**Statement of**

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**of the Kingdom of Bahrain**

**to the**

**Human Rights Council**

**Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review**

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**In the name of God the most Merciful, the most Compassionate**

**Your Excellencies Distinguished Participants,**

**May the peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you,**

At the outset I would like to welcome the distinguished participants, and to express our pride in presenting today the Kingdom of Bahrain’s fourth report for discussion within the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, prepared within the framework of transparency, responsibility and community partnership between the members of the Higher Coordinating Committee for Human Rights and civil society, reaffirming our determination to continue the fruitful cooperation with your esteemed Council as an illustration of the Kingdom’s respect for, and commitment to, the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism for Human Rights, renewing our previous voluntary commitments, given its importance and effectiveness in enhancing the human rights situation in all countries of the world.

**Mr. President**

The Kingdom of Bahrain, in line with the reformist approach of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the directives of the Government headed by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, is committed to respecting human rights and public freedoms, consolidating the rule of law and justice, supporting the democratic process and promoting comprehensive and sustainable development. It is with honour that I quote His Majesty, who said: **“the pursuit of democracy and respect for human rights will remain two wings with which Bahrain will fly to future horizons”.**

The Kingdom of Bahrain believes in the importance of international solidarity in establishing the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence and promoting the freedom of religion and belief, as constants stemming from its historical, religious and civilizational values, its advanced legislative and institutional system, in accordance with the Constitution, the principles of the National Action Charter and international human rights charters.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has strengthened its position as a longstanding model of tolerance and coexistence among different religions, sects and ethnicities for hundreds of years, as one of the inherent and enduring human rights and freedoms. The historic visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Kingdom of Bahrain, and his participation with His Eminence the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Shaikh Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb, Chairman of the Council of Muslim Elders in the "Bahrain Dialogue Forum: The East and West for Human Coexistence", was a clear demonstration of my country's determination to continue its efforts to uphold the values of peace and understanding among people of all religions and beliefs, to consolidate the principles of human fraternity and to establish the values of doing good and peace.

One of the fruits of this high-level fraternal meeting is the announcement of the establishment of the King Hamad International Prize for Dialogue and Peaceful Coexistence, which implements His Majesty's keenness to promote human fraternity and dialogue among peoples and cultures in peace, and his unwavering support for the harnessing of virtue and bringing people together without discrimination in the interest of nations and peoples, reflecting the Kingdom of Bahrain's keenness to highlight the principles of tolerance, peaceful coexistence and mutual respect among all through innovative initiatives, at a time when the world is facing difficult challenges.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is distinctive in this authentic approach, as pointed out by His Holiness Pope Francis in his speech during the reception held by His Majesty, during which he said, I quote: “This country’s greatest riches shine forth in its ethnic and cultural diversity, and in the peaceful co-existence and the traditional hospitality of its people. Diversity that is not bland, but inclusive, is the wealth of every truly developed country” end quote.

The Kingdom of Bahrain will continue its role as an active partner in consolidating peace and security as an inherent right of all peoples, whilst reaffirming that human solidarity is the fundamental pillar for a better world in which the value of preserving human rights and fundamental freedoms prevails, which rejects religious, sectarian and racial hostility and hatred, and which works to resolve disputes by diplomatic means, in order to achieve just, comprehensive and lasting international peace and security that will enhance efforts to achieve sustainable development.

**Mr. President,**

The Kingdom of Bahrain has continued its tireless efforts to promote human rights and protect its freedoms. **With regards to** **economic and social rights**, my Government has been keen to focus efforts to ensure that the rights of all are guaranteed without discrimination on the basis of sex, origin, religion or beliefs, with particular attention given to the protection of the most vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and the disabled, the achievement of social security and the improvement of the standard of living for people, as the focus of comprehensive development and the goal of all progress.

