

Report on Progress and Existing Challenges on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)

2019

Family Affairs Council (FAC)

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Introduction:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia believes that women are a fundamental force in society, with an entrenched guarantee in its laws and regulations; as such, the Kingdom is keen on strengthening the status of women in all areas and is taking all necessary measures to ensure the protection of their rights. The Saudi Basic Law of Governance is the general and basic framework which regulates various aspects of the country's political, social and economic life. The Basic Law of Governance guarantees the protection of human rights, stipulating in Article (26) thereof that, "The State shall protect human rights in accordance with the Islamic Sharia." In addition, the Kingdom has endeavored to protect the rights of individuals and ensure a decent living for both genders under its local laws and regulations, as well as the human rights regional and international conventions and treaties to which it has become party, given their alignment with its objectives for women empowerment and advancement, the most notable of which is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified by a royal decree issued in the year 2000. The Kingdom has also become a party to 16 ILO conventions on empowering working women, safeguarding their rights, preventing discrimination and forced Labour and promoting equal pay for both genders.

The achievements and efforts indicated in the Report are a result of programs and policies which aim at the promotion and protection of human rights, including women's rights, and take into account a number of principles, particularly precedence, gradation and comprehensiveness, among others. These programs and policies are based on the Kingdom's laws, international and regional conventions as well the feedback and recommendations given by the committees responsible for monitoring the implementation of such conventions. The Council of Ministers issued Decision No. 308, dated 18/07/1437 H (corresponding to 25/04/2016), approving Saudi Vision 2030, which consists of comprehensive economic and social development plans and programs designed to transform the Kingdom to a pioneering and successful global model of excellence across all fronts. The principal means and mechanisms by which the Vision will be realized include the launch of specific programs, including the Government Restructuring Program, the Strategic Directions Program, the Regulations Review Program, the Performance Management Program and the National Transformation Program. Such programs are closely associated with human rights, having

explicitly affirmed a number of human rights, notably: the right to security, the right to health, the right to education and training and the right to work, as well as family protection, the empowerment of women and the promotion of their participation in political and public life, the freedom to form and support associations and the right to participate in cultural, sporting and leisure activities. Furthermore, around 26 initiatives were identified as part of three Vision Realization Programs focusing on the empowerment of women and families (See Annex No. 1).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia affirms that points reviewed in this report represent the most significant measures and efforts taken to ensure the rights of women. It continues to look forward to the highest levels of promotion and protection of women's rights by enacting the necessary legislations, taking effective implementation measures, and preparing programs and plans based on the Kingdom's commitment to conventions.

The Report provides an account of the most significant achievements during the past five years, as well as the efforts made towards women's empowerment and gender equality as a result of programs and policies designed to promote and protect human rights, particularly the rights of women and children. It was prepared by a committee formed by the Family Affairs Council (FAC), in cooperation with several governmental bodies, civil society and private sector institutions concerned with women or specific issues related to women, given that the reporting process requires wide national participation.

The reporting process underwent several phases:

Phase 1 – Preparation: An executive committee was formed to develop the Report, composed of members from the Family Affairs Council and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was equipped with the knowledge and skills required for the preparation of the Report through a workshop in which an international expert from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) participated, which also provided the team with the UN Women guidance note for comprehensive national-level reviews to be used as the basis for the report.

Phase 2 – Information Collection: The information required for the Report was gathered through a process based on several principles, notably transparency and documentation.

Representatives of all relevant government agencies, civil society institutions and the private sector (24 entities) were contacted to provide all the information, data and statistics required for the Report. (See Annex 2)

Phase 3 – National Review and Deliberation: Representatives of relevant government agencies, the private sector, and civil society institutions were invited to attend a national workshop review, discuss the draft report and complete any missing data and information.

Phase 4 – Drafting: Consecutive and intensive meetings were held by the Report Preparation Team to review the draft report in detail and complete all the work requirements and ultimately finalize the document.

Phase 5 – Approval.

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Section One: Priorities, Achievements, Challenges and Obstacles

First: The most important achievements, challenges and obstacles to the progress of gender equality and women empowerment over the past 5 years:

1. Saudi women have an entrenched guarantee in the Kingdom's laws and regulations which are derived from Islamic Sharia, the basis for all governance laws in the country. Several rights were granted to women, including the marriage and post-divorce cases from the Law of Civil Procedure before Sharia Courts. The Law previously stipulated that the lawsuit shall be filed at the defendant's place of residence, whereas now it can be filed at the female plaintiff's place of residence, regardless of the defendant's. Furthermore, the Enforcement Law provided that women may not be subject to executive imprisonment if they are pregnant or mother to an infant under the age of two. There are also several domestic legislations and laws which enhance the role of women.
2. The Kingdom's leadership issued consecutive orders to eliminate all discriminatory practices against women, notably High Order No. 33322, dated 21/07/1438 H (corresponding to 17/04/2017), which prohibits government departments from asking women to obtain anyone's permission prior to receiving services or finalizing

procedures. The laws and regulations in the Kingdom are constantly being reviewed to verify their compliance with the Kingdom's aspirations for the advancement of women. Furthermore, High Order No. 905, dated 06/01/1439 H (corresponding to 26/09/2017), was issued for the implementation of the provisions of the Traffic Law and its implementing regulations, including issuing driving licenses for males and females alike.

3. A number of competent entities, such as the Shura Council, regularly study the laws in effect that are relevant to women issues and propose any necessary action. As of 16/08/1439 H (corresponding to 01/05/2018), a total of 96 women-related decisions and recommendations were made by the Shura Council, of which 60% pertain to women employment and suitable working environments, and 21% concern awareness regarding women's rights. By virtue of its competence, the Human Rights Commission (HRC) provides its feedback on existing laws and regulations, including monitoring and reporting on discrimination against women, and participating in studying draft laws to ensure their consistency with international human rights standards. HRC also supports the role of supervisory bodies in monitoring and reporting on the compliance of government institutions by ensuring that entities fulfill all their relevant obligations.
4. Civil society institutions endeavor to support and activate the right of women to litigation and access to justice. For instance, charities provided more than 99068 free legal services to 55615 women beneficiaries during the past three years. In addition, there has been an increase in permits granted to Saudi women lawyers, with training programs being launched to this end; in fact, 59 Saudi women were licensed in 2017, increasing the number of female legal practitioners to 244. Efforts are also being made by these institutions to inform women about their rights and encourage them to request them.
5. The Kingdom is engaged in ongoing efforts to support the development of society and its members and ensure equal and fair access to all their rights. Supporting women's development is a main objective under the national development plans, taking on multiple trajectories across different levels in many fields, with the aim of strengthening women's enjoyment of their rights equally and fairly on par with men, within the framework of the Kingdom's international obligations. The establishment

of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs (CEDA) under the Council of Ministers represents a paradigm shift towards focusing and channeling national efforts toward achieving social development goals, and reviewing and coordinating economic and development strategies and plans while also monitoring their implementation.

6. The thirteenth objective of the Tenth Development Plan (2015-2019) is related to the empowerment of women and boosting their contribution to the various areas of development by: increasing the contribution of civil society institutions to the advancement of women's participation; encouraging the establishment of cooperative women's associations; increasing the participation of women in committees, commissions and specialized (domestic and international) councils; developing the support services and facilities needed to enable women to perform their economic and social role; expanding the participation of women in economic activity and increasing employment opportunities for women in various fields to absorb the large number of female workers and to provide them with a decent living; expanding options that are appropriate for females in scientific, technical and professional specialties; requalifying female graduates whose specialties do not conform with Labour market requirements; devising appropriate systems for developing the aptitudes and abilities of Saudi girls; reviewing and updating all laws and regulations concerning the working mother; improving health care for women; and providing opportunities to women with outstanding abilities to hold administrative positions in government agencies and universities. Many civil society institutions support the development and advancement of women in economic, social and cultural fields through progressive programs and mechanisms, most of which are overseen by women who are economic, social and cultural specialists or businesswomen. These activities include the "Baraka Loan Center" project, which was initiated by the King Abdulaziz Women's Charity Association (Awn) and seeks to boost household economies by promoting the role of productive women (**women running home-based businesses**). The Business Incubator Foundation helps female entrepreneurs overcome traditional obstacles and provides them with legal assistance. In addition, the Fatat Al-Ahsa Development Charity has launched several programs to combat poverty by strengthening handicraft skills. Other

such activities undertaken by civil society institutions will be discussed below in the Report.

7. The educational system in Saudi Arabia is fundamentally based on gender equality in all its aspects, including admission, enrolment, curricula, examinations, qualifications of instructors and lecturers and the quality of educational facilities and equipment. Moreover, women have enjoyed greater attention in this regard through affirmative action, such as the establishment of the largest university city for female students in the world – the Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University. It should be noted that qualitative and quantitative indicators reflect continuous development, with net primary school enrolment rate reaching 98% in 2017. In the same year, there were 38,368 schools with 6,230,108 students and 537,147 teachers of both genders. Furthermore, there were 28 government universities and 29 private colleges and universities attended by 1,485,915 male and female students, with 45,922 female scholarship students studying abroad. It should be stressed that the education and training sector was allocated the largest share of the state's budget in the year 2018, amounting to SAR 192 billion (i.e. USD 51 billion). With regard to physical education, the Ministry of Education launched the "Physical Education for Improving the Health of Female Students" initiative under Ministerial Decision No. 89263, dated 11/07/2017, with the aim of establishing and equipping 500 gyms on an annual basis. The "Lifelong Learning Initiative" (Estidama) is a national development initiative which seeks to eradicate illiteracy and enable individuals to benefit from various educational and training opportunities.
8. As to the health sector, the Kingdom allocates a significant budget for the establishment of a number of hospitals and medical cities to receive citizens and residents of both genders. There is currently a total of 470 hospitals, with a capacity of approximately 71 thousand beds, including 16 obstetrics and gynecology hospitals. Furthermore, new medical cities are being built and existing medical cities are being expanded to meet the increasing demand for health services. In order to ensure the quality of health care provided to patients, the Ministry has been keen to intensify supervisory visits that have led to the improved compliance of quality indicators with the required standards, and the enhancement of 77% of the total of poorly rated health

centers in the country. The most prominent women health programs include: the Advanced Pregnancy Program; the National Program to Support Breast-Feeding; the Healthy Marriage Program, which includes premarital screening for genetic diseases; the Healthy and Balanced Nutrition Awareness Program; and the Epidemic Control System. However, health is a complex issue that deals with a wide range of topics, most notably awareness. There are several female health care issues that require increased awareness in the Kingdom, and in some cases not only locally but also regionally, the most notable of which is women's mental health, including postnatal depression; it is only recently that this has been covered my medical examinations, given that there is a lot of stigma associated with mental health issues. As such, they are considered among the priority challenges that will be addressed by health institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

9. The Kingdom has also made several remarkable achievements over the past few years to remove employment and entrepreneurship obstacles facing women wishing to enter the Labour market, culminating in a twofold increase in the number of women across both the private and public sectors. In recent years, there has also been an increase in the diplomatic and international presence of the Saudi woman, with her occupying positions such as Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and chairman of a global financial group. Women have also continued to participate in the elections of the boards of directors of chambers of commerce and public associations; a woman was elected as the Chairman of the Board of the Saudi Stock Exchange Company (Tadawul), the largest stock exchange in the region. Women have also voted and ran for 2015 municipal elections, and now occupy 25% of the board of the Human Rights Commission and 20% of the seats in the Shura Council. Women also currently hold senior positions such as a ministerial level ambassador, deputy ministers, and deans of universities. Saudi women are employed in various sectors at varying rates, with the education sector having the highest percentage of female civil servants, followed by the health sector. However, female representation in certain sectors, such as in the fields of justice, security and military, continues to be drastically low, with these sectors hoping to bridge the gap by announcing – as of 2018 – jobs for women in the Public Prosecution, the General Directorate of Passports, and others. It should also be noted

that there are fewer women in senior or leading civil service positions, which is an issue being addressed by the 2030 initiatives. Furthermore, volunteer work has been one of the platforms that have enabled Saudi women to contribute further to the development and advancement of society through advanced programs and mechanisms, most of which are overseen by women who are economic, social and cultural specialists and businesswomen, with the non-profit sector striking a balance between women (43%) and men (57%). With regard to the private sector, women employment has increased significantly over the past four years, at a rate of approximately 130%. The status of working women still requires more facilities to lower unemployment rates, overcome existing challenges – such as child care programs and flexible working hours – and enhance capacity building programs in management and leadership empowerment and self-development.

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Second: The top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia over the past five years:

- **Equality and Non-Discrimination under the Law and Access to Justice**

10. Within its legislative framework, the Kingdom has enacted new laws and legislative amendments which aim to eliminate discriminatory practices against women, notably High Order No. 33322, which prohibits government departments from asking women to obtain anyone’s permission prior to receiving services or finalizing procedures. Gender equality has also been achieved under the Traffic Law, with a high order promulgating the Law and its implementing regulations and providing for the issuance of driving licenses for men and women alike. The Kingdom is keen to abolish discriminatory practices against women both legislatively and in practice.

11. By virtue of its competence, the Shura Council regularly studies the laws and regulations in effect that affect human rights, particularly those of women, and proposes any necessary action. One of the Shura Council’s committees is the human rights and supervisory bodies committee which represents the technical mechanism concerned with the legislative aspects of human rights, the main tasks of which are studying topics related to human rights, anti-corruption, supervisory bodies, and

international, bilateral and regional conventions on human rights. The committee includes Shura Council members of both genders. It is also chaired by a woman and boasts a 70%-female membership, which has resulted in more women-related outcomes by the Council.

12. the Human Rights Commission (HRC) provides its feedback on existing laws and regulations, including monitoring and reporting on discrimination against women, and participating in studying draft laws to ensure their consistency with international human rights standards. HRC also supports the role of supervisory bodies in monitoring and reporting on the compliance of government institutions by ensuring that entities fulfill all their relevant obligations.
13. The Council of Ministers issued a decision to form the Family Affairs Council (FAC), which aims to enhance and promote the status and role of the family in society; unify efforts made by the various state bodies to form a common family vision; discuss problems and offer solutions to them. The FAC is also responsible for preparing the draft family strategy in coordination with the relevant authorities, as well as raising awareness regarding the rights and duties of family members, encouraging community participation in family matters, and preparing a database on family affairs. Article (6) of the FAC bylaws provides that the FAC shall form the necessary technical committees, including a women's committee tasked with examining all women's issues and developing strategies and legislations that empower women in all aspects of their lives. The Women's Committee is currently coordinating with the relevant authorities to prepare a national action plan for women aligned with the objectives and initiatives of the National Transformation Program and the Global Sustainable Development Goals for women.
14. The National Observatory for Women (NOW) was established to monitor and track all women affairs, notably the participation of Saudi women in development both nationally and internationally. The Observatory serves as a supportive resource and reference for decision makers, institutions, and civil society organizations by establishing indicators to measure the role of Saudi women in development, providing beneficiaries with data and supporting studies to strengthen women participation in developmental roles, while also periodically updating them.

15. Women committees were established in the offices of regional governors to conduct field visits to women's sections in hospitals, educational facilities, and social welfare sections in women's prisons and girls' welfare institutions to ensure their suitability, detect any shortcomings, provide assistance and report to the regional governors.
16. The Labour Law, among others, is currently being reviewed to ensure its alignment with the anti-discrimination legislations and regulations. It includes provisions which adopt the principle of substantive equality between men and women in terms of rights and obligations, and has now been issued with a number of provisions in line with the Kingdom's political and developmental trends as well as its obligations under international conventions and treaties. The provisions include the prevention of any wage discrimination between male and female employees, the adoption of the Wage Protection System (WPS), and the Unemployment Insurance.
17. In addition to the efforts made by the various entities towards reviewing the laws in effect, the Kingdom has supported public courts, personal status courts and criminal courts with a sufficient number of researchers and specialists in sociology and psychology, in order to provide professional advice to judges focused on domestic cases, especially domestic violence.

- **Women's entrepreneurship and women's enterprises**

18. Saudi Arabia is undergoing major social and economic transformations due to its balanced path towards greater well-being and prosperity, including its endeavor to transform from an oil-based economy to an economy based on knowledge and resource recruitment. This approach is supported by laws promoting equal work opportunities for men and women, and increased social awareness regarding the value of women's work. Women have begun engaging in several domains, holding senior positions, and embracing advanced scientific and practical specialties. Demand continues to increase for women entering the Labour market and taking on new roles, with many factors affecting its boom, such as the desire to increase the family's income or fulfill the family's financial obligations, especially in the absence of the breadwinner; the increase in the number of female graduates from universities and institutes inside and outside the Kingdom; and the positive outlook towards women employment from

among various segments of society. During the past eight years, the number of women employees in the Labour market has doubled in both the private and public sectors. The Kingdom has placed great importance on providing an appropriate working environment that caters to family matters and enables women to strike a balance between their work and their family. The laws in the Kingdom have guaranteed the rights of working women, such as entitling her to sick leave as a result of pregnancy, maternity leave, and childcare leave, all with full pay and based on her needs. Pursuant to the laws, working women have also been granted a “Iddah” leave (mourning period) in the event of the husband’s death, with the possibility of extension without pay if she is pregnant, until the child is delivered. To strike a balance between work and family life, many nurseries (or daycare centers) have been opened in different regions of the Kingdom, and employers with a work team exceeding 50 female members shall provide a suitable place with a sufficient number of caretakers to look after workers' children under the age of six. In the case of facilities with over 100 female working women in any given city, the minister has legal authority to oblige the employer to establish a nursery in conjunction with other employers in the city or to contract with an existing nursery to care for children under the age of six during working hours. The Unemployment Insurance was also implemented to ensure compensation for unemployed workers in accordance with certain regulations, until their ability to resume work once again. It also enables women to distribute their fully paid maternity leave as they wish, starting such leave as early as four weeks before their due date, and six weeks after childbirth. They may extend it for one month without pay without prejudice to their paid leave. Women have also benefited from the provisions of the Social Insurance Law concerning pensions and compensation for work injuries and occupational hazards. Working women in the private sector can also resort to the solutions relating to the private sector.

- **Quality of Education, Training and Life-long Learning for Women and Girls**

19. Under the Saudi Vision 2030 and its relevant strategies, and guided by the UN Sustainable Development Plan 2025, work is currently underway to reduce illiteracy by constantly launching flexible programs, such as the Society Without Illiteracy

Program, the City without Illiteracy Program, the Convoys of Light Project, the Educated Neighborhood Program, and other programs which target women in different provinces, governorates, district centers, and small villages, by eliminating the female dropout rate, and providing beneficiaries with financial and moral incentives, among other methods. The Kingdom has been granting financial incentives to male and female students alike, and providing them with free higher education. It should be noted that the rate of illiteracy in the Kingdom 22 years ago was approximately 25%, mostly among women, while in 2018 the general illiteracy rate dropped to 4.67%, with the rate of illiteracy among women dropping to 7.29%. Furthermore, there are 18,904 women in the Kingdom's various regions benefitting from the Society Without Illiteracy Program, given that 65,651 women have benefitted from the awareness-raising and illiteracy eradication campaigns held over the summer season of the past five years.

