the last week of December of last year. |
| **Your Excellency the President,** |
| Women in the Sultanate of Oman enjoy the same rights and freedoms as men and the Sultanate is one of the leading countries in the region in the area of women's rights. The number of women registered in institutions of higher education exceeds the number of men. Furthermore, the number of women participating in the workforce is increasing day by day, and the ministerial formation of the Council of Ministers issued on 18 August 2020 included three women, and a woman was appointed to the position of head of an authority, and three women to the position of undersecretary of a ministry, and women occupy many positions in various government units. |
| In addition to the foregoing, 15 (fifteen) women have been appointed to the State Council, which has been entrusted with many legislative and oversight powers, and one of the women occupies the position of First Vice Chairman of the State Council. Two women also occupy seats in the Shura Council by virtue of the Shura Council elections for the ninth term (2019-2023), it is worth mentioning that the number of women entitled to vote reached 337,543 (three hundred thirty-seven thousand five hundred and forty-three) women, accounting for 47.3% of the total number of voters. Women also have the right to run for and vote in the membership of municipal councils, and council elections have led to a number of women winning membership in these councils. |
| **Your Excellency the President, Ladies and Gentlemen,** |
| In relation to the right to work, the government is continuing its efforts to provide job opportunities for the largest number of citizens of both genders to reduce the percentage of job seekers. |
| The Labour Law governs the relationship between workers and employers, in order to create a degree of balance between the rights and obligations of the parties to this relationship. The Sultanate conducts a continuous dialogue between the parties (the government, workers, and employers). Furthermore, a new draft labour law is currently being studied in line with future developments in relation to worker rights, in addition to taking into account the standards of the International Labor Organization. |
| In order to strengthen the rights of foreign workers, Decision 157/2020 was issued by the Royal Oman Police Amending Some Provisions of the Executive Regulation of the Foreigners Residency Law. Under this amendment, the “no objection certificate” requirement was abolished, this amendment will allow a foreign worker to move from one employer to another of his own free will, thus providing more protection for workers from all forms of abuse, exploitation, and forced labor, all of which are criminalised by law. |
| Moreover, the Employment Security System was issued recently, which is an insurance system against emergency conditions that workers in the private sector are exposed to. This system is central in encouraging work in the private sector. |
| **Your Excellency the President,** |
| The Shura Council elections were held for the ninth period in 2019, and they were of great importance in enhancing the participation of citizens in the exercise of their political rights in the election of members of the Shura Council, which has many legislative and oversight competences. Omani citizens chose 86 members of the Shura Council, representing all states for four years. The Sultanate has sixty-one states. |
| Election days, whether for the Shura Council or for municipal councils, are considered a distinct Omani day, in which political participation from all layers of society is present, which reinforces the right of political participation that the Sultanate has provided to citizens, thus promoting their role in state building. |
| **Your Excellency the President, Ladies and Gentlemen,** |
| The government of my country has made concrete efforts to combat the crime of human trafficking by taking a number of effective steps, including implementing a national awareness campaign entitled "Ihsan" in 2017 aimed at raising awareness of human trafficking crimes. Competent bodies have also set up intensive and specialist training workshops in the field of combating human trafficking, in addition to holding an annual national seminar for officials working in the Public Prosecution, the Royal Oman Police, the Ministry of Labour, and the Ministry of Social Development, with the participation of the Oman Human Rights Commission and international organisations. |
| A speacilised unit has also been established to investigate human trafficking cases in the Public Prosecution pursuant to Decision 50/2017, as well as the establishment of a speacilised directorate in the courts to settle human trafficking cases, and speacilised departments in the Royal Oman Police, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Labour, and the Council of Ministers adopted this month a national plan to combat human trafficking, which confirms the Sultanate’s commitment to work with the international community to combat this phenomenon. |
| As the Sultanate realises the necessity to reinforce human rights principles at the national level, it is of the view that training nationals capable of dealing with human rights issues in the Sultanate is the most appropriate way to promote human rights. For this reason, the national human rights commission works to ensure and safeguard human rights through preventive measures represented in entrenching human rights in various segments of society, as well as through subsequent procedures related to receiving individual complaints from citizens and non-citizens and taking the necessary measures in regard to them in coordination with concerned authorities. |
| Furthermore, the Omani Committee for International Humanitarian Law was established. It seeks to spread and strengthen awareness of the principles, goals, and objectives of international humanitarian law at the institutional and individual level, and exchange experiences with associations, organisations, and bodies working in this field with the aim of strengthening cooperation, and ensuring the implementation and application of the provisions of international humanitarian law in the Sultanate through coordination between competent bodies by reviewing legislation related to international humanitarian law and providing the necessary recommendations in this regard, bearing in mind that the Sultanate is a party to a large number of international agreements related to international humanitarian law. |
| **Your Excellency the President,** |
| The Sultanate is committed to continuing to provide foreign aid to developing countries in the form of grants for humanitarian and development reasons in all parts of the world. A number of countries have benefited from this aid. In addition, Omani charitable associations, headed by the Omani Authority for Charitable Activities, which I have the honor to be Chairman of its Board of Directors, provide urgent relief in the event of natural disasters and in cases of earthquakes and famine in different parts of the world, which confirms the great role of the Sultanate in reducing human suffering in different parts of the world, without discrimination. |
| **Your Excellency the President,** |
| Despite the fact that the Sultanate is located in a troubled region, this has not discouraged it from searching for peaceful solutions to end the conflicts in the region. This is because the work to consolidate international peace and security lies at the core of what the Sultanate believes in for an international community that enjoys harmony among its peoples. To this end, the Sultanate has sought and is seeking to play an effective role as a member of the international community, which was represented in coordinating the operations of returning hostages to their countries, or in receiving the wounded from countries in which armed conflicts broke out and ensuring their treatment and then securing their return to their countries, in addition to its efforts to mediate between conflicting parties in the region. |
| **Challenges and Priorities:** |
| The Sultanate follows a transparent and progressive approach, and, like other countries, it faces a number of national challenges, the most important of which are: |
| * The hindrance of implementing the Sultanate's national strategies as a result of the sharp decline in oil prices, as the Sultanate relies on oil for its income to a large extent.
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| * The absence of effective and transparent cooperation mechanisms to achieve effective human rights practices with some countries who provide labour.
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| * Limited finances and human capabilities, similar to many developing countries, have resulted in a failure to spread the culture of human rights on the largest scale, and to strengthen its presence in various professional and academic disciplines.
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| * The outbreak of the Coronavirus (Covid-19), and the many health and economic difficulties that resulted from it.
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| * The increasing number of graduates, which is a great challenge for many world governments, including the Sultanate, due to the widening gap between the numbers of graduates and available job opportunities, but this did not discourage my country from its commitment to providing employment to citizens and proposing employment plans in the private sector, which the government relies on to be a main part of the national economy. To this end, the Sultanate has made great strides in raising the spirit of self-employment among the youth, and has facilitated all procedures relating to the youth establishing their businesses, and in order to achieve this demand, incubators funded and established by the government have been established in order to provide the private sector with national competencies. All this comes in line with the Sultanate’s keenness to implement the principle of the right to work which the Sultanate fully believes in and has affirmed in its Basic Statute, so that the individual can secure a good life in line with developments in society, as evidenced by the establishment of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority by virtue of Royal Decree 107/2020 as one of the Sultanate’s efforts in this field.
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| With all my sincere thanks and appreciation for your efforts through your esteemed Council in serving and protecting people, and achieving their ambitions and aspirations. |
| **Peace, mercy, and blessings of God.** |