The Kingdom has strengthened its position among the list of countries with very high human development according to the Human Development report issued by the United Nations Development Program for 2022, ranking thirty-fifth globally and third in the Middle East and North Africa region, in a new testimony to the development of the level of health services with the increase in life expectancy rates at birth to 79 years, and in education with the expected years of study rising to 16 years, and with improving living standards with an increase in per capita Gross National Income to approximately $40,000 dollars, in addition to its significant progress in all gender equality indicators.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has been able to provide a global model in addressing the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and its repercussions, through a balance between maintaining public health and safety, and the continuation of life without taking exceptional measures such as the ban on partial or total movement, with the sustainability of the development process, in accordance with proactive plans, programs and integrated policies that ensured the protection of human rights and dignity, the **most prominent indicators of which are:**

**First: Provision of sustainable, high-quality health and treatment services,** with the development of an "open budget that does not take into account costs", conducting tests and vaccinations free of charge for all citizens and residents alike, with testing amounting to 600% of the population, with 82% receiving the second dose of the vaccine and 67% receiving the booster dose, with individuals given the right to choose between six approved global vaccines, and the capacity of medical beds available increasing sixfold.

These procedures and measures were praised by the World Health Organization, describing the Kingdom as a pioneering model and example of following the methodology of "tracking, testing, treatment", and its selection of Manama as the first healthy city in the Middle East region, in addition to the Kingdom of Bahrain obtaining first place in the world according to Japan's Nikkei Coronavirus Recovery Index for 2021 and 2022. The Government also granted full immunity to foreign workers whose residency had expired or did not have valid official documentation, in order to ensure that they could receive tests and vaccinations, which was welcomed by their countries.

**Second: The implementation of five financial and economic packages** since March 2020 worth approximately $12 billion dollars, the equivalent of one-third of Gross Domestic Product, and including forty initiatives to support individuals, the private sector and the sectors most affected by the pandemic. This was followed by the launch of the economic recovery plan in October 2021 in accordance with five priorities to accelerate the pace of employment of citizens and their integration in the labour market in cooperation with the Labour Fund (Tamkeen), update legislation and commercial procedures to attract foreign investment, with economic openness and diversification, and the implementation of health, educational, tourism and technical projects and establishing five new housing cities.

**Third: Supporting digital transformation in the provision of governmental, health and educational services**, thanks to the Kingdom benefitting from advanced communications and information technology infrastructure, and it ranking first globally in the use of the Internet according to the World Bank, and first in the Arab world in the report of digital trends of the International Telecommunication Union in 2021, and being among the countries with very high indicators in the field of e-government, and the **positive effects of this on:**

* The sustainability of the educational process according to flexible procedures that have maintained the safety of students and educational staff, and reflected excellence in the digital empowerment program in education.
* Supporting flexible work and remote attendance in both government and private sectors during the past period.
* Moving towards the use of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and artificial intelligence technology in promoting the exercise of human rights in a comprehensive concept that includes the right to privacy, the protection of responsible freedoms on the Internet and the countering of cybercrime.

In the context of promoting economic and social rights, the Kingdom of Bahrain has maintained its **Tier 1 ranking** for the fifth consecutive year **in the US State Department’s Trafficking in Persons report** in 2022, a unique achievement of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa, through the application of the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons of 2008.

The Kingdom affirmed its excellence in protecting the rights of expatriate workers, by establishing a comprehensive and specialised centre to support and protect expatriate workers, that received 56,328 cases since its launch in 2016 to benefit from its guidance, legal, medical, accommodation and preventative services, in addition to correcting the irregular conditions of employers and foreign workers, and applying the optional insurance system for domestic workers.

**Mr. President,**

**Civil and political rights** represent a fundamental pillar in the comprehensive development process under His Majesty the King, since the popular consensus on the National Action Charter in 2001 and the adoption of constitutional amendments, the consolidation of the rule of law and institutions within the framework of the separation of powers, their cooperation in accordance with the Constitution, ensuring human rights to life, physical integrity and security, fair trial, free and responsible expression of opinion, and strengthening the role of civil society in the presence of more than 660 civil, political and human rights societies.