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Third: Measures to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination:

- **Women with Disabilities**

20. The Kingdom has always provided the utmost attention and care to persons with disabilities across several areas, including therapy and prevention, and has sought to overcome the challenges facing persons with disabilities in their various aspects of life, such as education, health and career, while also urging private sector institutions and enterprises to contribute further to the cause. One of the main governmental initiatives focuses primarily on involving persons with disabilities in the Labour market. Targeting governmental and non-governmental entities, the Qaderoon Network program focuses on raising awareness regarding disability, providing counsel and training, while also promoting the exchange of good practices for the development of sustainable working environments and a culture of appropriate facilities. Tawafuq is the second program which is intended to enable women with disabilities to be employed. It was launched in 2014, and was designed to enable job-seeking persons with disabilities to find employment, on the condition that at least 4% of private sector

employees have a form of disability. In 2016, the government introduced the Disability Work Card and established the Certification System for Disability-Friendly Work Environments. In the same year, 10% of persons with disabilities found employment in the Kingdom, with a quarter of workers receiving benefits under the Tawafuq program. Furthermore, seventeen companies joined the Qaderoon Business Disability Network, and several companies increased their quota of disabled employees. The Special Education Development Initiative was launched by establishing a national strategy for the education of people with disabilities, and the Kingdom adopted the concept of Inclusive Education (IE), which was implemented at the beginning of the academic year 2015/2016 in public schools. It helps male and female students with disabilities within the framework of implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and promoting a human rights-based approach to enhance and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. The Council of Ministers issued Decision No. 534, dated 12/10/2015, ordering the inclusion of students with physical and health disabilities in the stipend's allocation to private education students, and doubling the special education stipend to include 14 cases of physical and health disabilities. The above-mentioned programs are social protection measures that reflect the government's efforts to promote the integration of persons with disabilities, especially females, in the formal Labour market.

- **Other Categories / Divorced Women**

21. Affirmative action is based on "taking special measures with the sole purpose of securing adequate progress for certain groups or individuals in need of protection, to ensure their equal enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms." Several decisions have been issued within the scope of affirmative action in favor of women, enabling them to file a lawsuit in their place of residence or at their nearest court in marriage and divorce related lawsuits, as an exception to the provisions of Article 36 of the Law of Procedure before Sharia Courts, which previously required the lawsuit to be filed at the defendant's place of residence. It further required family lawsuits brought before personal status courts to be resolved in a single hearing, and allotted a period not exceeding a week for their consideration. The Law of Civil

Procedure before General Courts includes all procedures related to divorce, such as custody, alimony and visitation rights, to accelerate the process of family lawsuits. Under the Law, two marriage certificates shall be issued, one for the husband and the other for the wife, in order to strengthen her rights when in need of judicial recourse. In addition, custody and visitation lawsuits shall be executed in the country of custody set out in the court ruling. Women shall be entitled to obtain the custody certificate without filing a lawsuit. In alimony lawsuits, the implementing regulations of the Enforcement Law gives priority to seizing the half of the husband's salary for the benefit of the woman for whom the alimony judgment has been granted.

- **Domestic workers**

22. At approximately 2.4 million, domestic workers make up 7.5% of the total population, of which 30% are females, most of whom work in the service industries and housekeeping. The Kingdom is keen to ensure that the relationship between the male (or female) worker and the employer is governed by a contractual legal relationship. Specific entities in the Kingdom study the recommendations made by the treaty bodies to review the current situation of foreign workers, including domestic workers. As a result, the concept of a sponsor no longer exists in the Kingdom, and the Domestic Workers Regulations have been issued, ensuring the rights of this group in particular, and ensuring that the provisions are consistent with relevant international standards. These regulations are periodically reviewed by government bodies such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MLSD) and HRC.
23. Several precautionary measures have been taken to prevent abuse, exploitation and violence against expat workers, such as raising awareness by relevant authorities and relevant civil society institutions using media, social media, brochures and leaflets in all languages, in order to familiarize the male and female workers with the solutions they can access in the event of abuse or encroachment upon their rights. This includes the complaint receipt process, means of access to justice and the provision of interpreters, given that the employer is not entitled to include a provision in the domestic worker contract that contravenes these Regulations. Domestic workers have the right to retain their passports, and the employer may not prevent them from

keeping their passport or leaving the country, if they want. If their reasons for their return are legitimate, then the employer shall incur the cost of the ticket to their country.

24. The Law guarantees domestic workers the right to receive free health services on equal terms with citizens in hospitals and government health centers, when contracting with individuals in the Kingdom. As for those contracting with institutions or companies, the employer shall provide medical insurance to all employees. Furthermore, the employer shall not be entitled to assign the domestic worker any tasks not agreed upon in the contract, or any work that threatens their health or impair their dignity, or force them to work for third parties. The employer shall pay the wages agreed upon in the contract in a timely manner and document same in writing. In addition, the employer shall provide appropriate accommodation, a weekly leave, and a daily rest period as agreed upon, as well as a paid sick leave and leave for one month after two years of employment, in addition to the end of service gratuity after four years of employment. The Regulations include penalties for violators, whereby the legally prescribed fines shall be imposed in respect of received complaints or during inspections carried out by a number of authorities.
25. In addition to the foregoing, domestic Labour has witnessed developments in terms of laws and procedures, including:
- **Developing recruitment mechanisms:** Recruitment offices are now qualified through training and workshops held in sending states. They are also familiarized with worker rights as well as special standards required of recruitment offices and companies. These offices and companies are screened to ensure their compliance with the required standards for obtaining licenses to coordinate between embassies of countries and conclude agreements and contracts.
 - **Developing control and oversight over practitioners:** The Musaned electronic system, which serves domestic workers, was launched with the aim of protecting the rights of domestic workers from the time of concluding the contract in their country until they leave the Kingdom after the expiration of the contract. It serves to protect their wages, monitor payment through local banks, attest contracts, and

provide support and protection through the customer service agency at the Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MLSD).

- **Developing support and protection mechanisms:** The 1991 Complaint Hotline was established to familiarize domestic workers with the solutions and complaint receipt mechanism they can access upon the violation of their rights, as well as the means to acquire the necessary legal assistance. These complaints are received by persons and companies proficient in 8 different languages.
- **Amending the Law of Criminal Procedure:** The amended Law of Criminal Procedure was promulgated under Royal Decree No. M/2, and its provisions apply to citizens and residents alike. Under the Law, authorities are required to familiarize the accused person of their rights, and criminal investigation officers are to immediately hear the statements of the accused person. If evidence is sufficient to charge the accused, they shall be referred within 24 hours, with a procès-verbal, to the investigator, who shall question the accused and then order their arrest or release within 24 hours. The Law guarantees the right of the accused to seek legal counsel during the investigation and trial. If he cannot afford a lawyer, then the State shall assign a lawyer at its expense.
- Prohibiting all forms of trafficking in persons, such as selling work visas, receiving payment for hiring a worker, receiving payment for entry visas, exit/re-entry visas, residence permits and work permits, breaching contractual obligations, treating workers inhumanly and immorally and employing and exploiting children.
- Workers may not be made to work under direct sunlight between 12:00 PM to 15:00 PM from 15 June to 15 September of each calendar year.

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Fourth: Has the increasing number of humanitarian crises—caused by conflict, extreme weather or other events—affected the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) in your country?

26. The humanitarian crises—caused by conflict, extreme weather or other events—did not affect the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA).

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Fifth: The top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls over the coming five years through laws, policies and/or programs

- **Quality education, training and life-long learning for women and girls**

27. Education is an important cornerstone of the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030 and women have received a significant share of attention in all the programs and initiatives being implemented under the Vision. Such objectives include equal access to education as a priority, including military, security and vocational education. In line with Saudi Vision 2030, five female students were accepted for the first time in the postgraduate programs offered by the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in the academic year 1440/1441 H (corresponding to 2019/2020). Such programs include: Master and PhD in Mathematics; Master in Statistics; Master and PhD in Computer Engineering; Master and PhD in Computer Science; Master of Business Administration (MBA); and Master of Engineering Management. Furthermore, the recruitment process of female teaching staff members commenced on 11/06/2018. Work is underway to build an integrated educational process through improving curricula and teaching methods; ensuring quality, equitable, and inclusive education; enhancing lifelong learning opportunities for all; and improving the ranking of national educational institutions (such as universities and institutes) in accordance with international standards.

- **Women Entrepreneurship and Enterprises**

28. In recent years, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has made significant efforts towards the support of entrepreneurs, as evidenced by the remarkable work performed by the Small & Medium Enterprises General Authority (SMEA) and its effective role in increasing the contribution of small and medium-sized enterprises in the economy and strengthening their role as one of the main drivers of the Saudi economy.

29. There have been notable developments during the past three years in establishments owned by women as well as the total number of small and medium-sized enterprises. Data indicates that the number of establishments registered at the end of the second

quarter of 2018 reached 448,437, with an increase of 1449 establishments compared with 2017 (i.e. 0.3%). At the end of the second quarter of 2018, the total number of commercial registers owned by women reached 102,823 in the SME sector, concentrated in micro-enterprises at a rate of 53% for this category of commercial registers. At the end of the second quarter of 2018, there were 2,741 new micro-enterprises, 406 small enterprises, and 22 new medium enterprises.

30. Over the past five years, there has been an increased focus on women's entrepreneurship, with more than 25 "enablers" of women entrepreneurship across the Kingdom, primarily in the main cities. The Kingdom seeks to increase the participation of women in entrepreneurship projects and their entry into the Labour market, and plans to address these through programs and initiatives of Saudi Vision 2030. The National Transformation Program has identified a number of programs and initiatives that focus on fostering and strengthening a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship; encouraging women in the field of industry, especially small enterprises in need of support, given their fundamental importance to Saudi Vision 2030; increasing the number of existing limited liability establishments, from 50 thousand to 104 thousand facilities by the year 2020; and developing and sponsoring the micro-enterprise sector in order to enhance the role of Saudi youth and empower them to contribute effectively to economic and social developments in partnership with the sister institutions of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. The most prominent initiatives are:

- As part of the National Transformation Program, which is the first step towards realizing Saudi Vision 2030, the Ministries of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources launched its track for "Supporting Entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Enterprises", the first in its initiative tracks which are composed of one hundred and thirteen initiatives. The main initiative under this track will target the Saudi Authority for Industrial Cities and Technology Zones (Modon), aiming for the "construction of four industrial oases suitable for women's fields of employment". It is also backed by supporting initiatives within the same framework, most notably the "Business Incubators and Accelerators and Industrial Innovation Centers Program", the initiative for "establishing industrial parks in

promising areas", the Saudi Aramco Entrepreneurship Center (Wa'ed), as well as the initiative for "developing the export capabilities of Saudi entities."

- The "industrial oases suitable for women's fields of employment" initiative was launched in implementation of the Council of Ministers decision on the allocation and preparation of sites within cities to set up industrial projects for the employment of women. Such an initiative aims to increase women's employment in the industrial sector, particularly in light and clean industries that match their interests and inclinations; and create new jobs for women in modern industrial oases which would be a real economic addition, integrating with existing and future industrial activities. They would be located near populated areas, and provide all the support services to facilitate work of women, i.e. public transport, nurseries within cities, and technical and vocational institutes for women, in coordination with the concerned entities across the various regions.
 - The "Business Incubators and Accelerators Program" initiative aims to help develop the business plans of incubated projects; prepare various workshops to develop the individual skills of incubators; provide legal, administrative and marketing counsel; develop marketing research and promotion skills; and help incubators obtain funding by facilitating access to financial support resources. It further aims to provide continuous follow-up and assistance; and provide various means of support to the development and success of the project. On the other hand, Saudi Aramco Entrepreneurship Center (Wa'ed) supports efforts made by the Ministries of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources towards the initiative of "supporting entrepreneurship and small and medium enterprises." This initiative aims to transform new and innovative ideas into successful, tangible projects by encouraging entrepreneurs to discover and utilize their effective entrepreneurial capabilities in business.
- **Access to decent health care, including sexual and reproductive health rights and reproductive rights**
31. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia gives special attention to women's health, as evidenced by its eagerness to develop a national plan to accelerate progress in maternal and child

health, namely the National Reproductive and Child Health Strategy. It is being implemented in line with the Ministry of Health's strategy and the WHO Global Strategy to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals agreed by WHO member states. Its five-year plan seeks to reduce the mortality and morbidity rate of mothers, newborns and children of both genders by half, and the under-five mortality rate by a third. Currently, the maternal morbidity and mortality rate is 12 deaths per 100,000 live births, and the objective is to reduce that number to 6 deaths per 100,000 live births. Furthermore, the initiative aims to reduce the under-five mortality rate by a third, given that it currently stands at 8.05 per 1000 births, by increasing the percentage of children who make regular visits to healthy child clinics to 50%. The initiative also aims to strengthen the components of the health system, thus improving health services for mothers and children, as well as enhance partnerships with relevant sectors and the community to empower families and society and improve health awareness regarding reproductive health and sexual health through educational and informative campaigns. The National Health Strategy for the Elderly (2018-2030) will be developed in line with Saudi Vision 2030, the Global Strategy and Action Plan on Aging and Health (2016-2020) and as an extension of the National Health Strategy for the Elderly (2010-2015).

- **Right to work and rights at work**

32. The Kingdom's laws guarantee the right to work for all able persons without any form of discrimination. Article 28 of the Basic Law of Governance provides that "the State shall facilitate the provision of job opportunities to every able person, and shall enact laws that protect the worker and the employer." Moreover, Article 1 of the Civil Service Law states that, "Civil service employees shall be selected based on merit," with Article 4 identifying the requirements to be met by potential employees. The Ministry of Civil Service launched the Electronic Recruitment System (Jadarah) through which citizens are nominated for government posts based on their qualifications and expertise and without any discrimination. Nominees and their ranks shall be announced with the utmost transparency, and those who have not been nominated are entitled to appeal to the Ministry or the administrative courts.

33. Over the coming years, the Kingdom seeks to complement efforts and achieve the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030, most notably increasing the participation of women in the Labour market. Efforts by government bodies are combined through a number of initiatives launched to increase communication between sectors, concentrate efforts, and achieve women's empowerment, not only in terms of recruitment, but also qualification and preparation for entry into the Labour market.
34. Several decisions and programs have been adopted to increase job opportunities for Saudi women. Among these is an initiative launched to develop female employment, through four key axes – each made up of a group of programs – and they are as follows: direct recruitment, employment mechanism programs, programs addressing the challenges of female employment and support services, and programs to develop and give effect to legislations and regulations on female employment. A number of decisions have been issued, putting in place the regulatory and procedural frameworks to expand female employment, and implementation is being monitored. These decisions concern the regulation of female employment in factories and shopping malls and the feminization of jobs in shops selling female items. Other decisions have also been issued, regulating women's employment in retail establishments, kitchens and family leisure centers.

- **Changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes**

35. The Kingdom seeks to enhance the national identity of Saudi women in national and international forums, in line with the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030. One of its significant initiatives is the “National Character Enrichment Program,” which encompasses the draft Family Strategy that focuses on all family members, including women, and enhancing their national identity. In addition, emphasis shall be placed on implementing media programs which aim at changing women stereotypes in the society and creating a realistic mental image that reflects the level of participation and effectiveness of Saudi women in all developmental areas, as well as reviewing educational curricula to ensure quality education and improving the image of Saudi women.

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Section Two: Progress Across the 12 Critical Areas of Concern

1 / Inclusive Development, Shared Prosperity and Decent Work

Sixth: Action taken by the State in the last five years to advance gender equality in terms of women's role in gainful employment and Labour:

- **Strengthening / enforcing laws and workplace policies and practices that prohibit discrimination in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in the public and private sectors, and equal pay legislation.**

36. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has ratified the 100th International Labour Organization Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value.

37. Both men and women receive equal unemployment benefits. The Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) also provides the same training and employment support to women and men employed in the private sector, both in terms of the amount of training cost support, wages or duration of support. It should be noted that the Labour Law has taken into account the nature of women and has dedicated an entire chapter to them (Chapter 9), wherein it stipulates further provisions related to women employment in the private sector so as to provide them with more protection.

38. High Order No. 33322, dated 17/04/2017, prohibits government departments from asking women to obtain the approval of any person in order to receive services or finalize procedures."

39. The implementing regulations of the Labour Law have been issued, and Article 34 thereof stipulates that, "Employment of women does not require a permit from the Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MLSD) or any other entity. There shall be no discrimination in wages between male and female workers for work of equal value."

40. The Ministry of Civil Service conducted a comprehensive review of the Civil Service Law and its implementing regulations, in coordination with a large number of entities

and specialists from the public and private sectors as well as the project consultant who provided the benchmarks of several countries. It aimed to assess the reality of the situation, and identify the needs and requirements of government agencies and its employees who are subject to this Law, in a manner consistent with modern administrative changes, in order to help realize Saudi Vision 2030, streamline procedures, enable government agencies to independently manage their human resource matters, and aid in building an organizational environment and an effective plan to raise the efficiency of human resources in the public sector. It should be noted that the amended version of the implementing regulations for civil service employees went into force on Thursday, 11/09/1440 H (corresponding to 16/05/2019). These regulations emphasize the principle of non-discrimination between men and women in terms of employment, promotions, salaries and training, and target all public sector employees, estimated at one million two hundred thousand in number, working in nearly 424 government agencies across Saudi Arabia.

41. Saudi Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Program aim to achieve excellence in government performance, improve economic enablers, and enhance living standards. These objectives will be achieved by accelerating the implementation of digital and primary infrastructure projects, and engaging stakeholders in identifying challenges, developing solutions and contributing to the implementation and assessment of the performance of the Program initiatives. The sixth aspect ("Enabling Different Society Segments to Access the Labour Market and Increasing its Attractiveness") of the eight-aspect Transformation Program seeks to remove developmental obstacles in the Labour market for all segments of society, by enhancing the culture of women's participation in the Labour market; providing the possible tools and means which make the work environment suitable for women; establishing programs that support the rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities and enacting laws and regulations focusing on the suitability of the work environment to ensure their integration into the Labour market. Furthermore, this aspect seeks to develop modern mechanisms for inspection and settlement of Labour disputes, improving the experience of citizens and expatriates and contributing to attracting international talents and competencies.

42. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development provides a compliance platform for organizing and improving the Labour market and work environment and strengthening the partnership between the Ministry, the private sector and community members. It comprises three critical programs: the Self-Assessment Program, Maa'n Monitoring Application (whistleblower app), and the Institutional Inspection Platform "Tamam".