The Kingdom of Bahrain will witness this month its sixth **parliamentary and** **municipal elections**, after the success of previous rounds, the most recent of which was in 2018 with a high popular participation rate of more than 67%, in a sign of the vibrancy of its democratic process and the exercise by citizens, both men and women, of their constitutional right to stand and elect with full integrity and transparency, amid full supervision by the judiciary, and monitored by civil society associations, the press and media. We are proud that the percentage of women running for the upcoming parliamentary elections has reached almost 25% of the candidates, which indicates the desire and keenness of Bahraini women to contribute to political life in the Kingdom and to play their national role as an active element of society.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has strengthened its efforts in **promoting criminal justice and law enforcement** under modern and advanced legislation and pioneering and unprecedented mechanisms in the Middle East region, the most important of which are: the application of the Law on Alternative Sanctions and Measures of 2017, which provided for the replacement of custodial sentences after half of it had been served. Due to the success of the programme, in 2021 an amendment was issued which authorised the Ministry of Interior to request the replacement of the sentence of those convicted before the start of the sentence. Thus, the Ministry was given more space in the field of application of the Law on Alternative Sanctions and Measures, and the number of beneficiaries has surpassed 4400 since it came into effect.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has taken integrated measures to protect the right to life, and physical and moral integrity, and for the liberty and personal safety and the rights of prisoners and detainees, through the activation of national oversight mechanisms and with independent human rights institutions exercising their functions freely, impartially, transparently and with full independence in oversight and accountability in the presence of an impartial judiciary that protects rights, freedoms and human dignity, **the most prominent of which are:**

* **The** **National Institution for Human Rights’** efforts to investigate alleged human rights violations, receive complaints, and follow up on them, and exercise its functions in full independence in accordance with the Paris Principles.
* The **Ombudsman** initiating procedures for examining and investigating any complaints or allegations of human rights violations by Ministry of Interior personnel, and taking legal action on them. The Ombudsman has received 7,880 complaints and requests for assistance since its launch in July 2013.
* The efforts of the **Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission** and its primary role in supervising prisons and places of detention, through 22 inspection visits since August 2014.
* The impartial and transparent investigations carried out by the **Special Investigation Unit (SIU)** in the Public Prosecution, since its establishment in 2012, to determine criminal responsibility for any crimes of torture and ill-treatment, with it referring more than 180 accused police officers to criminal and disciplinary trials, and imposing stiff penalties against those found guilty.

The Kingdom's invitation to a delegation of Ambassadors and the Resident Coordinator of United Nations Activities accredited in the Kingdom to visit the Reform and Rehabilitation Center in Jau is proof of the openness and transparency of the Kingdom of Bahrain in this regard.

**Mr. President**

In the context of our concern for human rights and public freedoms, my Government has paid special attention to the rights of the most vulnerable groups, consolidating its pioneering achievements in **supporting the advancement of women** in accordance with the National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women (2013-2022) under the follow-up of the Supreme Council for Women. It is in the process of approving a new plan by the end of this year, to enhance family and social stability and the quality of life, whilst integrating women's needs into comprehensive development programmes within the framework of equality, equal opportunities and gender balance, drawing on lessons learned from the implementation of the current plan.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is proud of the contribution of Bahraini women and their pivotal role in various walks of life, through their assumption this year of four ministerial portfolios, their chairmanship of the Council of Representatives and the legislative authority since 2018, whilst representing 19% of the seats of the Shura and Representative Councils, 12% of judges, and their increased contribution to represent 56% of workers in the government sector, 35% in the private sector, 70% of students of higher education, 49% of academic positions, and ranking first globally in bridging the gender gap in enrolment in secondary and higher education according to the 2021 Davos Report, and through their presence in global forums by representing 33% of diplomats, and their membership in many UN committees and organisations.

In the field of **rights of the child**, the adoption of the Law on Restorative Justice for Children and their Protection from Ill-Treatment of 2021 represented a qualitative leap in the care of children and their protection from exploitation or abuse, whether psychologically, physically, sexually or economically, through which a judicial committee and specialised courts for children were formed to ensure their privacy, and to abolish the criminal responsibility of children under the age of fifteen, whilst allowing the imposing of alternative sanctions or protective measures on the child as they are "at risk" in the event that they commit a felony or misdemeanour, ranging from reprimands to training, rehabilitation and educational programs or caring for him or her in a social welfare institution or hospital, in addition to the implementation of the Family Law of 2017, and Law on Protection from Domestic Violence of 2015, with the formation of a specialised prosecution for the family and children.