- **Introducing/strengthening active gender-neutral policies in the Labour market (e.g. education and training, skills, and subsidies)**

43. The laws of Saudi Arabia guarantee all citizens the right to free education without any discrimination. Article 30 of the Basic Law of Governance states that, "The State shall provide public education and shall be committed to combating illiteracy". Furthermore, Article 233 of the General Education Policy in the Kingdom, which was issued under Council of Ministers Decision No. 779, dated 16-27/11/1389 H (corresponding to 26-27/11/1969), affirms that all types and levels of education shall be free of cost. In addition, Article 15 of the Policy stresses the importance of linking education at all levels to the general development plan of the country, which aims to achieve a true partnership between men and women, stemming from its belief in the importance of the role of education in achieving sustainable development and giving effect to human rights. Extensive efforts have also been made to provide educational services and combat illiteracy based on gender equality.

44. It is worth noting that the educational system in Saudi Arabia is fundamentally based on gender equality in all of its aspects, including admission, enrolment, curricula, examinations, qualifications of instructors and lecturers and the quality of educational facilities and equipment. Women have even enjoyed greater benefits within the bracket of affirmative action, with several university cities for female students such as the Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, constantly being established. By virtue of their competencies, concerned entities have been giving effect to the human rights of women without any discrimination, as well as addressing discriminatory practices through control and awareness-raising measures, among others. For its part, HRC

ensures that relevant government agencies implement human rights laws and regulations, detects violations against women's rights and takes the necessary legal action. It also monitors implementation by government agencies, each within its purview, of the international human rights instruments ratified by the Kingdom, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and verifies whether these agencies have adopted the measures needed to implement such instruments.

45. As part of the active Labour market policies, the Kingdom has adopted active Labour policies which provide support and training, without any gender-based discrimination, and focus in some aspects on vulnerable groups of women within the intended age group.

- **Taking measures to prevent sexual harassment, including in the workplace**

46. The Anti-Harassment Law was promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/96, dated 31/05/2018, with the aim of combatting and preventing the crime of harassment, penalizing its perpetrators and protecting its victims, thus preserving the privacy, dignity and personal freedoms of an individual, as guaranteed by the provisions of the Sharia and other laws. Article 5 of the Law states that, "The competent entities in both the government and private sectors shall put in place the necessary measures to prevent and combat harassment in their own working environments, provided they include the following: (a) an internal complaint mechanism (ICM) within the entity; (b) the necessary procedures to ascertain the veracity and seriousness of complaints in a manner that maintains their confidentiality; (c) the dissemination and communication of such measures to their members." Moreover, the competent entities in the government sector and the private sector shall hold accountable and enact disciplinary measures on any of their members in case of any violation to the provisions of the Law, in accordance with the established procedures. Disciplinary accountability in accordance with this article shall not prejudice the right of a victim to submit a complaint to the competent authorities.

47. Several entities have adhered to Article 5 of the Law by establishing the necessary measures to prevent and combat harassment in the working environment, including the "Public Prosecution", through the preparation of courses on mechanisms for dealing with harassment issues across the various regions. They include several aspects: (i) introducing the Anti-Harassment Law and the notable characteristics that distinguish it from other social protection laws and penal procedures, such as mechanisms of handling legal proceedings and malicious lawsuits; and (ii) defining the various crimes in harassment lawsuits, and differentiating between them and other types of harassment lawsuits, in order to develop legal mechanisms to handle harassment lawsuits across the Kingdom regions with the objective of unifying investigation procedures and initiation of lawsuits. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development developed Workplace Anti-harassment Charter on 02/04/1440 H, (corresponding to 11/12/2018), wherein Article 4 states that, "The Ministry shall be responsible for providing a healthy, safe and respectful working environment for all."

- **Developing mechanisms for women's equal participation in economic decision-making bodies (e.g. in Ministries of Commerce and Finance, central banks, and national economic commissions)**

48. The laws of the Kingdom do not comprise any provisions that prevent women from occupying any senior position. Article 1 of the Civil Service Law states that, "Civil service employees shall be selected based on merit," therefore nothing prevents women from occupying senior or civil service positions in the Kingdom. Women participation in the Shura Council has gradually increased over the years, beginning with 6 women serving as part-time consultants and growing in number to the point where and they now constitute – in 2019 – 20% of its members. Furthermore, there are no legal provisions preventing women from the right to vote or run for elections. The Law of Municipal Councils has given women the right to vote and run for municipal elections on par with men when conditions are met. The third round of municipal council elections were held in 2015 under the supervision of civil society institutions and the attendance of local and international media. The participation of 81% of the total women voters was recorded, with 21 women also winning seats in the elections.

Women have also been able to participate in the nominations and elections of the Council of Saudi Chambers, even winning positions on the various boards and committees of the chambers of commerce in recent years. In addition, women have held senior positions in government institutions and universities, among others, such as leadership and supervisory positions in the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Economy and Planning, the Ministry of Education, the General Sport Authority and the Family Affairs Council. The Public Prosecution, which has become part of the judiciary, is also seeking to hire qualified women to serve as prosecutors, announcing in January 2018 vacancies for women to serve as prosecutors on an equal footing with men, under the same conditions that are to be met by male applicants. The General Directorate of Public Security also announced the opening of admission and registration to several military positions for women. The laws of the Kingdom provide Saudi women with the opportunity to represent the government on a regional and international level through their work in Saudi embassies, consulates and missions and through their participation in Saudi delegations to regional and international conferences, forums and organisations. In terms of foreign service, many qualified women now hold positions in Saudi embassies and missions abroad, and account for 151 diplomatic positions, as of 2019, among which is the position of the Saudi Ambassador to the United States. In addition, Saudi women have held senior positions in regional and international organizations, including the United Nations. For example, a Saudi woman was appointed as the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, and the Assistant Director-General of the World Health Organization. Saudi women have also participated in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Furthermore, many specialized Saudi women have participated in Saudi delegations to international and regional forums, such as convention sessions, the regular sessions of the Human Rights Council and the sessions of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

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Seventh: Actions taken by the State in the last five years to acknowledge, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work and promote work-family reconciliation:

- **Including unpaid care and domestic work in national statistics and accounting (e.g. time-management surveys, valuation exercises, satellite accounts)**

49. The General Authority for Statistics is in the process of conducting a time-management survey, which covers unpaid care and domestic work among others. The survey is expected to be published in 2020.

50. Article 151 of the implementing regulations for civil service employees, promulgated in 2019, states that "Working women shall be entitled to fully paid maternity leave for seventy (70) days to be distributed at her discretion, provided that her pre-delivery leave does not exceed 28 days, subject to submitting an authenticated medical certificate indicating the expected due date". Working women may also apply for a 3-year childcare leave." In 2015, Article 113 of the Labour Law stated that, "A male worker shall be entitled to a three-day fully paid leave in the case of childbirth".

- **Expanding childcare services or making existing services more affordable**

51. As indicated in Paragraph 18, Article 159 of the Labour Law states that employers with a work team exceeding 50 female members shall provide a suitable place with a sufficient number of caretakers to look after workers' children under the age of 6. In the case of facilities with over 100 female working women in any given city, the minister has legal authority to oblige the employer to establish a nursery in conjunction with other employers in the city or to contract with an existing nursery to care for children under the age of 6 during working hours. In such a case, the Minister shall set forth the terms and conditions regulating such a facility as well as the charges imposed on the female workers benefiting from the service.

52. The Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) launched the "Qurrah" initiative which is supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. It is intended to encourage Saudi women, increase their participation in the Labour market, support their career and family stability, and aid them in striking a balance between their family

life and their career aspirations. The Human Resources Development Fund contributes by covering a portion of the cost of the nurseries supervised by the Ministry of Education up to a maximum of SAR 800 monthly per child. Since the launch of the program in September 2017, there have been more than 23 000 eligible female beneficiaries, and a total of 186 licensed nurseries.

53. There are 3807 kindergartens affiliated with the Ministry of Education, and collectively they contribute in the support and encouragement of women to participate in the Labour market by providing a safe environment for their children.

- **Expanding support for frail elderly persons and others needing extensive care**

54. The Kingdom has always been concerned with the rights of elderly men and women over the age of 60 and has provided them with all the necessary services and facilities to offer them the utmost care and ensure the full enjoyment of their rights. Accordingly, the Council of Ministers has issued a decision approving the establishment of the Family Affairs Council to handle family affairs in the Kingdom through a number of specialized committees, one of which is dedicated to the elderly. During 2017, the number of elderly persons enrolled in the program in primary health care centers distributed across all regions and governorates amounted to 26,198, of which 51% were women. During the period between 2010 and 2017, 104 531 elderly persons were enrolled in the program, with women constituting 51.7%. The Law on the Rights of the Elderly is currently under review, and it aims to promote the status of elderly persons of both genders, care for them and protect their rights. It further aims to involve government agencies and the private sector in providing them with programs and services.

55. Council of Ministers Decision No. 198, dated 04/04/1440 H, (corresponding to 13/12/2018) has amended the first clause of Council of Ministers Decision No. 45, dated 27/02/1432 H, which states that the Ministry of Labour and Social Development shall supervise and follow up on the activities of the private children daycare centers and the private social research and studies centers and issue all relevant licenses. Under the

amendment, the Ministry shall also be responsible for the activities of private elderly centers.

56. Social welfare homes in the Kingdom are open to elderly women, and are designed in such a way to resemble normal households so as to give them the feeling of independence and tranquility. These homes also provide them with full subsistence allowance; social, health, and psychological care; as well as physiotherapy services and personal care programs. They also enable them to engage in arts and handicrafts during their free time, in addition to the appropriate religious, cultural and leisure programs. A monthly allowance is also paid to each resident. There are currently 12 homes for the elderly distributed across the Kingdom, providing services such as social, psychological, and medical care and subsistence allowance. In addition, they are provided with financial allocations, all their needs are met, and they enjoy a range of cultural, professional, leisure and sports activities.
57. Home care is also provided to elderly persons who are not eligible for admission to social welfare homes because of the fact that they have family members. In such cases, homes send a team comprising a doctor, psychologist, social worker, physiotherapist and a personal care worker to provide the necessary care to the elderly person in their household, and to offer guidance to their family concerning the care required for their condition. To date, 9763 persons have benefited from this service.
58. The Social Insurance Law in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports the elderly given their status as a category entitled to security pensions and assistance under the provisions of the Law.
59. The National Transformation Program 2020 also includes several initiatives focused on the elderly, notably: modeling, processing and supporting social welfare services for elderly persons in centers, homes, and institutions in partnership with the private and non-profit sectors; developing five model oases for the elderly across the Kingdom; supporting the participation of the non-profit sector by establishing 13 specialized associations for the elderly; and granting licenses to private elderly centers affiliated with the private and non-profit sectors.
60. The Kingdom has daycare centers that admit persons with extreme, moderate, dual and multiple intellectual disabilities across morning and afternoon shifts, given that

the state covers beneficiary fees for one shift only. There are currently 191 centers serving 16,916 persons in all regions of the Kingdom. It should be noted that, in light of ongoing expansions, facilities are provided to investors in the shape of habilitation and rehabilitation in these centers, such as covering the costs of transportation services. Furthermore, health, psychological, social, educational, and recreational services and programs are offered to persons with extreme and moderate disabilities who do not benefit from the educational integration programs or in private education institutes or programs.

61. Through the government electronic system of "Absher", the Ministry of Interior provides the "Taqdeer" service which allows the elderly and people with special needs to directly have access to all civil status services through visits to their place of residence.
62. The Ministry of Justice introduced "the mobile notary public service", which is a free service provided to beneficiaries – including the elderly – who are unable to visit notary public offices and which occurs at their place of residence.
63. The Ministry of Health introduced the "Awlawia" (Priority) Card for the elderly in order to ensure easy access to health services.
64. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development launched the "Priority to Them" initiative in April 2019, as part of the social initiatives launched recently under the slogan of "Building and Empowerment". It aims to facilitate check-ups and daily transactions and alleviate the hardships of people with special needs – such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, pregnant women and mothers of infants – in various government agencies and the service sector.
65. The third sector contributes to serving the elderly through specialized associations, such as the Waqar Association and the Alzheimer's Association.

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Eighth: Has there been any austerity/fiscal consolidation measures, such as cuts in public expenditure or public sector downsizing, over the past five years?

66. The estimates of the general State budget for the year 2019 are as follows: Total expenditure budgeted for the upcoming year is estimated at approximately SAR 1.106

trillion, i.e. 7.3% higher than the projected expenditures of the current year. Over the next year and in the medium term, the fiscal policy aims to focus on spending priorities with social and economic returns in terms of operational expenditures, such as the Citizen Account Program, the Private Sector Motivation Plan and the Saudi Vision 2030 realization programs, while maintaining the goal of raising the efficiency of government spending. Operational expenses for 2019 are estimated at SAR 860 billion, i.e. approximately 77.8% of total expenditures.

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2 / Poverty Eradication, Social Protection and Social Services

Ninth: Action taken by the State in the last five years to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls:

- **Promoting the access of poor women to decent work through active labour market policies (e.g. job training, skills, employment subsidies, etc.) and targeted measures**

67. The draft National Strategy for Social Development in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: In cooperation with other government bodies, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development has developed the National Strategy for Social Development in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in line with an integrated methodology that draws on the best international and business practices applied in strategic planning. The strategy is designed to create radical and comprehensive (preventive and remedial) solutions to address poverty through unconventional means, by focusing on several axes such as training of manpower in various categories through programs leading up to employment, protection against destitution through education and the identification of mechanisms to break the cycle of destitution, in addition to financing.

68. Royal Decree No. 24535, dated 22/02/2017, was issued to approve the poverty line and its indicators in the Kingdom.

69. The Kingdom enables capable female social security recipients to benefit from qualification programs leading up to employment, which complement the training programs offered by the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) and are designed for women in the greatest of needs. In addition, the Kingdom allocates considerable amounts to social safety nets, and its efforts in 2017 could be summarized as follows:

- Allocation for health and social development in the 2017 general state budget amounted to USD 25,33 billion.
- Social security allocations in the 2017 general state budget amounted to USD 4 billion.

- Total annual assistance provided to charities amounted to USD 120 million.
 - Total annual assistance to cooperative societies amounted to USD 26,67 million.
70. The maximum social security allocations for families was raised from SAR 16,200 (USD 4,320) to SAR 31,100 (USD 8,293) per annum. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development has developed mechanisms that enable women of vulnerable groups to make use of qualification programs that lead up to employment and remote work opportunities. The number of households that no longer depend on social security and enjoy financial independence stood at 15 thousand in 2018. In addition, the Ministry has developed production schemes for capable social security recipients, with the aim of raising the volume of sales from SAR 360 million (USD 96 million) to SAR 2.5 billion (USD 666 million), and launched a program (Wusool) to support the transport of working women with a monthly income of less than USD 2000.
71. The Social Development Bank (SDB) provides financing programs and productive and social loans directly targeting women. It should be noted that loans for women have increased from 11% in 2016 to 30% in 2017. As to micro credit and productive family schemes, women recipients account for 90% of total recipients, with a 318% increase between 2016 and 2017. Women have also benefited from low-income household loans, with SDB supporting more than 70,000 social loans in 2017.
72. More than 57% of the beneficiaries under the Social Charity Fund (SCF) are women, divided between scholarship programs (54%), training programs (59%), and the Program of Supporting Projects through Partners (over 50%).
73. The Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) launched the "Tamheer" Program, an on-the-job training program for Saudi male and female graduates with a bachelor's degree, master's degree or a PhD who have not been employed within the last six months. Tamheer is designed to train them at government institutions and excelling companies in the private sector so they may gain the necessary experience and skills to prepare them to enter the labour market. It further provides them with the desired qualifications, skills and expertise and increases the availability of and access to employment opportunities. The trainee will be provided with a monthly remuneration of SAR 3000 during the three to six months period of training. In addition to the monthly incentive, the Human Resources Development Fund will also provide occupational hazard insurance for the duration of the program and an accredited certificate upon successful completion of the training program, increasing the likelihood of finding a job that fits the graduate's skills and capabilities.
74. The Citizen Account Program was launched as part of the Fiscal Balance Program and aims to improve and channel subsidies to eligible citizens, in order to reduce the impact of energy price corrections and other economic reforms implemented under Saudi Vision 2030. Along with benefitting from the subsidies, the Program pays cash amounts to middle or low-income citizens

of both genders; women amounted to 55% of the total independent recipients, and only 7% of total households were headed by women. The Citizen Account is a program that seeks to alleviate the burden of Saudi citizens and provide financial support to low- and middle-income Saudi households, to ensure a better life for citizens and compensate those who may be at risk as a result of the economic policies being implemented by the government. The program also aims to re-channel government subsidies to eligible segments, in such a way as to promote rational consumption and to ensure that subsidies are offered in an equitable manner to eligible groups, given that they are offered as payments deposited directly into the accounts of eligible recipients. It is worth mentioning that cash transfers are an effective and internationally recognized instrument to encourage people to save money. The program seeks to achieve several objectives that are bound to raise the efficiency of government subsidies to citizens, encourage rationing in the consumption of basic commodities by households and reduce the negative impact of economic reforms. The program also aims to encourage households to ration the consumption of basic goods, such as gasoline, electricity, energy products and water; raise the efficiency of government subsidies provided to citizens; and alleviate the impact of economic reforms on low-income and middle-income citizens.

Notable Citizen Account figures:

- Total eligible beneficiaries, including family heads and dependents, were 13.4 million.
- Total family head beneficiaries: 3,862,346.
- Total dependent beneficiaries: 9,542,633.
- Total unqualified dependent beneficiaries: 422,439.
- Total unqualified family head beneficiaries: 120,173.

75. The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz issued a royal decree on 05/01/2018, ordering the payment of a monthly "cost of living allowance" of one thousand Saudi Riyals for civil and military servants for one year as follows:

- First: The annual increment shall be paid to civil and military servants for the fiscal year (1439 / 1440 H) as of 14/04/1439 H (corresponding to 01/01/2018).
- Second: The monthly cost of living allowance of one thousand Saudi riyals shall be paid to civil and military servants for one year.
- Third: A remuneration of SAR 5000 shall be paid to military personnel serving in the front line of military operations in the southern border of the Kingdom.
- Fourth: An amount of SAR 500 shall be added as cost of living allowance to the pension allocated to citizen beneficiaries by the Public Pension Agency and the General Organization for Social Insurance for one year.

- Fifth: An amount of SAR 500 shall be added as cost of living allowance to the monthly provision allocated to social security beneficiaries for one year; however, this allowance shall not be combined with what has been stipulated in the Fourth paragraph above.
- Sixth: The stipends of male and female students shall be increased by 10% for one year.
- Seventh: The State shall bear the value-added tax for citizens benefiting from private health services and private education.
- Eighth: The State shall bear any value-added tax not exceeding SAR 850,000 when a first home is purchased by a citizen.

76. The Council of Ministers Decision No. 75, dated 01/01/2016, was issued amending Paragraph a of Article 4 of the Regulations of the Social Development Bank (SDB) to the following: "The Bank shall provide interest-free loans and non-financial services to micro-enterprises to encourage their owners to become self-employed business owners and professionals. The Bank shall determine the classification of such projects, as well as their maximum capital and headcount." It further amended Paragraph c of Article 4 of the Regulations to the following: "Developing and strengthening the micro-enterprise sector to enhance its role in economic and social development". The Bank has abided by such amendments through several initiatives and programs, notably: productive family programs and empowerment of self-employment. It aims to support, sponsor, and finance micro-enterprises, productive family projects and handicrafts in the Kingdom through various funding segments and the Professional Home Program, the regulations of which were adopted by the Bank's Board of Directors. The program aims to provide a number of non-financial services to develop and organize economic activities for individuals and families with micro enterprises and productive families' projects (household projects), including qualification, support, product development and marketing services with innovative models suitable for local and international markets. In addition, it intends to qualify human cadres specialized in executing projects, activate the role of relevant authorities and support coordination between them.

77. The monthly minimum wage for Saudi nationals across all employment categories shall be SAR 3000 (approximately USD 800).

- **Expanding access to land ownership, housing, financing and technology and/or agricultural extension services**

78. In February 2019, the Board of the Real Estate Development Fund (REDF) and the Ministry of Housing announced that Saudi women may now apply for a housing loan to purchase their own homes. Applications submitted by women to the Ministry are addressed on the basis of providing additional facilities priority groups, such as female breadwinners, divorced women, widows, women with disabilities or women who have a family member with a disability, or the like.

- **Providing/ Promoting low-cost legal services for women living in poverty**

79. The laws of the Kingdom have guaranteed the right to seek legal action for citizens and residents alike. Article 47 of the Basic Law of Governance states that, "The right of litigation shall be guaranteed equally for both citizens and residents in the Kingdom". Judicial laws, decisions and instructions issued by justice authorities include provisions that facilitate access to justice and promote equality before the court. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has supported many initiatives that aim to facilitate women's access to free legal services.

80. It should be noted that within the scope of promoting women's awareness of their legal rights, government bodies, in conjunction with civil society organizations, have launched a national campaign to promote women's awareness of laws and procedures that protect their rights, especially in relation to social care services, and civil status procedures for marriage, divorce and birth registration among others. Civil organizations concerned with women's issues, such as the Mawaddah Charitable Association for Reduction of Divorce and its Effects, have also implemented several volunteering programs for providing legal, social and psychological counselling for women. Since the launch of the legal incubator program, the Charity has conducted nine courses, qualifying 270 female legal counsellors who provided over 28,800 volunteering hours in the form of legal support and counselling for the Charity beneficiaries. Through the program, the Charity also established the "Mashura" Fund, the first charitable fund aimed at providing free judicial assistance services, including free oral and written legal advice and access to volunteer attorneys of both genders offering free legal representation before the courts. In support of joint counselling and legal work with Mawaddah, the Ministry of Justice has collaborated with the graduates of the legal incubator program to provide free legal advice to women before personal status courts. This has enabled the Charity to open offices for women, the first of their kind in Saudi courts, where qualified legal counsellors provide free legal services for female litigants. With the support of the Ministry of Justice, the Charity has managed to open free legal support offices within personal status courts in Riyadh, Makkah, Madinah, Jeddah and Dammam. Mawaddah's legal support offices provide the following free services for female litigants in personal status courts: providing oral legal counselling in family and marital issues, preparing statements of claims as per the prescribed form, and educating female litigants about the steps and procedures needed to complete the submission and registration of a case with the court. Through such offices, the Charity has provided over 99,068 free legal services for 55,615 beneficiaries.

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Tenth: Action taken by the State during the last five years to improve access to social protection for women and girls:

- **Providing or promoting social protection for unemployed females (e.g. unemployment benefits, public works programs, and social assistance)**

81. The Kingdom has always sought to provide equal social care to all its citizens. The Social Insurance Law was first issued in 1962, and amended in 2016 to keep up with economic and social changes. By providing social care, the State aims to ensure the participation of all members of the Saudi community in all comprehensive development programs by altering the culture of dependence on financial support prevalent among the beneficiaries of social services and transforming the idle human potential of social service beneficiaries to become effective and productive forces in society. The State also aims to promote the role of social responsibility in the public and private sectors and civil society organizations, connect job seeking social service beneficiaries with employers by providing training and qualification services and employment with partners, and provide financial and in-kind assistance for low earners. Social security beneficiaries receive a monthly allowance, and the total spending for this program in 2018 amounted to SAR 15,964 billion, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and the Electricity and Cogeneration Regulatory Authority (ECRA).

- **Reforming contributory social protection programs to promote women's access and benefit**

82. The Kingdom, represented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, provides various programs to assist those in need of becoming self-reliant and leading a decent life that satisfies their needs and the basic needs of their families. Such programs include:

- Lump-Sum Allowance Program: a program that seeks the betterment of social and economic status. A sum of 4 527 000 000 Saudi Riyals was spent on this program in 2016.
- Supplementary Support Program: a supporting program serving the youth and people with limited income within the 18-35 age group.
- Cash Assistance Program for School Bags and Uniforms: a program that aims to help families benefitting from the social security program in acquiring school supplies and uniforms for their children, including general education students.
- Partial Payment of Electricity Bills Program: it aims to ensure the continuity of electricity services for social security beneficiaries and alleviate their financial burden by paying part of the bill amount. The amount differs as per the number of family members registered with the social security program and their location. The program operates in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and the General Authority for Statistics.
- Food Cash Assistance Program: it aims to reduce the financial burden of social security beneficiaries, help them with providing food for their families and meet their living needs by depositing a food support amount on the tenth of every Hijri month, according to the number of family members.

- Health Insurance Program: it is part of the system of supporting health insurance programs for categories eligible under the social security program. The program has been referred to the Health Services Council for examination and appropriate action.
 - Productive Projects Program: it aims to transform families benefiting from social security who are able to work and produce, from dependent families to providing families capable of work and productivity, by qualifying them and providing them with financial support, in order to increase the income of social security beneficiaries.
83. The Women Empowerment Department was established under the Social Security Agency of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development to empower women and create educational, training, qualification, and employment opportunities in many government and private entities for female social security beneficiaries who are qualified. This aims to transform the status of female beneficiaries from dependent to productive, and to empower women to perform a key role in development, thus achieving sustainable societal development. The Department seeks to educate, train and employ female beneficiaries in order to enable qualified young categories capable of studying and working to achieve independence from the social security program.
84. In addition, the women's social committees – affiliated with the chambers of commerce – aims to empower women with average and limited income, it also provides them with factory work training in a friendly environment, while providing nursery and transportation services to ensure their continued employment. The number of female workers in one factory amounted to 2000.
85. Working women benefit from all the provisions of the Labour Law, whether in terms of wages, paid leaves and end-of-service gratuity, among others. They also enjoy equal benefits from the unemployment insurance system on par with working men, as well as social insurance related to retirement pensions and compensations for work injuries and occupational risks. Employers are required to register men and women working within their facilities under the insurance system, and women, like men, can seek solutions related to the work field in the private sector.
86. Electronic platforms (Jadarah, Hafiz, Taqat, and Dorooob) have been launched to enable job-seeking women to register and familiarize themselves with the qualification mechanism across the various regions of the Kingdom. They also connect jobseekers and employers, enable the exchange of job and training services efficiently and effectively in order to increase the stability and development of the work force in the Saudi labour market, and make job opportunities equally available to everyone.

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Eleventh: Procedures taken by the State during the last five years to improve the health outcomes of women and girls

- **Promoting women's access to health services by expanding comprehensive health coverage or workers' health services**

87. Article 27 of the Basic Law of Governance confirms the equal rights of men and women to health care, stating that "the State shall look after public health, and provide health care for every citizen." and his or her family in case of emergency, illness, disability or old age." In this respect, it should be noted that this right is a basic right for every person, and all the Kingdom's effective laws and procedures in the health sector ensure women's right to receive medical care without any restriction or limitation. The Ministry of Health is currently working on transforming hospitals and medical centers to governmental entities in order to promote efficiency, increase productivity, reduce waste, accelerate decision-making, and avoid centralism. This will in turn improve the quality of medical services within the framework of the National Transformation Program, a key part of Saudi Vision 2030.
88. The Council of Ministers issued Decision No. 308, dated 25/04/2016, approving Saudi Vision 2030, which is closely associated with human rights and has expressly provided for a number of human rights, including "the right to health".
89. Efforts for improving health services provided for beneficiaries have continued, taking into account both the principle of equality and priority in terms of need. Such efforts focuses on many areas, including maternal and child care, vaccination programs, healthcare for the disabled and the elderly, student health care, psychological health, health care in cases of emergency and disasters, control of infectious and epidemic diseases, palliative care, organ transplantation and other areas of comprehensive health care, in addition to the supporting infrastructure in this field. The number of primary health care centers across all governorates and administrative regions of the Kingdom amounted to 2,361 at a percentage of 52.33%. The centers provide primary medical care for beneficiaries including Saudi female citizens and foreign residents.
90. Women who are not Saudi citizens are provided access to health services. Critical conditions have been admitted by emergency departments in governmental and private hospitals, regardless of any considerations other than the present case. Regular conditions of statutory residents are regulated by the Cooperative Health Insurance Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/10, dated 13/08/1999, which aims to provide and regulate health care for all residents of the Kingdom.

- **Expanding health care services specific to women and girls, including sexual, reproductive, mental and maternal health, as well as HIV services**

91. The National Strategy for Reproductive and Maternal Health was developed in line with the strategy of the Ministry of Health and the global strategy of the World Health Organization, in

order to achieve the sustainable development goals agreed upon by WHO member states. Three main objectives have been determined, the first of which is to reduce mortality and morbidity rate among mothers by half, and the mortality rate in children under five by a third within the next five years. The second objective is to enhance the components of the health care system in order to improve health care services provided to mothers and children. The third objective is the promotion of partnerships with relevant sectors and community partnerships in order to empower families and society and improve health awareness regarding reproductive health, especially sexual health, through educational awareness-raising and media campaigns.

92. The National Healthcare Model was developed in line with Saudi Vision 2030. It encompasses hotline healthcare services, school educational programs, the national referral network, comprehensive clinics, antenatal health care services, advanced home care services, school safety programs, pre-marital and chronic disease examinations, improving the services of the Saudi Center for Disease Prevention and Control, and health research programs.
93. Concerned bodies have implemented a number of programs and mechanisms which aim to promote women's health, including:
- Health education programs for the prevention of anemia and iron deficiency, which are implemented regularly in schools, shopping malls, and waiting rooms in healthcare facilities
 - Advanced Pregnancy Program
 - National Breastfeeding Support Program
 - Healthy Marriage Program, which provides testing services for hereditary and contagious diseases in future spouses, such as thalassemia, sickle cell anemia, hepatitis C and B, and HIV/AIDS
 - With regard to the elderly, the National Strategy for the Elderly was adopted.
94. Under the National Program for Early Detection of Breast Cancer, early detection via mammograms was conducted across at least 20 regions/governorates during October 2017. Approximately 13,327 women aged between 40-69 were tested, thus fulfilling 100% of the targeted quota. Breast cancer testing increased by 63%, and many courses and workshops have been conducted on breast cancer control.
95. Relevant bodies have implemented a number of programs and mechanisms for the promotion of women's health, including women's early detection clinics, which provide mobile services, such as early detection of diabetes, high blood pressure and osteoporosis, in addition to raising health awareness. This program was launched in October 2014 and, by March 2016, successfully tested approximately 6089 women for diabetes, high blood pressure and osteoporosis.

96. With a view to reduce maternal mortality rate to less than 70 deaths per 100,000 live births by the year 2030, the Kingdom established a new national circuit for pregnancy healthcare services (Safe Delivery Circuit), which consists of three stages: antenatal care, pregnancy care and postnatal care and which is conducted under the supervision of health professionals.
97. The Child Health Care Program has achieved various accomplishments, the most notable of which are the establishment of mother and child clinics in shopping malls across the Kingdom, and the issuance of the mother and child health passport.
98. HIV rate has been reduced through several methods, including raising awareness regarding the disease, targeting most-at-risk populations (MARPs), reducing risks by increasing counselling and testing clinics, ensuring the safety of blood transfusions, and preventing infections by adopting best health practices. It should be noted that treatment is provided to all HIV patients, and measures have been taken to control and contain this virus. The National HIV Control Program is at the core of national efforts aiming to fight and prevent this disease, and aims to accomplish the following goals:
- Promote the availability, exchange and use of strategic information on HIV, to direct the development and implementation of evidence-based policies, programs and services
 - Expand and improve the range and quality of programs and HIV prevention services for most-at-risk populations (MARPs) in order to reach all targeted groups
 - Improve the quality of HIV prevention programs and other public services, while focusing mainly on targeted groups
 - Improve quality, expand coverage and provide comprehensive treatment, care and (self) support for people living with HIV, as per international standards
 - Reinforce social, legal and political environments to enable a multi-sector national response to HIV, with particular focus on its victims and most-at-risk populations
 - Enhance and build technical, organizational and institutional capacities to coordinate, implement, monitor and evaluate non-centralism and to provide an effective multi-sector response to HIV.

• **Public Health / Awareness Campaigns**

99. The Kingdom continues to make efforts towards a gender-neutral approach to raising health awareness among its citizens, focusing on many areas such as "maternal and child care, vaccination programs, healthcare for the disabled and the elderly, student health care, psychological health" and other areas of comprehensive health care.
100. The Ministry of Health and other relevant bodies provide educational premarital programs to young women, covering social, health, psychological and other aspects of marriage. Schools

and universities take on that role through their curricula, which increases awareness of rights and duties in the context of marriage and family.

101. The Ministry of Health prepared a work strategy and a five-year plan intended to transform e-health into a key element in the development and provision of health care services, as well as a safe and high-quality health system that complies with global standards.

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Twelfth: Procedures taken by the State during the last five years to improve education outcomes and skills of women and girls

- **Enhancing educational curricula to increase equality awareness and end discrimination across educational levels**

102. The educational system in the Kingdom is fundamentally based on equality between men and women in all of its aspects, whether in terms of admission and enrollment mechanisms, curricula and tests, teachers and instructors' qualifications, or the quality of educational facilities and equipment; in fact, women have enjoyed greater attention in this regard through affirmative action. The Kingdom also ensures promoting education among men and women, in light of its belief in its importance and role in improving society and supporting its viability. Article 30 of the Basic Law of Governance, under the chapter of "Rights and Duties" states that, "The State shall provide public education, and shall be committed to combating illiteracy". In addition, Article 229 of the General Education Policy of the Kingdom emphasizes that the State considers human potential the basis for investment in its other resources, and caring for such potential through education and cultivation is the foundation of general development.

103. The Kingdom is committed to providing free education. Article 233 of the General Education Policy has guaranteed free education across all its forms and stages. Education is mandatory for both genders from ages 6 to 15, given that the Kingdom does not only rely on public schools, but has also encouraged the private sector to establish schools, training institutes and private colleges, in order to meet the needs of citizens who wish to enroll in private education. Under the Kingdom's budget, approximately SAR 192 billion (17% of the budget) was allocated to the educational sector for both genders in 2018.

104. In light of the ambitious and inspiring Saudi Vision 2030, the Ministry of Education was keen to fulfil its part as one of the Kingdom's various organs and support the national education and training strategy, which stems from the pillars of the country's vision and the aspirations of its leaders and citizens. The strategy contributes to the fulfillment of its obligations under the National Transformation Program 2020, in order to educate and achieve the potential of both genders, enabling them to participate in the development of their society and country, within a sophisticated and globally competitive education system. The strategy focuses on recruiting all

human and material capabilities and using state-of-the-art technology and software, and ensures the development of school curricula, in light of fundamental values, modern education requirements and other elements of a successful education, including educational and service infrastructures and facilities.

105. The Ministry of Education launched the Physical Education Initiative for the Promotion of Female Student Health under Decision No. 89263, dated 23/07/2017. The initiative is concerned with the application of a matrix of physical education health-promoting activities in accordance with a phased plan to develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills of female students to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The initiative is aimed at establishing and equipping 500 gyms annually in all-girl schools, with Saudi universities also launching undergraduate and graduate programs in physical education.
106. In light of the attention given by the Ministry of Education and in response to the issued high orders, Decision No. 51065, dated 26/12/2017, directed the Ministry of Education to establish the Intellectual Awareness Center. The Center seeks to implement the State's high-level policy of maintaining national identity while coping with everyday changes as well as preserving moderate Arab and Islamic values from any deviant behaviors or ideas.
107. The Council of Ministers issued Decision No. 534, dated 13/10/2015, which includes special needs male and female students with physical and health disabilities in the allowances of private education students, with a two-fold increase in allowance for 14 cases of physical and health disabilities.
108. The Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University was established pursuant to Royal Decree No. M/3139 dated 17/05/2016, approving the establishment of a university for girls in Riyadh under the Ministry of Higher Education. It is the first university for girls in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and has a capacity for around 60,000 students, i.e. more than 60% of high school graduates.
109. On 17/04/1440 H, a resolution was issued for the formation of the Higher Committee on Curricula, chaired by the Minister of Education, to supervise all works related to educational curricula, with emphasis on portraying women as partners in social development.
110. A national committee was formed to monitor the implementation of the fourth sustainable development goal, by leading efforts, developing plans, and implementing initiatives related to the fourth goal, in addition to aiding competent bodies in the implementation of other sustainable development goals requiring the support of education. The Kingdom is committed to the implementation of sustainable development goals and considers them a top priority, in accordance with its characteristics and fundamentals, given that Saudi Vision 2030 and its programs are generally consistent with the sustainable development goals.