The Kingdom continued to activate the "**National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**" by sponsoring people of determination, integrating them into education in schools, universities, training and employment programs and the labour market, and providing them with the facilities and devices relevant to them under Law on the care, rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities of 2006, and its amendments.

It continued its attention to the health, social and psychological **well-being of the elderly**, and the promotion of their value and status in society by enacting the Law on the Rights of the Elderly of 2009 and the National Strategy for the Elderly of2012.

There was an increase in the volume of government assistance allocated to widows, divorced and abandoned women, orphans, the disabled and those incapable of work, the elderly and families of prisoners, and others as per the Social Security law, as well as unemployment benefits for those entitled under the Unemployment Insurance Act of 2006. All this aims to preserve the dignity of citizens and residents of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

**Mr. President**

At the outset of my statement I reaffirmed the importance of solidarity rights which transcend regional borders, to which the Kingdom of Bahrain attaches great importance, underlining its commitment to international covenants and charters and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and based on the belief that human rights are not the exclusive preserve of an individual or a society per se, but are rights that affect groups and all peoples of the world. Accordingly, preserving and promoting them are the responsibility of all governments and societies, as an imperative necessity for the preservation of human dignity and the rights of mankind to security, peace, harmony, coexistence and the utilisation of opportunities for prosperity and sustainable development.

On that basis, the Kingdom of Bahrain affirmed its keenness to take into account the environmental dimensions related to sustainable development, through its pledge before the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060, and its support for the climate summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, and the continuation of its policy and projects in accordance with the new Law on the Environment of 2022, and Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030 towards a healthy, safe and sustainable environment.

The Kingdom of Bahrain also seeks to improve policies related to digital rights and freedoms on the Internet, to formulate policies that suit the situation and circumstances in the region, engage stakeholders and decision makers, influential groups, companies and users in order to adopt human rights values and principles and support efforts aimed at joint cooperation and organisation between members of society, at the local, regional and international levels.

**Mr. President,**

**Your Excellencies,**

The Kingdom of Bahrain is keen to strengthen the coordination and partnership with the United Nations and its agencies in line with the " Strategic Cooperation and Sustainable Development Framework" signed between the two sides, and to continue the constructive cooperation with your esteemed Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as the pioneering reference point in this field.

In this context, the Kingdom is working to host a United Nations Resident Coordinator for Human Rights on a permanent basis, and to present the second national report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals to the High-level Political Forum of the Economic and Social Council next June, as well as its pledge to deliver voluntary reports every two years, and to continue its commitment to submit periodic reports to the treaty committees transparently and objectively.

We express our pride in the preparation of the first National Human Rights Plan (2022-2026), with its adoption by the Government last April, and the follow-up of its implementation in partnership between national institutions, with the plan including 17 main goals, 34 sub-objectives and 102 projects, distributed over four themes that will promote Civil and Political Rights, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Rights of the Most Vulnerable Groups, and Solidarity Rights to achieve the desired goals, especially in the areas of legislation, institutional development, and capacity-building, with the plan including indicators to measure performance and the impact of implementation on the human rights reality in the country.

We reaffirm in this regard that the preparation of the plan took into account the recommendations issued by the Universal Periodic Review, and the strengthening of joint cooperation between national institutions and stakeholders, under the supervision of the Higher Coordinating Committee for Human Rights, which follows up the implementation of the plan and the UPR recommendations, and submits periodic reports making clear any obstacles to the Council of Ministers for guidance.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is confidently proceeding according to ambitious and integrated policies, plans and programmes towards the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopting modern policies, and transparent and responsible practices, that guarantee justice, tolerance, and economic and social prosperity, that enhance the Kingdom's active role in consolidating security, peace and sustainable development for the good and benefit of all citizens and residents in our country.

In conclusion, I cannot but express my delegation's aspiration to conduct an effective and constructive dialogue that will allow us to clarify the important achievements of the Kingdom in the framework of the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, to consolidate a State of justice, law, equality and dignity, and to listen to your observations and recommendations, and to thank the countries which submitted questions and observations, which we have no doubt will be an important incentive to consolidate the values and principles of respect for human rights in the comprehensive development process led by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

**Thank you, and may the peace, mercy and blessing of God be upon you.**