111. As part of its efforts to devote greater attention to Saudi women under Saudi Vision 2030, the Ministry of Education launched the Safe Driving Program, an educational, awareness-raising program which teaches women how to drive, concurrently with the efforts made by Princess Nourah University towards the same cause. The University established the first driving school for women in the Riyadh region, to provide the highest levels of education and training for Saudi women so they may begin their driving experience with confidence and skill.
112. The Ministry of Education has ensured the provision of elective health insurance opportunities for its teaching and administrative staff as well as their families. This aims to provide quality health care services for employees in the educational sector and facilitate their access to proper medical services at competitive prices. The number of health insurance beneficiaries currently stands at 17 245.
113. The Ministry of Education has launched the "Lifelong Learning Initiative" (Estidama), targeting adults aged between the ages of 15 and 50 with lower academic qualifications. This national developmental initiative seeks to eradicate illiteracy, reinforce lifelong learning values, enable women and men to benefit from different learning and training opportunities and access knowledge resources.
114. The Ministry of Education seeks to achieve the requirements of the fourth sustainable development goal in order to ensure comprehensive education for all and reinforce lifelong education opportunities. This is done through the annual awareness-raising and literacy summer campaign conducted during summer vacations in several remote locations in certain regions and governorates, covering educational, social, health, counselling and agricultural aspects.
115. Al-Wafaa Offices Initiative was launched under Decision No. 287727, dated 17/08/2016, for the care of students whose parents were martyred in the line of duty or served in the educational sector before their death. The Initiative aims to provide quality educational, social, health and counselling services and in-kind support from both the public and the private sectors, through Al-Wafaa Office at the Ministry and its branches across the educational departments in regions and governorates. There is a total of 46 Al-Wafaa Offices providing 2 406 educational services, 5 375 counselling services, 2 444 health services, 3 156 entertainment and marketing services, and 2 234 school supplies and subsistence services.
116. A project was launched for the development of nursery and kindergarten programs, expanding their services to include all regions in the Kingdom. This project aims to increase child capacity and advance early childhood programs and activities (nurseries / kindergartens). Statistics for the year 2017 indicate that there was a total of 3 272 kindergartens, with 137 029 female students and 130 241 male students, while 14 971 children were registered in 1 518 nurseries.
117. The Mother and Child Education Program was launched to support mothers in raising and caring for their children and helping them acquire the basic (mental, physical, emotional, social) skills,

in line with developmental characteristics of five-year-old children. The program provides compensatory education and supports the expansion of kindergartens. A total of 18 trainers underwent 25 hours of training on the updated version of the Mother and Child Education Program, which has helped 406 mothers and 137 children.

118. The Special Education Development Initiative was launched through the establishment of the National Strategy for Educating People with Disabilities at the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Health, the Education Evaluation Commission, the Ministry of Higher Education, charities and the King Salman Center for Disability Research.
119. School transportation has been provided to 33 232 special education students and students with motor impairments.
120. The Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Center for Special Education Support Services was established with a view of integrating people of both genders with special needs. It is a comprehensive center seeking to provide a special service for children who have difficulties preventing them from being admitted to regular or private schools, including qualification services to support their learning process and achieve their highest possible level of performance in their private, public and academic lives. The Center also provides survey services in schools and public kindergartens and conducts diagnoses and evaluations through a multidisciplinary team available on the premises. In addition, the Center provides individual treatment plans and services that comply with the child's needs, in order to return the child to their normal environment in school or at home as an interacting and independent individual, while providing the child with the appropriate support in his/her new environment, better suited to his/her capabilities and generally less restrictive.
121. The Ministry of Education introduced an initiative for providing educational services to students hospitalized in oncology centers and hospitals by opening 5 classrooms.
122. The Ministry of Education launched the "Irtiqaa" Initiative, which promotes family engagement in the educational process and empowers society in general to support partnerships focused on creating a knowledge society.
123. The Ministry of Education introduced the "Laws Governing Our Lives" subject to be included in secondary school curricula. It aims to teach students the meaning of law and governing regulations, and to introduce them to constitutional rules in the Kingdom.
124. The Ministry of Education introduced the "Critical Thinking Skills" subject to be included in secondary school curricula. It aims to improve students' thinking skills and encourage them to ask questions, while providing an environment that encourages respecting different points of views and raises their confidence and self-esteem, by paying attention to and showing respect for others and their interests (listening and empathy), nurturing relationships and brainstorming

(response and connection), providing new ideas and building on each other's ideas (suggestion and change), and justifying and evaluating ideas (investigation and thinking). This is based on four pillars: emotional thinking, cooperative thinking, creative thinking, and critical thinking.

125. There were 38 368 schools in the year 2017, with a total number of 3 126 959 female students in general education schools, compared with 3 123 192 males. The growth rate of female students exceeded that of males, and was estimated at an average of 5.3% for the same period. There is a clear trend towards equal enrollment in general education between genders and equal opportunities in education, consistent with the percentage of male and female representation in the population. Women account for the highest attendance percentage in universities, accounting for 51% of the total number of students enrolled in BA programs during 2017/2018, specifically 3 624 females compared to 3 055 males.
126. Educational indicators of 2017 show that the gender parity index in education stood at 1.02%.
127. There are 1 261 schools for adult females compared with 695 schools for males, with a margin of error of 10 schools.
128. There are 28 public universities and 29 private universities and colleges in the Kingdom. The number of students registered in BA programs in 2017/2018 was 42 486 female students, compared with 37 424 male students. Faculty members numbered 83 884 in total, with 34 247 women and 49 637 men.
129. The educational sector is witnessing a wave of developmental initiatives and projects as well as a steady growth; in 2017, the number of students with disabilities who were registered in all stages of general education totaled 17 931 male students and 11 621 female students.
130. During 2015-2017, the number of female students studying abroad reached 108 607. It should be noted that they enjoy equal opportunities in terms of choosing majors, and that their rate of enrollments is steadily growing.
131. The general, higher education and training sector had the biggest share of the State's budget for the year 2018 estimated at SAR 192 billion (USD 51 billion). Furthermore, the Ministry of Education grants allowances and remunerations to certain groups of students to encourage them to join general education and avoid them from dropping out, totaling SAR 2 015 266 581 per annum for 606 268 students.
132. During 2016-2017, the number of female students enrolled in higher education institutions was 185 783, which was 43.9% of the total number of students. The number of female students registered in higher education institutions was 809 119, a rate of 48.9%. The number of female graduates from higher education institutions was 116 371, in other words 53.1%. The number of new female students studying abroad was 4 741, a total of 36.0%. The number of registered female students studying abroad was 39 996, which was 28.6%. The number of female graduates

who studied abroad was 5 926, in other words 29.4%. The number of female health graduates from higher education institutions was 6 512, a total of 55.8%.

133. Saudi women have achieved national and international presence in scientific forums and patents, including but not limited to receiving the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Prize Honoring Inventors and the Talented, obtaining a number of patents for advanced technologies in nanotechnology and solar cells and in treatment of cancerous tumors, holding remarkable positions in medicine and engineering, and ranking first in global exhibitions, such as the 5th Korea International Women's Invention Exposition.

- **Procedures taken to improve girls' access to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs and skill development programs, and to facilitate the continuation and completion of their studies**

134. The Technical and Vocational Training Corporation works with its partners in the National Entrepreneurship Institute (Riyadah) to promote the culture of self-employment. To that end, it seeks to implement numerous events and programs, including the following: first, technical programs such as the "Select the Concept of your Project", which has benefitted 2 597 women and induction meetings which has benefitted 15 857 women; second, the Entrepreneur Program, from which have graduated 1 122 female through a series of courses; third, financially-endorsed projects and projects under formation, benefitting 902 and 203 women respectively; and fourth: launched projects, with 380 female beneficiaries.

135. There are 23 technical colleges and 17 international technical colleges for girls across the Kingdom, as well as training facilities which reached 291 in 2018. Furthermore, 19 576 women benefitted from courses on entrepreneurship and the culture of self-employment. The number of women registered in technical colleges reached 20 333, with 9 812 new admissions and 2668 graduates in 2018.

136. The Ministry of Education has updated school and academic curricula and raised awareness among women regarding the advanced vocational specializations that suit the requirements of the labour market and has started to expand technical and vocational education for girls to meet its needs. In 2019, qualification programs (diplomas) were introduced in girls' technical colleges (insurance, event management, tourism guidance, pilgrimage (*hajj and 'umrah*), professional health and safety, and human resources). In addition, various majors have been introduced into Saudi universities, such as media, politics, engineering and law.

137. Academic curricula have been improved, with Saudi universities introducing new majors for women to meet the requirements of the labour market, such as cyber security, networking and the Internet of Things, data science, engineering, and architecture).

138. The National Observatory for Women, affiliated with the King Abdullah Institute for Research and Consulting Studies at King Saud University, was established as part of the Kingdom's efforts to facilitate women's participation in accelerating national development. This Observatory is a think tank concerned with monitoring local and global participation of Saudi women in development across the economic, educational, organizational, health and social axes. It is considered a reference for decision makers and civil society organizations and institutions as it establishes indicators on women's role in development.
139. The Doroob Training Program was launched as "a national platform for electronic training sponsored by the Human Resource Development Fund (HRDF) that seeks to enable the workforce to develop their abilities and skills". The program aims to provide professional support for groups in need such as women and orphans, in order to give them the opportunity to acquire the required skills and qualifications necessary for entering the labour market and developing their future.
140. The Saudi "Injaz" Initiative aims to qualify male and female students and develop their interpersonal and professional skills for the labour market by providing a number of specialized professional and educational programs. Five hundred thousand male and female students were trained under this initiative.
141. The Technical and Vocational Training Corporation has established the Department of Development Initiatives for Girls Training. It aims to train girls, emphasize the role of the technical training sector for girls, create and implement development initiatives, and encourage community partnerships to advance female-oriented trainings.
- **Providing gender equality and human rights training to teachers and other professionals in the educational sector**
142. The Ministry of Education, pursuant to Decision No. 68129, dated 22/01/2018 G, launched a center for teacher services that aims to provide various services for teachers to enable them to benefit from commercial services and other services in all fields.
143. The Ministry of Education seeks to promote professional development for male and female teachers, enhance their efficiency in line with modern technology, introduce the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study Program (TIMSS) and the International Professional Development Program (*Khebrat*), which enables teachers of both genders to have first-hand experience in advanced countries in order to benefit from their educational practices.
144. The number of female teachers has remarkably exceeded the number of male teachers in general education, reaching 295 535 compared with 241 612 male teachers. The Ministry of Education has ensured the academic qualification of male and female teachers through specialized educational programs in universities inside and outside the Kingdom. The total number of

students of both genders was 912 in 2017. In 1440/1441 H, the number of female teachers enrolled in Master's programs was 530, compared with 470 males.

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3. Freedom from Violence, Stigmatization and Stereotyping

Thirteenth: Forms of violence against women and girls – in any context or situation – that have been given priority of action:

- **Spousal/domestic violence, including sexual violence and marital rape**

145. All forms of domestic violence are criminalized by the laws of the Kingdom. Many laws have been issued to strengthen the legal framework for the elimination of violence, such as the Law on Protection from Abuse and its implementing regulations and the related executive measures, in order to crack down on violence against women in all its forms. The Law has included provisions aimed at addressing the behavioral phenomena in society that foretell an abusive environment, and at mandating the immediate reporting of cases of abuse. It requires every civil or military public servant and private sector worker to immediately report cases of abuse to their employer, who in turn must inform the competent authorities or the police. The law also stressed that the identity of the informer may not be disclosed without their consent, or in cases identified by the implementing regulations, which were issued by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development by way of Decision No. 43047, dated 08/05/1435 H (corresponding to 10/03/2014), which also encompassed several implementing mechanisms for the provisions of the Law. The implementing regulations were amended by Decision No. 76048, dated 20/04/1440 H (corresponding to 27/12/2018), by the Minister of Labour and Social Development. The amendment includes a number of executive mechanisms for the provisions of the Law and the role of the concerned bodies in the implementation of provisions for the protection against abuse and the relevant punishments. The mechanisms are as follows: (a) Every public or private body shall inform the Ministry of Labour and Social Development or the police of any cases of abuse it encounters immediately upon detecting or receiving notice of same, and (b) a center shall be established for receiving reports of cases of abuse. In order to support the reception of violence-related complaints, an abuse reporting center was opened on 20/03/2016, operated by female staff working around the clock to receive all domestic violence reports on the unified telephone number 1919. Additionally, protection teams were formed across regions and governorates to receive complaints. Pursuant to Article 17 of the Law of Criminal Procedure, the Public Prosecution initiates criminal action and investigates crimes involving a private right of action, if the public interest dictates so. Reports shall be dealt with immediately by contacting the abused person and evaluating risks involved, providing medical evaluation if necessary, and taking all the procedures necessary and appropriate to deal with the

situation. Police departments and other competent security bodies shall be instructed to respond immediately to the social protection unit request to enter any location and provide full protection for unit professionals and the abused person. Social protection centers shall conduct awareness-raising campaigns throughout the year. In 2017, 146 educational programs were carried, and issued publications that introduce the Law and its implementing regulations.

146. The Law on Protection from Abuse constitutes a legal defense for protecting women and girls from all forms of violence against women. Moreover, regulatory and judicial remedial mechanisms are in place and available to all women without any discrimination. Together they provide protection against violence, offer health and legal assistance and compensation, and ensure that perpetrators are penalized. In addition to what has been provided in the Report, the Public Prosecution, pursuant to Article 17 of the Law of Criminal Procedure, initiates criminal action and investigates crimes involving a private right of action, if the public interest dictates so.

147. The National Family Safety Program is a national program that aims to protect families against violence, monitor and study cases of abuse, inform the competent bodies in this field and raise awareness regarding the impact of violence. As part of a project for data collection and building a database on cases of domestic violence, the Program established "the National Register for Cases of Violence against Children and Women in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Health Sector". It is an advanced central electronic register in which demographic, diagnostic and remedial data is entered and updated regularly by protection centers in the health sector directly via the Internet when monitoring cases of violence against women. The Register aims to form annual statistics that help protection strategy makers in the Kingdom create a comprehensive vision. The Program also launched a number of national preventive projects, such as the Project for the Support and Rehabilitation of Battered Women, whereby women who survive violence undergo rehabilitation for 10 weeks to start a new life and to ensure that they do not re-enter the cycle of violence. This training program has so far benefitted over 200 women.

- **Sexual Harassment and Violence in Public Places, Educational Institutions and the Workplace**

148. The Anti-Harassment Charter is a measure stipulated by Article 5 of the Anti-Harassment Law, which states, "All relevant bodies in the governmental sector and the private sector shall establish the necessary measures to prevent and combat harassment in their respective workplaces". This was referred to in the answer to Question No. 6.

- **Trafficking in Women and Girls**

149. The National Plan to Combat Human Trafficking for the years 2017-2020 was issued, and an amount of SAR 30 million (i.e. USD 8 million) was allocated as an implementation budget.
150. The Anti-Human Trafficking Committee was formed under the Council of Ministers Decision No. 244, dated 13/07/2009, and is chaired by the president of the Human Right Commission. The membership of the Committee includes representatives of the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour and Social Development, Ministry of Culture and Media, and the Public Prosecution. This Committee is a key national mechanism for the implementation of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law. Its tasks include following up on the situation of victims in order to prevent the repetition of harm; establishing a policy that encourages active searching for victims and training law enforcement officers on how to identify them; coordinating with competent authorities to return the victims to their home country or to their residence in any other country at their request; and recommending that a victim remains in Saudi Arabia and have the victim's legal status adjusted accordingly so that the victim can seek employment, if necessary. The financial, human and technical resources of the Committee provide technical and administrative assistance to the General Secretariat, which includes several specialists in fields relevant to the committee. Given that the Committee is affiliated with the HRC, funds are allocated to it from the HRC's annual budget. Currently, an advanced database is being developed, digitally connecting the bodies represented in the Committee. This database will constitute a national information reference in combating the crimes of trafficking in persons.
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Fourteenth: Measures prioritized by the State in the last five years to address violence against women and girls

- **Establishing or promoting and implementing laws combating violence against women**

151. The Law on Protection from Abuse, referred to in Question No. 13, was issued together with its implementing regulations, which include a number of executive mechanisms for the provisions of the Law, notably: obligating all public or private bodies to immediately inform the Ministry of Labour and Social Development or the police of any cases of abuse that come to their knowledge; establishing a center to receive reports of abuse and immediately handling such cases, conducting medical evaluations if necessary, obliging all police departments and other competent security authorities to respond immediately to the protection unit's request to enter any location; and providing full protection to the members of the protection unit and the victims of abuse.

- **Introducing or strengthening measures to increase women’s access to justice (such as establishing specialized courts, providing judicial and police training, protection orders, remedies and compensations, including women murder cases).**

152. Several decisions have been taken to promote women’s judiciary-related rights such as: increasing female lawyers by 120% to a total of 418. In 2018, there were 3 140 female lawyer trainees, 67 female legal representatives, 60 female notaries and 244 female employees in the Ministry of Justice, with the aim of increasing that number to 1 400 female employees in 2019. Law diplomas were launched to provide a qualification process leading up to professional licenses. Special centers were established, in collaboration with a civil society institution operating in the Kingdom, to enforce custody sentences in order to provide an ideal environment with key elements such as family, security, health and entertainment. Women were also granted the right of guardianship over their children, making it easier to receive services from different bodies. Furthermore, families with an absent or missing breadwinner, or those who have been abandoned or estranged, are entitled to a social insurance pension. Regulations under Enforcement Law were amended to provide for the right of the mother to have custody during the litigation period and that requests of enforcing custody or visitation rulings shall be considered in the country of custody or visitation indicated in the judgment, the immediate enforcement of judgments of alimony, visitation or handing over the child to their legal guardian. Women’s offices have been established, in collaboration with a civil society institution operating in the Kingdom, in Personal Status Courts to provide free services to women. Furthermore, the President of the Supreme Judicial Council issued Circular No. T/1049, dated 20/06/1439 H (corresponding to 08/03/2017), on the mother’s preferential right to prove custody of her children without the need to file a lawsuit before personal status courts, in cases where there is no conflict between her and the father.

153. In terms of women’s employment, the Public Prosecution now includes 200 members, 300 administrative staff and 150 trainees in the legal division.

154. With regard to the provision of legal assistance, Article 139 of the Law of Criminal Procedure states that in major crimes, if an accused is financially unable to appoint a lawyer, he may ask the court to appoint a lawyer for him at the expense of the State. This provision equally applies to both genders. Moreover, the Charter of the Saudi Bar Association (SBA) indicates in Article 2.7 thereof that its objectives include providing legal assistance to those eligible and technical advice in its area of competence. It should be noted that female lawyers play a significant role in this aspect, with their number reaching 2 335 in February of 2017. The Ministry of Justice has also signed an agreement with a civil society institution to provide assistance and advice to women in the field of judicial procedures. In addition, there has been an increase in law colleges

and departments at universities for female students in a manner leading to an annual increase in the number of female graduates.

155. High Order No. 25803, dated 29/05/1439 H, was issued for the provision of legal assistance to women and children in cases of abuse. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development, in coordination with the Saudi Bar Association, was instructed to obtain a periodic list of the names and addresses of pro bono lawyers to provide legal assistance and cooperate with them pursuant to Article 13.11 of the SBA Charter, which was promulgated by Council of Ministers Decision No. 317, dated 08/07/1436 H. The Ministry was also instructed to conclude a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mawaddah Charitable Association for Reduction of Divorce and its Effects, in order to benefit from the Association's experience with regard to legal custody to provide legal assistance and technical advice to beneficiaries. It will also collaborate with the National Society for Human Rights to benefit from its experience in providing judicial assistance, as well as communicate with lawyers to encourage and motivate them to provide legal assistance to beneficiaries.
156. Healthcare professionals are also required – under the Law of Practicing Healthcare Professions, promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/59 in 2005 – to report any injury that could constitute a criminal assault pursuant to Article 11 thereof. A charter was also issued in 2007 to deal with cases of violence and abuse in health facilities under Ministerial Resolution No. 24/56070. This Charter was circulated among all health affairs directorates of the Ministry of Health in the Kingdom, and brought about the establishment of 53 centers within the hospitals in the Kingdom to diagnose, treat, refer and monitor cases of violence against women. Under the charter, these centers are to provide immediate medical intervention upon receiving cases of violence and abuse, develop treatment plans and appropriate rehabilitation programs and report domestic violence cases to social protection committees within a maximum period of 48 hours.
157. Women are now employed in 5 justice domains (social researcher - legal researcher – Sharia researcher - administrative assistant - senior software developer).

- **Providing or promoting services for survivors of violence such as: shelters, helplines, specialized health services, legal services, justice services, counselling and housing.**

158. The Kingdom now has 25 social protection units and teams, 9 government shelters and 6 shelters operated by civil society institutions, which together have benefitted 966 women up to March 2019.

Fifteenth: Strategies adopted by the State in the last five years to prevent violence against women and girls:

- **Rallying and mobilizing the community**

159. Programs have been included within Saudi Vision 2030 to develop the mechanisms of handling violence and improve the provided services through several initiatives, notably the establishment of a family protection body, and the development of a comprehensive service package covering the needs of victims and offenders during and after incidents of domestic violence, a number of cooperation mechanisms for all parties concerned with domestic violence, and awareness campaigns to prevent domestic violence in society.

- **Raising public awareness and change of perceptions and behaviors.**

160. The Kingdom has implemented a number of educational and training programs, workshops and lectures, as well as online and televised campaigns covering various aspects of human rights, in a move to raise public awareness and change perceptions and behaviors. The educational authorities in the Kingdom have focused on disseminating the culture of human rights and their efforts were rewarded by the issuance of High Order No. 13084, dated 18/01/2015, instructing the HRC, in coordination with the Ministry of Education, “to mainstream human rights into higher education curricula and take action to create a separate human rights specialization in the appropriate faculties”.

161. On 14/12/2017, the HRC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education, launching the Human Rights e-Learning Portal, under the slogan “My Nation is the Protector of My Rights.”

162. The Ministry of Education has developed a project aimed at familiarizing educational staff (educational supervisors, school principals, teachers) with the fundamentals and types of human rights in Islam, invoking the reasons behind the creation of humans and their role on Earth, promoting the status of human rights in Islam, clarifying the types of human rights and explaining the impact of observing human rights in Islam on the individual and society. The number of women in the human rights program implemented by the Ministry of Education was 1 138.

163. By publishing statutory provisions relating to human rights and duties on their websites and social media accounts, government bodies have helped disseminate the culture of human rights among site visitors.

164. The Women Committee of the Family Affairs Council focused on formulating awareness programs and initiatives in all areas related to the promotion of the status of women, covering areas of human rights, economic, social and health awareness, by building partnerships with academic and development institutions.

- **Action taken in primary and secondary education, including comprehensive sex education**

165. The Law on the Protection from Abuse and its implementing regulations contains provisions on the rehabilitation and integration of victims, including Article 2, which stipulates that the Law aims to provide assistance and treatment, shelter, and social, psychological and health care. Article 2.3 of the implementing regulations states that “the Ministry of Labour and Social Development shall coordinate with the relevant public and private bodies to ensure the provision of shelter services, assistance and moral, psychological, social, health and security support for persons suffering from abuse.”
166. The Ministry of Education approved a course titled the “Laws Governing Our Lives” for high school students. It includes a module named “The Law and its Role in Social Protection”, which aims to educate students on the social protection laws in Saudi Arabia, social security beneficiaries, forms of criminal abuse in the Kingdom, the Anti-Harassment Law, and the role of the law in protecting persons with special needs. The course also includes a module called “Law and Human Rights”, which aims to familiarize students with the laws governing human rights and strengthen their understanding of the concept of human rights.

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Sixteenth: Measures taken by the State in the last five years to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (online sexual harassment, online stalking, and non-consensual sharing of intimate images):

- **Establishing or strengthening legislations and regulatory provisions**

167. The Kingdom focuses on the inclusiveness of the concept of harassment under the Anti-Harassment Law, with Article 1 providing for the criminalization of sexual harassment using any means, including modern technology.
168. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia strives to reduce the misuse of technology, starting with the Anti-Cyber Crime Law – promulgated on 26/03/2007 – which has been carefully implemented in the last five year.
169. Cybercrimes can be reported through the “Kollona Amn” application, developed in collaboration between the Ministry of Interior and Public Security to facilitate the reporting of certain violations and crimes, including cybercrimes. The application enables the user to submit reports and upload evidence, including pictures, links or videos, to be delivered to the competent authorities. Another option available to users is the “Absher” platform, which provides many electronic services, including a reporting service linked to Public Security.

- **Implementing awareness-raising initiatives targeting the general public and youth in educational institutions**

170. The Public Prosecution is raising community awareness regarding the Law by providing specific examples of certain crimes subject to its provisions, and stresses that the violation of personal privacy through the use of photography using any technical means, the defamation of others or their harm through social media are all considered a cybercrime under Article 3 of the Law.

- **Working with technology providers to identify and adhere to good business practices**

171. The National Committee for Digital Transformation was formed by High Order No. 49584, dated 29/10/1438 H (corresponding to 23/07/2017), to formulate digital transformation policies and strategies for governmental bodies, develop plans and programs for the implementation thereof and ensure the coordination of related initiatives. A committee was also formed by a high decision to regulate ethical content with the aim of protecting society from unethical technical content and create social and cultural awareness among society members about the ethical content of information technology, achieve harmony and coordinate efforts between governmental and non-governmental bodies concerned with the regulation of ethical content of information technology.

172. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development has also identified, via its website, the bodies and mechanisms responsible for receiving reports and the available direct and indirect remedies (the General Directorate of Social Protection, regional governorates, the HRC, the National Society for Human Rights, the Family Safety Program, public and private hospitals, police departments, educational institutions and charities). Furthermore, reports of violence and other forms of discrimination against women can be submitted via the “Amn” online portal of the Ministry of Interior or to the email address of the Ministry's Human Rights Department.

173. One of the best practices in promoting criminal justice is the launch of a website called Nafethah Tawasul (Communication Window) (www.nefethah.gov.sa), which grants the public access to information on persons detained on security grounds, provides them with electronic means of communication with their families, and enables them to submit all their requests and complaints.

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Seventeenth: Measures taken by the State in the last five years to address the photography of women and girls and/or discrimination and/or prejudice against women in the media

174. The Council of Ministers issued a royal decree adopting the Anti-Cyber Crime Law, which aims to reduce cybercrimes by defining such crimes and their prescribed penalties. It seeks to achieve a necessary balance between the interest of society in the use of modern technology and the interest of humans in the protection of their personal privacy and secrets, to help establish an

information system and preserve the rights arising from the legitimate use of computers and information networks. It also aims to protect public interest, morals and ethics as well as the national economy. Article 6 of the Law states that, “Any person who commits one of the following cybercrimes shall be subject to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years and a fine not exceeding SAR 3 million or either punishment:

- i. Building or promoting a website on an information network or a computer to promote or facilitate trafficking in persons;
- ii. Producing, preparing, transmitting or storing material impinging on public order, religious values, public morals and privacy, through an information network or computer;
- iii. Building or promoting a website on an information network or a computer to trade in, distribute, demonstrate method of use or facilitate dealing in narcotics and psychotropic drugs;
- iv. Creating, publicizing or promoting material for pornographic or gambling sites that violate public morals.”

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Eighteenth: A procedure specifically designed to address violence against certain groups of women facing various forms of discrimination:

175. The Kingdom’s laws ensure that victims of human rights violations receive compensation, as a remedial principle applicable in the Kingdom. The Law of Criminal Procedure guarantees that the victim, or his representative and his heirs may initiate criminal procedures. As regards combatting torture and abuse, Royal Decree No. 43 and several other related legislations, such as the Law of Criminal Procedure, the Law on the Protection from Abuse, the Child Protection Law and the Convention against Torture (which became part of the national law upon ratification by the Kingdom), complement one another to build a strong statutory framework guaranteeing prevention and protection against crimes of torture and abuse and ensuring that victims receive redress in the form of rehabilitation, assistance, compensation, etc. (Refer to the answers to Paragraphs 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 under Question No. 3).

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4. Participation, Accountability and Gender-Neutral Institutions:

Nineteenth: Actions and measures taken by the State in the last five years to promote women’s participation in public life and decision-making:

- **Promulgating the constitution, laws and regulations that promote women's participation in politics, especially at the decision-making level, including reform of the electoral law and the adoption of temporary special measures such as shares, reserved seats, standards and objectives**

176. Royal Decree No. A/44, dated 29/02/1434 H (corresponding to 12/01/2013) was issued for the amendment of Article 3 of the Shura Council Law to include women as full members of the Council at a minimum rate of 20% of the total number of seats, when previously they only participated in a consultancy capacity. Royal Decree No. A/45 was issued on 29/02/1434 (corresponding to 12/01/2013), nominating the members of the Shura Council, of which 30 were women, in its sixth term (03/03/1434 H - 02/03/1438 H, corresponding to 15/01/2013 - 02/12/2016).

177. The Human Rights Commission was formed by Council of Ministers Decision No. 207, dated 08/08/1426 H (corresponding to 12/09/2005), which is a government agency affiliated directly with the King and concerned with the protection and promotion of human rights in accordance with international standards and in light of the Islamic Sharia. Under its charter, it enjoys broad powers enabling it to perform its tasks independently and freely. The Council of Ministers issued a decision amending said charter to enhance the autonomy of the Commission, affiliating it directly with the King when it was previously an executive authority. Some of the most important powers assigned to the HRC include: (i) ensuring the implementation of existing laws and regulations related to human rights by the concerned government authorities, (ii) uncovering any irregularities that constitute a violation of human rights, (iii) providing feedback on draft laws pertaining to human rights, (iv) monitoring implementation by government agencies of international human rights instruments to which the Kingdom is a party, and ensuring that such agencies take all the necessary measures for their implementation; (v) visiting prisons and detention centers at any time without pre-authorization from the competent authority, and submitting reports on them to the Prime Minister; (vi) receiving and verifying complaints related to human rights and taking the legal measures pertaining to them, and (vii) devising a public policy for raising human rights awareness. Since its establishment, the Commission has always created women's divisions at its headquarters and branches throughout the Kingdom, staffed by a large number of qualified women with equal rights to their male colleagues. The HRC has recently been modified with the aim of promoting its role and enabling it to effectively achieve the objectives for which it was established.

178. Under Council of Ministers Decision No. 443, dated 20/10/1437 H, the Family Affairs Council was established to promote the status of the family and strengthen its role in society, build strong cohesive families that nurture their children and adhere to religious and moral values and the highest of ideals. The Council includes in its membership representatives from various bodies,

and encompasses under its authority several technical committees including the Children Committee, the Women Committee and the Elderly Committee.

179. Under Royal Decree No. M/61, dated 04/10/1435 H (corresponding to 01/08/2014), the Law of Municipal Councils was issued to grant women the right to vote and run in municipal elections on par with men. There are 38 women operating in municipal councils, including 21 elected women and 17 women appointed by the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, given its right to appoint a third of the members of the municipal council.

- **Capacity building, skills development and other measures**

180. As part of the initiatives of the National Transformation Program 2020, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development launched the “Empowerment and Development of National Leaders Program”. This initiative consists of two training programs aiming to improve the leadership skills and trade management of 5000 Saudi managers and 1000 Saudi executive officers in the private, governmental and non-governmental (NGOs) sectors by the year 2020. Furthermore, the Ministry of Civil Service launched an initiative for “raising the efficiency of human capital”, in order to provide citizens with the knowledge and skills needed to meet the future needs of the Labour market and to improve the performance, productivity and flexibility of government agencies.

181. Promoting work culture and developing skills (personal and technical) among women to enable their participation in the workforce through the “Parallel Training on Labour Market Requirements” initiative, which targets unemployed women and aims to develop intensive training programs that result in employment in partnership with the private sector. The program consists of on-the-job training (by the employing company) held in parallel with a training program (technical and personal skills) organized by specialized training agencies. Upon completion of the training, the trainee will receive a certificate authenticated by the program owner, and the participating companies are supported in different ways (new initiative – Ministry of Labour and Social Development).

182. Promoting work culture and developing both personal and technical skills among women to enable their participation in the workforce and increasing women’s share in managerial positions (middle and senior) through the “Women Civil Service Empowerment and Promotion of Leadership Roles” initiative. It aims to increase the qualitative participation of women across all governmental sectors at all job ranks, by hiring them in senior leadership positions in civil service agencies, investing their energies and capabilities, expanding their work opportunities and increasing their participation in order to achieve gender balance (existing Initiative – Ministry of Civil Service). Additional initiatives aim to increase women’s share in (middle and senior) managerial positions include the Leadership Training and Guidance Initiative for

Women, which aims to develop training programs that help improve the skills of working women and prepare them for leadership positions, and increase the number of women in leadership positions (senior and middle management levels) by encouraging listed companies and their managers to hire them, and providing a mentorship program to help women at the beginning of their career path (new Initiative – Ministry of Labour and Social Development).

183. Various jobs have been created in the municipal sector for women in the same domains as their male colleagues, given that such jobs were previously occupied only by men. Women also enjoy full participation in the workplace on par with men, and hold leadership positions in the municipal sector.

- **Promoting the participation of minorities and young women, via awareness and mentorship programs included**

184. The MiSK Charity Foundation provides a leadership program for tenth and eleventh-grade students at Harvard University for 7 consecutive weeks, during which they are prepared and engaged in enrichment programs and field visits.

185. In light of its interest in empowering women and activating their role as key elements in promoting national development based on the directions of our leadership and in fulfilment of the aspirations of Saudi Vision 2030, the Saudi Industrial Development Fund has promoted the empowerment of women in the business sector through several aspects, notably providing employment opportunities at all ranks on an equal and fair basis. Accordingly, women in the Saudi Industrial Development Fund have held several senior positions, such as Assistant General Manager, Department Manager, Sector Manager, General Manager Advisor.

186. Career opportunities in the Saudi Industrial Development Fund are based on merit, which has resulted in an exponential increase in working women, with more than 50 women employed at a rate of 50% of new employees in the year 2018.

187. In supporting women's ability to seize the best opportunities, the Saudi Industrial Development Fund applies the principle of equal pay for both genders, as wages and benefits are determined solely on the basis of merit and experience.

188. Women are given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process as chairpersons or members in the relevant committees which support senior management make decisions and contribute to the development of policies and regulations, including the Young Leaders Committee and the Social Services Committee.

189. Women are enabled to participate in international and local conferences, seminars and forums as representatives of the Saudi Industrial Development Fund in a participatory, moderation or speaking capacity.

190. Women organize and participate in social, sports and recreational activities.

191. The management of the Saudi Industrial Development Fund has taken many steps towards developing and updating policies and regulations that support and facilitate women's work and contribute to creating a safe and attractive working environment. It is worth noting that women have played a prominent role in providing visions and suggestions for such policies, the most important of which are:

- Updating the Human Resources policies in accordance with the requirements of working women. An appropriate work environment is to be established to meet the needs of women, by providing facilities such as special places for prayer and rest, facilitating their entry and exit to and from the workplace, and supporting their procurement of driving permits.
- Developing policies related to women's leave to meet their needs and requirements. Article 9 of Chapter VII of the Human Resources Policy Manual of the Saudi Industrial Development Fund states that: Working women are entitled to leave in the following cases: A full-time maternity leave for seventeen weeks, distributed by the woman at her discretion, with a maximum of four weeks prior to the expected date of deliver, and under no circumstance may a woman be asked to work during the first six weeks following childbirth. Women are entitled to extend the leave for one month without pay. If the delivered child is ill or disabled in a way that requires continuous observance, the woman is entitled to a one-month leave with full pay starting after the end of the maternity leave period, and has the right to extend the leave for one month without pay. When a woman returns to work after maternity leave, she is entitled to take a break for an hour per day to breastfeed her child, in addition to the rest period granted to other employees. Such period(s) is(are) calculated with the actual working hours and does(do) not result in a deduction in wages. A Muslim working woman whose husband dies is entitled to a fully-paid *iddah* leave of not less than four months and ten days from the date of death. She has the right to extend this leave without pay if she is pregnant until the delivery of her child.
- Introducing an anti-harassment policy aimed at providing a safe working environment that suits the requirements of working women, and raising awareness among all workers to steer clear from the causes of harassment to avoid deterrent penalties.

192. The management of the Saudi Industrial Development Fund considers training and qualification as the most important drivers of success and achievement. In accordance with the general desire to increase the opportunities for empowerment of women in the Labour market, many long-term and short-term training programs and specialized and professional programs, as well as general skills programs, were designed to develop human resources in order to achieve the identified plans and objectives (long-term two-year training programs held inside and outside the Kingdom that target fresh graduates, of which more than 55% have been made available to

women such as: the Nokhab Credit Program and the Program for Technical and Marketing Analysis and Business Development).

193. Two-month specialized professional training programs outside the Kingdom where women have been given the opportunity to train at the world's most prestigious universities such as Stanford University.
194. Short-term specialized training, which is available annually to women to keep up with the latest developments in the world of business, industry, interpersonal skills and other areas that serve the career of working women.
195. The Saudi Industrial Development Fund has been providing equal cooperative and summer training opportunities to both genders, aiming at providing every opportunity to female university students as well as rewards to support and enhance the on-the-job training experience.

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Twentieth: Actions taken by the State in the last five years to increasingly enable women to articulate and participate in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technology (ICT):

196. The Kingdom's laws ensure freedom of opinion and expression, subject only to the restrictions prescribed by the law that are necessary to preserve the rights or reputation of others, to protect national security, public order, public health or public morals, to avoid propaganda wars and national, racial or religious hatred, and to prevent discrimination, hostility or violence, as stipulated by the Information Policy of the Ministry of Information. The publication of several paper and electronic newspapers, the establishment of two independent authorities for radio and television and audio-visual media, the establishment of several television channels and radio stations in multiple languages, and the facilitation of the use of different social media are an indication of the breadth of spaces of expression and opinion, and finding ways to exercise this right for both genders. The King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue (KACND) provides an appropriate environment for discussing many problems and issues of concern to citizens while enjoying independence in selecting its topics and practices, which is a development in this area. Article 8 of the Law of Printed Materials and Publication also states that, "Freedom of expression is guaranteed in the different means of publication within the limits of Islamic Sharia and the prevalent laws", while Article 2 of the Web Publishing Regulations state that one of its objective is to support a culture of dialogue and diversity.

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Twenty-first: Do you track the proportion of the national budget invested in the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women (gender-sensitive budgeting)?

197. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia devotes a significant portion of its annual budget to the women sector and all related matters, by allocating funds to concerned government agencies such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. The Ministry of Finance ensures the proper disbursement of budget items to ensure benefitting concerned groups, including women. It should also be noted that it is difficult to determine the resources spent on such sector because the approach used in preparing the state budget depends on general items, including all age groups. Government entities the competence of which relates to women affairs – or specific related affairs – review financial spending on the sectors under their supervision, including the women sector, identify areas that need further spending and review same with the Ministry of Finance when discussing the annual budget.
198. The Human Rights Commission follows up on the implementation by government entities of the Kingdom’s obligations under the human rights conventions to which it has become party, and indicates performance shortcomings in its annual reports, as well as the reasons leading to them, such as lack or inefficiency of financial spending, in order to take the necessary actions to address such shortcomings. Civil society institutions, including the National Society for Human Rights, contribute to the monitoring of possible shortcomings.

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Twenty-second: The proportion of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) invested in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (gender-sensitive budgeting):

199. In reviewing the financial contributions of the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) to developing countries, we find that 27.74% – equivalent to SAR 15 271,96 million – of its total contributions until the end of 2017 were directed to the social development sectors, which benefit women more.
200. The Coalition for the Support of Legitimacy in Yemen has attached a great importance to relief and humanitarian work in Yemen through coordination with international organizations. The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center, together with a number of local and international institutions and organizations, has participated with a package of programs and projects, including the control of the cholera epidemic, caused by the armed, Iran-backed Houthi militias as a result of the damage to environmental and preventive health facilities supporting the prevention of the spread of the disease. The Center also participated with a package of executive programs for projects to rehabilitate children recruited by Houthi militias, in addition to a number of projects supporting Yemeni women and families, as well as many nutrition,

medical, health and environmental projects to address the effects of lack of food or medicine and raise the efficiency of health facilities in support of human rights, through the provision of food and medicine within a framework of standards free from any discrimination that may prevent or withhold the benefit of any human being, regardless of his affiliations or attitudes. The support provided by the Kingdom within the framework of the Coalition's 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan in Yemen amounted to a total of USD 465 000 000, spent towards financing infrastructure projects in Yemen, all of which are provided to support Yemeni people in various fields in a way that ensures that relief and humanitarian assistance reaches the intended beneficiaries.

201. The Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) contributes to the financing of social banking projects that seek to provide small loans to families and women in particular. For example, the SFD spent SAR 100 million towards funding the Social Fund for Development in Egypt, and SAR 75 million towards funding the Social Fund for Development in Yemen. It has also been financing the water well drilling project in the Sahel Region in Africa since 1982, for a total amount of USD 320 million, which have helped drill 6 302 wells and benefit 13 African countries, which has contributed significantly to alleviating the suffering of African women in providing safe drinking water and reducing the number of cases of waterborne diseases.

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Twenty-third: Valid national strategy or action plan for gender equality:

202. A national strategy is currently being prepared to strengthen and protect human rights pursuant to High Order No. 13084 of 10/03/1436 H (corresponding to 01/01/2015). The strategy is being prepared based on the principles of the Islamic Sharia, the Basic Law of Governance and other relevant laws and regional and international human rights conventions ratified by the Kingdom, and guided by several declarations and action plans.

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Twenty-fourth: Action plan and timeline for implementing the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (in case of member states), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women:

203. The Kingdom is party to five of the major UN human rights conventions, namely the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination against Women; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In addition, the Kingdom is a party to three optional protocols, namely, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC); the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

204. These conventions become part of the laws of the Kingdom upon their ratification, given that the statutory instrument (the royal decree) through which laws are issued in the Kingdom is the same instrument by which the Kingdom becomes party to conventions, as provided by Article 70 of the Basic Law, which states, “International treaties, agreements, regulations and concessions are approved and amended by royal decrees.” Article 11.1 of the International Agreement Procedures, issued by Council of Ministers Decision No. 287, dated 14/08/1431 H (corresponding to 26/07/2010), requires concerned bodies – upon a convention’s entry into force – to take the necessary implementation procedures and ensure the fulfillment of all the Kingdom’s resulting obligations.
205. The Kingdom has strived towards meeting its obligations under these conventions, and monitoring their implementation through the relevant government bodies and means of redress, particularly the judicial bodies. The charter of the Human Rights Commission – issued by Council of Ministers Decision No. 207, dated 08/08/1426 H (corresponding to 12/09/2005) – requires government bodies to follow up on their relevant obligations under the international human rights instruments to which the Kingdom has become party, and ensure that the necessary measures are taken for their implementation.
206. A national mechanism (the Standing Committee for Drafting Reports) was established under High Order No. 13084, dated 27/03/1436 H (corresponding to 18/01/2015) to prepare reports on the human rights conventions to which the Kingdom is a party and reports required under the Universal Periodic Review. The Committee is also responsible for monitoring recommendations emanating from regional and international treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review. The committee is composed of a number of concerned government bodies and operates in partnership with civil society institutions.

Below is a brief plan for the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) contained in its concluding observations in light of the Kingdom’s obligations.

First Phase: Circulating the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to all government bodies and civil society institutions through the Standing Committee for Drafting Reports.

Second Phase: Studying the concluding observations by the Standing Committee for Drafting Reports in light of the Kingdom’s obligations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in order to specify what has been – directly or indirectly – implemented, as well as the measures required at the various legislative, executive and administrative levels.

Third Phase: Agreeing on a number of procedures and mechanisms for the implementation of the appropriate recommendations.

Fourth Phase: Following up regularly on the implementation of the appropriate recommendations by the Standing Committee and the HRC through a periodically-updated special database, for inclusion in subsequent periodic reports prepared by the Standing Committee and the Human Rights Status Report issued annually by the HRC.

Fifth Phase: Informing the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of the measures taken concerning the recommendations made through subsequent periodic reports, or responses to lists of issues, or through interactive dialogues.

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Twenty-fifth: A national human rights institution in your country:

207. Under its charter, the Human Rights Commission (HRC) is responsible for following up on government agencies to ensure their implementation of the Kingdom's obligations under human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This supervisory role requires the HRC to coordinate with government agencies to overcome obstacles and discuss the best ways to give effect to the provisions of the Convention ratified by the Kingdom. This is done through human rights departments established within such bodies in a liaison officer capacity with HRC under its charter. It should be noted that a women’s committee has been established among the various committees of the HRC Board.

208. The charter of Human Rights Commission is consistent with the Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions (The Paris Principles), as indicated by the commitment of the Commission to the protection and promotion of human rights, and its broad jurisdiction governed by a legislation that identifies both its composition and jurisdiction. The HRC provides feedback and recommendations to the government on all matters relating to human rights, and prepares annual reports on the status of human rights in the Kingdom. It further monitors implementation – by government agencies – of the human rights laws and regulations, uncovers any violations or irregularities, provides feedback on draft laws, existing laws and the

international human rights instruments ratified by the Kingdom. It is the entity in charge of supervising the preparation of the Kingdom's treaty reports and UPR Reports. Moreover, it cooperates with the United Nations as well as national, regional, and international organizations and institutions, and is responsible for teaching and raising awareness regarding the culture of human rights. In order to enhance the independence of the HRC, the Council of Ministers issued Decision No. 237 in March of 2016, affiliating it directly with the King when it was previously an executive authority.

209. The HRC Board is the ultimate authority over its affairs, in accordance with Article 4 of its charter. The Board comprises a chairman, deputy chairman, and twenty-four members who are highly qualified in areas related to human rights, and renowned for their integrity, competency and expertise in the field of human rights. Members shall be from different regions of the Kingdom and different groups of Saudi society. It should be noted that the HRC Board included six female members in its third term, given that members are appointed for a four-year renewable term. In addition, the Board is composed of six committees, including a committee on family, women and children.
210. According to Article 9 of the HRC charter, a chairman with the rank of minister shall manage, represent and ensure the smooth flow of its operations, in accordance with its competence and functions. Article 10 of the charter also provides for the appointment of a deputy chairman at an excellent rank to assist the chairman when present and assume his responsibilities in his absence. The HRC includes a number of male and female employees specialized in its areas of concern.
211. With regard to financial resources, Article 17.1 of the charter states that, "the HRC shall have a separate budget prepared and issued in accordance with the procedures of the state's general budget, and it shall only disburse funds in accordance with the instructions of the state budget. It shall be funded by: (i) allocations in the state budget; (ii) income generated from activities carried out under its competence; (iii) donations, aids, grants and bequests accepted by HRC in accordance with the rules set by its Board; and (iv) other resources that the Board decides to add to the HRC funds."
212. In accordance with its regulations, the Family Affairs Council (FAC) shall ensure that governmental and private entities concerned with family affairs fulfill their designated roles, achieve their objectives, and coordinate between them to form a common vision for the family, and shall be responsible for monitoring family affairs inside the Kingdom. Article 6 of the FAC Regulations states that the FAC shall form all necessary technical committees, provided that they include three committees, for children, women and the elderly. Under Article 4, the FAC aims to promote the status of the family and strengthen its role in society, build strong cohesive families that nurture their children and adhere to religious and moral values and the highest of

ideals. The most notable tasks of the FAC include the preparation of the draft family strategy in coordination with the relevant authorities; ensuring that government and private entities concerned with family affairs fulfill their designated roles, achieve their objectives, and coordinate between them to form a common vision for the family; raising awareness regarding the rights and duties of family members in Islam; identifying problems and risks to the family and developing appropriate solutions; encouraging the participation of the private sector in family issues and their solutions; and preparing a database on family affairs.

213. The primary functions of the National Society for Human Rights include: ensuring the implementation of the provisions of the Basic Law of Governance and all internal laws in the Kingdom related to human rights; ensuring the implementation of the Kingdom's human rights obligations, in accordance with the international and regional human rights standards; and receiving human rights complaints and following up on same with concerned bodies, and investigating claims of human rights violations. The Society issues annual reports on the status of human rights in the Kingdom. It is worth noting that it has also amended its bylaws on 14/02/2015 to be in line with the Paris Principles 1993.

214. Civil society institutions in the Kingdom are key partners of government agencies concerned with human rights, and their fruitful partnerships have resulted in the adoption of measures that have had a great impact on furthering the progress made in the promotion and protection of women's rights. It should be noted that civil society institutions play an active role in receiving complaints, tracking violations and irregularities related to women's rights, and approaching the concerned government authorities. They also take up an advisory and educational role in developing reports on human rights, including women rights, which has been a valuable opportunity to review the current status of women's rights in the Kingdom, and to undertake major efforts in raising awareness regarding women's rights, including the related convention.

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5/ Peaceful and Inclusive Societies:

Twenty-sixth: Action taken by the State in the last five years to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the agenda for women, peace and security:

215. Saudi women participate in the Kingdom's efforts to maintain international peace and security through international programs in partnership with a number of regional and international organizations. A partnership was established between the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), encompassing a Dialogue for Peace Program. Young girls have also participated in the

Messengers of Peace Program held as a result of a collaboration between the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue and the World Organization of the Scout Movement. It is worth noting that these two programs are supervised by a Saudi woman. Moreover, Saudi women take part in such efforts through the mechanisms and bodies of regional and international entities, including the UN General Assembly and its Specialized Committees, the Human Rights Council, and the King Abdullah Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, which is concerned with the propagation of a culture of peace and coexistence. These active participations and roles played by Saudi women have had a direct and indirect impact on preventing conflicts.

216. Since its establishment on 12/05/2015, the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center has been dedicated to international humanitarian aid and relief. It operates a range of programs designed in accordance with cutting-edge global models to extend the vital role of the aid and relief programs provided by the Kingdom to relieve the suffering of societies experiencing humanitarian crises and enabling them to lead a decent life, without any discrimination. The Center seeks to consolidate the Kingdom's relief operations overseas and coordinate the activities of (governmental and non-governmental) relief agencies. The Center relies on a several pillars, including:

- Continuing the Kingdom's efforts to help indigent people across the world
- Providing aid to all those in need, regardless of any non-humanitarian motives
- Coordinating and consulting with international organizations and institutions
- Applying all internationally accepted standards adopted in relief programs
- Developing effective partnerships with leading international humanitarian organizations and bodies to ensure an urgent response to humanitarian crises
- Ensuring the sustainable impact of humanitarian assistance by improving and monitoring relief program outputs. Since its establishment, the Center has implemented 439 projects in collaboration with 124 partners from international organizations and local institutions in 12 humanitarian sectors, covering 40 countries around the world.

217. The King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue plays a significant role in spreading the Islamic concept of *wasatiyyah* (moderation) and promoting tolerance and coexistence. It has launched several projects which aim to achieve these objectives, including the Tibyan Project (to prevent extremism), which aims to spread the values of moderation and tolerance and emphasize the rejection of all forms of extremism,

218. At the regional and international level, the Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology (Etidal) – inaugurated in 2017 – is considered a main component of the institutional framework for combating terrorism as it is concerned with monitoring and analyzing extremist ideology to counter and prevent it, in cooperation with the relevant states and organizations.

219. The promulgation of the Anti-Human Trafficking Law; ratification of conventions and protocols on combating human trafficking; formation of an anti-trafficking committee comprising representatives of relevant government bodies; and creation of a department under the Ministry of Labour and Social Development to combat crimes of trafficking in persons have all contributed to the development of a statutory and institutional framework that guarantees the protection from crimes of trafficking in persons for everyone, without discrimination, the provision of medical, psychological and legal assistance to victims, and the payment of compensation for damages and other forms of redress. The State has also established a hotline (199111) to receive complaints in eight languages.
220. With regard to the rights of domestic workers, the Law of Domestic Workers and Equivalent – referred to in Section 1 of the Report (see paragraph no. ___) – was issued, and is considered a key step towards regulating the relationship between an employer and a domestic worker and guaranteeing the rights and obligations of both parties. Under the law, the employer shall not be entitled to assign the domestic worker any tasks not agreed upon in the contract, or any work that threatens their health or impairs their dignity, or force them to work for third parties. The employer shall pay the wages agreed upon in the contract in a timely manner and document same in writing, and shall also provide appropriate accommodation to the worker.

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Twenty-seventh: Actions taken by the State in the last five years to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at the decision-making level in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile areas or ones affected by crises:

221. The Kingdom’s policy as to granting aid or during armed conflict is based on non-discrimination. To that end, the Kingdom has taken the following action: (i) conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Joint Forces Command and the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict on Protecting Yemeni Children (the first of its kind); (ii) commendation by the United Nations of the efforts of the Joint Coalition Forces in Yemen in retrieving and protecting children; and (iii) establishment of the Child Protection Unit (CPU) under the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen, which is one of the actions taken to protect children in armed conflict. It includes several programs, such as the rehabilitation of children recruited for battle.
222. An independent joint team was formed to assess incidents by Coalition forces during military operations in support of the legitimate government in Yemen, comprising in its membership 14 military and legal experts. The team investigates allegations and incidents in accordance with

bylaws developed in accordance with common standard procedures such as the assessment of incidents that occur in such operations. The team shall also rely on universally accepted procedures, such as the investigation of facts, gathering of evidence and proof and target lists, as well as the provisions of the international humanitarian law and international norms, rules of engagement, incident assessment and targeting mechanism. In addition, the team is entitled to summon persons as it deems appropriate and hear their statements. The joint team operates under full autonomy and impartiality.

223. A Memorandum of Understanding for the protection of Yemeni children was concluded between the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on 25/03/2019. The memorandum falls under the joint coordination efforts made towards the development of deeper measures to protect children in armed conflict. It is concerned with humanitarian aspects and the commitments of the Coalition and the United Nations to strengthen and enhance the protection of children in military operations. It includes firm measures to support and enhance child protection in coordination with the Child Protection Unit (CPU) of the Joint Forces Command, which has made remarkable efforts in child care, repatriation, protection and rehabilitation. There shall be joint and intensive cooperation during the coming months to bring about these procedures together with taking additional long-term action, such as joint training and dissemination and promotion of knowledge on child protection in Yemen. Moreover, the memorandum of understanding is the first of its kind and the first global model, and will provide knowledge on how to protect children in armed conflict worldwide as well as preventative mechanisms. The establishment of the Child Protection Unit (CPU) by the Coalition to support Legitimacy in Yemen is one of the most important measures taken to protect children in armed conflict, as it includes several programs such as the rehabilitation of recruited children. An independent joint team was also formed to assess incidents by the Coalition forces during military operations in support of the legitimate government in Yemen, in accordance with the judicial aspects of the international humanitarian law. The team is composed of 14 military and legal experts, who shall be responsible for investigating allegations and incidents after developing a set of bylaws regulating their work.

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Twenty-eighth: Actions taken by the State in the last five years to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in armed and other conflicts, or other humanitarian action and methods of crisis response:

- **Increased access to violence prevention and protection services by conflict-affected, refugeeed or displaced women**

224. The Kingdom stresses its full abidance with the international human rights law and all the provisions and rules under the international humanitarian law as well as the laws of armed conflict. It further affirms that it has updated the rules of engagement and continuously updates targeting sites, while also training and qualifying Ministry of Defense personnel on the provisions of the international humanitarian law. It has also incorporated human rights principles into the curricula of its military colleges and educational institutions, to include courses on human rights and the international humanitarian law. In this regard, the Kingdom affirms that all military operations carried out under the umbrella of the Coalition for the Support of Legitimacy in Yemen are fully consistent with these provisions and rules, and that the Coalition forces are careful to spare civilians, especially children and women, as well as civilian objects from the effects of the conflict, and provide them with protection against flagrant violations. Furthermore, the Kingdom has provided support to the United Nations to help all sectors of the UN humanitarian response, including the protection sector.

225. The National Commission on International Humanitarian Law was established to operate on the military level and incorporate provisions into the Military Penal Law for punishing crimes perpetrated in times of war and peace. The Commission also develops military curricula in accordance with that international humanitarian law. At the civilian level, the Commission promotes a culture of international humanitarian law in cooperation with various governmental and national bodies and institutions. In addition, the Commission gives effect to the conventions ratified by the Kingdom in the same domain. It should be noted that the Committee periodically endeavors to join conventions pertaining to international humanitarian law, enhances cooperation and exchange with national and international bodies, and qualifies individuals through training programs.

- **Measures to combat arms trafficking**

226. The Kingdom is currently in the process of implementing the Law of Weapons and Ammunition which was promulgated on 20/10/2005. On 01/07/2018, the Ministry of Interior gave a one-year grace period to regularize the situation of citizens carrying weapons without a license. During this period, the Ministry suspended all accountability procedures for those who take the initiative to report, deliver or license weapons at their disposal, given that the Ministry will – upon the expiry of the period – penalize persons with unlicensed weapons in accordance with the provisions of the Law.

227. The Kingdom addressed extremist ideology by promulgating the Law of Terrorism Crimes and Financing by Royal Decree No. M/21, dated 02/11/2017, and establishing the Global Center for

Combating Extremist Ideology (Etidal) on 21/05/2018 with the objective of monitoring, analyzing and predicting extremist ideology in order to confront it and prevent its spread, and cooperating with concerned governments and organizations. Etidal has several strategic objectives, including: (i) refuting extremist rhetoric, combating its activities and curbing its impact; (ii) preventing extremist ideology and any form of affiliation, sympathy or contribution to its activities; (iii) promoting moderation, tolerance and coexistence; and (iv) promoting international cooperation in combating extremist ideology.

- **Measures to combat trafficking in women and children**

228. The national action plan to combat crimes of trafficking in persons (2017–2020) was issued, and an amount of SAR 30 million (USD 8 million) was allocated as an implementation budget.
229. The Anti-Human Trafficking Committee was formed under the Council of Ministers Decision No. 244, dated 13/07/2009, and it is chaired by the president of the Human Right Commission. The membership of the Committee includes representatives of the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour and Social Development, Ministry of Culture and Media, and the Public Prosecution. This Committee is a key national mechanism for the implementation of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law. With regard to the human and technical resources of the Committee, its needs are met by a general secretariat committee encompassing a number of specialists in its fields of operation. Given that the Committee is affiliated with HRC, funds are allocated to it from the HRC's annual budget. Currently, an advanced database is being developed, digitally connecting the bodies represented in the Committee. This database will constitute a national information reference in combating the crimes of trafficking in persons.
230. Under the memorandum of understanding on technical cooperation concluded with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the HRC carries out training activities primarily targeting government officials, judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officials, lawyers and representatives of civil society institutions. Such activities include the training course held in March 2014 under the title of "Experiences of Successful States in Combating Trafficking in Persons". In 2012, HRC held a seminar titled "Explaining the Anti-Human Trafficking Law" as well as other continuous activities, in the context of promoting awareness of human rights. It should be noted that these activities aim to provide the targeted people with the necessary skills and knowledge that enable them to be familiar with all remedial procedures, including tracking, documentation, protection, prosecution and assistance of all kinds, particularly legal assistance, which includes the appointment of lawyers and translators, and the provision of rehabilitation and redress.

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Twenty-ninth: Action taken by the State in the last five years to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child:

- **Implementing policies and programs to reduce and eradicate child, early and forced marriages:**

231. With regard to the reduction of underage marriages, Article 16.3 of the implementing regulations of the Child Protection Law states that, “Before concluding a marriage contract, it is necessary to ascertain that the marriage of a person under the age of eighteen does not harm such person and will achieve their best interests, whether the person is male or female.” In cooperation with the concerned authorities and civil society institutions, the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue conducted studies showing that the number of underage marriages is constantly decreasing. This study gave rise to proposals which include a number of procedures and controls currently being studied by the relevant stakeholders.

- **Implementing policies and programs to eliminate violence against girls, including physical and sexual violence and harmful practices:**

232. The Child Protection Law was issued on 25/12/2014, with the aim of protecting the child (any person under the age of 18, as defined by the Law) from all forms of abuse and neglect experienced in their surrounding environment (home, school, neighborhood, public places, nurseries, alternative family, governmental and non-governmental institutions or the like), whether at the hands of a person who has guardianship or authority over a child or is responsible for them, or is related to the child in any way, or otherwise. The forms of child abuse identified under the Law include: non-registration, concealment or non-maintenance of their identification documents; disruption of education; exposure to sexual harassment or exploitation; exposure to exploitation in terms of money, criminality or begging; and discriminating against them for any ethnic, social or economic reason.

233. The Law was promulgated under Royal Decree No. M/14, dated 25/11/2015 with the aim of protecting each person under the age of eighteen by addressing the forms of abuse and neglect to which they could be exposed. As per Article 2, the Law aims to emphasize the provisions of Sharia and international laws and conventions to which the Kingdom is a party, which preserve the child's rights and protect them from all forms of abuse or neglect. It also stresses on the importance of raising awareness regarding the rights of the child, particularly those related to protecting them from abuse and neglect, and provides for a number of acts that constitute a form of abuse or neglect. The implementing regulations of the Child Protection Law were

promulgated by the Minister of Labour and Social Development under Decision No. 56386, dated 05/04/2015, and includes detailed provisions on the implementation of the Law.

234. With regard to combating violence against children, the Ministry of Education has implemented the “Rifq” Project, an educational program aimed at reducing violence in general education schools using a number of methods, including: educating students, school staff and parents regarding pedagogical (preventive) means of reducing and addressing violence; and equipping guidance counselors with methods for the early detection and management of violence. Statistics show that 100% of projects, programs, publications and information material were implemented across various schools.
235. The “116111” toll-free helpline was established to support and help children under eighteen. It is intended to receive complaints related to children suffering from any form of abuse, neglect and exploitation, whether at home, school, the neighborhood, public places, government or private institutions and the like, and provide immediate and specialized advice to children.
236. The National Registry of Child Abuse and Negligence Cases was recently established in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the health sector as a step towards tracking violence cases (and protecting bullied children).

- **Promoting girls’ access to quality education and skills development**

237. With regard to the development of kindergartens, the Council of Ministers Decision No. 152, dated 29/04/1437 H, was issued, declaring the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education over all matters related to kindergartens in the Kingdom in the age group of 3 to 6 years, including the issuance of the necessary licenses in order to carry out, follow up, and oversee the activity.
238. The increasing role of non-governmental associations and institutions concerned with childhood affairs reflects the interest of civil society in children's rights. Developments achieved in this field include: focusing on developing services related to discovering and nurturing gifted children whether through the King Abdulaziz & His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity or through various programs launched by the Ministry of Education and NGOs, as well as developing services for children with various health and educational disabilities. Educational institutions have also taken interest in the behavioral aspects of children, and proper socialization programs have been intensified in order to instill values in children, guide their conduct, protect them against delinquency, and combat extremist ideology.
239. The Ministry of Education has adopted several programs, including a program for the development of nurseries and kindergarten and the expansion of their services to include all regions in the Kingdom, with the objective of serving more children, and updating programs and activities specialized in early childhood (nurseries/kindergartens). Statistics for 2017 indicate that there were 3 272 kindergartens with 267 270 students, and the number of children

was 14 971 in 1 518 nurseries. The Ministry of Education also adopted the Mother and Child Education Program, which aims to support mothers in raising and caring for their children and helping them acquire the basic mental, physical, emotional and social skills. Furthermore, it adopted the Kindergarten Environment Improvement Program by using ECERS index, with a success rate of 95%.

240. The State has taken measures to support the families of martyrs, such as giving them priority in terms of employment, receiving health care inside and outside the Kingdom, access to housing, and payment of financial compensation.

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6 / Environmental Conservation, Protection and Rehabilitation

Thirty: Action taken by the State in the last five years to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies:

241. Article 32 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates that, “The State shall endeavor to preserve, protect, and improve the environment and prevent its pollution.” Furthermore, Saudi Vision 2030 states: “By preserving our environment and natural resources, we fulfill our Islamic, human and moral duties. Preservation of the environment is also our responsibility towards future generations and essential to the quality of our daily lives. Thus, we will seek to reduce pollution by increasing the efficiency of waste management, reducing all types of pollution and fighting desertification. We will also promote the optimal use of our water resources by reducing consumption and utilizing treated and renewable water.” An integrated waste recycling project is currently underway, and work is being done for the protection of beaches and natural reserves.
242. In order to achieve this purpose, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture issued the National Environmental Strategy under Council of Ministers Decision No. 454, dated 08/05/2018. It aims to enhance the quality of life for all society members, strengthen abidance with environmental laws, achieve maximum adaptation to climate change, support research and development and environmentally friendly technologies, and adopt the highest professional and ethical standards to manage and operate the environment and meteorology sectors. It further ensures compliance with international treaties, enhances participation of civil society institutions in environmental protection and the initiatives of the National Transformation Program 2020 – prepared by both men and women – that total 83 initiatives for environmental as well as meteorology and services development. Moreover, it approved four executive centers and the Environment Fund to address the growing environmental challenges and achieve the Kingdom's objectives in its endeavor to preserve the environment and natural resources and achieve sustainable development and social welfare across all sectors. The establishment of

environmental structures is intended to create 106 thousand jobs for both genders without any discrimination, in order to work in the relevant environmental sectors (government, private and development) and contribute to the implementation of the National Environmental Strategy and its initiatives in line with the National Transformation Program 2020 and Saudi Vision 2030.

243. As stated above, men and women have participated in the following:

- Development of the National Environmental Strategy through 25 workshops
- Development of National Transformation initiatives
- Preparation of the draft Comprehensive Environmental Law
- Preparation, implementation and monitoring of environmental and meteorological initiatives, programs and projects; development of natural vegetation; combating desertification; and conservation of biodiversity
- Participation in committee meetings and attending national, regional and international conferences related to the environment, biodiversity and natural resources.

244. The Ministry attaches great importance to environmental awareness in order to embed environmental concepts and responsibility at all levels for both genders. This is achieved by bringing about cooperation; developing an integrated environmental awareness partnership with civil society, economic sectors and companies; steering partnership towards environmental sustainability; adopting social responsibility within the private sector; and organizing and supporting associations, as well as male and female activists concerned with environmental awareness, protection and development.

245. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia provides water services to its inhabitants without discrimination. 80% of the population has access to clean and potable water without discrimination, with a view of increasing that percentage to 100% by 2030. With regard to the coverage of sanitation services, it is currently at 50% and expected to reach 95% by 2030.

246. Both genders enjoy equal access to agriculture services (in all plant, animal and fishery fields). In addition, women have access, without discrimination, to investment opportunities in environmental, water and agricultural projects and domains, and they are able to obtain interest-free financing for agricultural purposes and activities and veterinary clinics and pharmacies from the Agricultural Development Fund (ADF).

247. The Sustainable Agricultural Rural Development Program 2025 provides small agricultural producers of both genders with opportunities and possibilities to develop, produce, and market Arabic coffee to a rate of 7 000 tons per annum (TPA); produce honey to a rate 7 500 TPA; cultivate and trade flowers to a rate of 2 billion flowers per annum; and produce and market fruits to a rate of 305 thousand TPA. It further enhances the capabilities of fishermen and fish breeders to a rate 30 thousand tons of fish per annum. There are also other programs which

contribute to improving the income of small farmers, and provide employment opportunities and reduce immigration for both genders.

248. Both genders enjoy equal access to general and university education and in most disciplines, including science, water, agriculture, engineering, technology, environment, biodiversity, natural resources and desertification control.
249. The Kingdom has established specialized centers and herbaria to preserve plant genetic resources to maintain biological diversity, including medicinal plants, which are used in alternative medicine for both genders.

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Thirty-one: Action taken by the State in the last five years to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programs for disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation:

250. In anticipation of disaster response, the State has prepared the necessary plans for all male and female citizens in all regions of the Kingdom. The main authority responsible for this is the Civil Defense Council which is represented in all related entities. Shelters and strategic water and grain reservoirs have been established that would be sufficient for long periods of time. With regard to water, preparedness for emergency management is a key pillar, and already 3 initiatives have been developed to that end. As for the environment, strategic objectives include: (i) raising the environmental level across all development sectors, (ii) reducing pollution and its negative impact on the environment, (iii) strengthening the national capacity to adapt to climate change, (iv) reducing desertification and dust storms, (v) raising environmental awareness, (v) strengthening the role of associations and voluntary work, and (vi) improving the quality and scope of meteorological services. Furthermore, the agricultural sector considers plant and animal health among its main pillars, and has developed 6 initiatives to that end.
251. The Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture has prepared a draft Comprehensive Environmental Law which takes into account the mechanisms, criteria and policies to be taken to reduce risks, disasters and climate variability and their impact on the population in general. The Arab League also developed the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2030 through the cooperation of its member states, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It was adopted in the Arab Summit held in Dhahran under Resolution No. S.S 733 G.O (29) E3 on 15/04/2018.
252. The Food Security Strategy was approved and launched by the Council of Ministers on 01/05/2018. It is composed of 11 educational programs, including the Food Loss and Waste Reduction Program, the Food Industry Program, the Executive Nutrition Program, the Food Safety Program, the Early Warning System, Emergency Management, the Executive Capacity Building Program, the Sustainable Agricultural Production Program, the Social Safety Net

Program, the Executive Program for Strategic Food Stocks, and the Executive Governance Program, which together have launched over 100 initiatives.

253. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ratified the Paris Agreement on 04/11/2016.

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Section Three: National Institutions and Processes

Thirty-two: The State's current national mechanism for gender equality and the empowerment of women. Please name it and describe its standing under the government.

254. The Human Rights Commission was formed by Council of Ministers Decision No. 207, dated 08/08/1426 H (corresponding to 12/09/2005), which is a government agency affiliated directly with the King and concerned with the protection and promotion of human rights in accordance with international standards and in light of the Islamic Sharia. It aims to protect and promote human rights as per international human rights standards across all aspects, to promote awareness and participate in ensuring implementation of the same in light of the provisions of Sharia. The HRC shall be responsible for providing feedback and counsel on matters relating to human rights. It is considered a legal personality enjoying broad powers enabling it to perform its tasks independently and freely under its charter. Some of the most important powers assigned to the HRC include: (i) ensuring the implementation of existing laws and regulations related to human rights by the concerned government authorities, (ii) uncovering any irregularities that constitute a violation of human rights, (iii) providing feedback on draft laws pertaining to human rights, (iv) monitoring implementation by government agencies of international human rights instruments to which the Kingdom is a party, and ensuring that such agencies take all the necessary measures for their implementation; (v) visiting prisons and detention centers at any time without pre-authorization from the competent authority, and submitting reports on them to the Prime Minister; (vi) receiving and verifying complaints related to human rights and taking the legal measures pertaining to them, and (vii) devising a public policy for raising human rights awareness. It is worth noting that the HRC has submitted its first report on the status of human rights in the Kingdom, which covers its observations on the implementation by government agencies, each within its purview, of the obligations of the Kingdom in accordance with international human rights standards. The report also covers human rights complaints, particularly concerning prisoners and detainees; the right to recourse and equality before the judiciary; the right to protection from abuse and torture; assurance of physical safety; the right to reputation and dignity; the right to freedom of movement; nationality and residency issues; other basic rights; the right to employment, social care and health care; protection from domestic violence; other economic, social and cultural rights; and the rights of special groups, including

women and children, persons with disabilities and the elderly. The report made 75 recommendations, which were studied by a governmental committee that formulated appropriate implementation mechanism. Since its establishment, the Commission has always established women's divisions at its headquarters and branches throughout the Kingdom, staffed by a large number of qualified women with equal rights as their male colleagues.

255. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development was established under a royal decree issued at the end of 1380 H under the name of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Since its inception, the Ministry has strived for the development of local communities and attached importance to social committees, provincial councils, centers, small villages, youth and family care centers, and cooperative societies. The Ministry has three main objectives: (i) formulating the general policy for social and labour affairs in the Kingdom based on the values, principles and applicable laws of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; (ii) developing and implementing projects; and (iii) participating in guiding the social development in the Kingdom in a balanced manner aimed at raising the awareness of the citizens, improving their standard of living and creating the elements of a decent life within the framework of preserving and strengthening spiritual and moral values to build a rising, integrated society.
256. In the year 1425 H, the Council of Ministers issued Decision No. 27, which ordered the division of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs into two independent ministries: the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Ministry of Labour shall be responsible for all activities related to employment and labour affairs, whereas the Ministry of Social Development would be responsible for social activities. In the 4th month of 1436 H, Royal Decree No. A/133 was issued, merging the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Social Affairs once again under one ministry, namely the Ministry of Labour and Social Development.
257. The Family Affairs Council was established under Council of Ministers Decision No. (441), dated 10/10/1437 H (corresponding to 15/07/2016) to handle family affairs in the Kingdom. Article 6 of the FAC Regulations stated that the FAC shall form all the necessary technical committees, provided that they include three committees, for children, women and the elderly. The Council of Ministers issued Decision No. 14, dated 16/01/1439 H (corresponding to 15/09/2017), adding a new subparagraph to paragraph 1 of Article 3 of its regulations, amending the composition of the FAC to include two members specialized in the affairs of the elderly. It is worth noting that the FAC now also supervises a family protection committee.
258. The National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) is a non-governmental organization with no connection to any government agency, and enjoys full autonomy in all its affairs. It is concerned with promoting, protecting and defending the human rights of citizens, residents and visitors of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The NSHR interacts with government agencies, non-governmental entities and international organizations to achieve the objectives set forth in its

charter. Its primary functions include: ensuring the implementation of the provisions of the Basic Law of Governance and all internal laws in the Kingdom related to human rights; ensuring the implementation of the Kingdom's human rights obligations, in accordance with the international and regional human rights standards; and receiving human rights complaints and following up on same with concerned bodies, and investigating claims of human rights violations. The NSHR members include male and female academics and specialists in areas relating to human rights. Moreover, the NSHR issues annual reports on the status of human rights in Saudi Arabia, the most recent of which was Report No. 3, titled "An Ambitious Leadership and Poor Institutional Performance".

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Thirty-three: Is the head of the national mechanism a member of the institutional process for SDG implementation (e.g. inter-ministerial coordinating offices, agencies or committees)?

259. The Kingdom is committed to implementing the sustainable development goals and attaches the highest priority to this endeavor, in line with its national characteristics and fundamentals. By way of a Royal Order, the Minister of Economy and Planning was entrusted with the implementation of the sustainable development goals, given its role in supporting stakeholders and government agencies in strategic and operational planning. The Ministry also provides the necessary information, data, statistics, and studies to the relevant authorities, and aligns sectoral and regional plans among relevant bodies. Furthermore, the General Authority for Statistics builds indicators which measure progress made towards the realization of the goals, by conducting further statistical calculations to provide the necessary information and data.

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Thirty-four: Are there any formal mechanisms in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

260. Several government and private entities, organizations and NGOs in Saudi Arabia have adopted many measures that contribute to the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the Sustainable Development Plan of Action. The Family Affairs Council (FAC) was established with a committee specialized in women affairs, which aims to empower and support women by adopting projects, drawing policies, and building partnerships that enhances the role of women and enables them to face challenges, thus ensuring family stability and economic and cognitive growth to improve the quality of life. In addition, its policies and programs are constantly being aligned with the sustainable development goals.

In order to monitor all women-related aspects, the National Observatory for Women (NOW) was established as a house of expertise in 2018 to support women at all levels. It observes the participation of Saudi women in development at all local and international levels, and their direct impact on society and development in general. The Observatory serves as a supportive reference to decision makers, institutions, and civil society organizations by establishing indicators to measure the role of Saudi women in development and providing beneficiaries with data and supporting studies to strengthen women’s participation. NOW is affiliated with the King Abdullah Institute for Research & Consulting Studies (KAI) at King Saud University (KSU).

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Thirty-five: Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls as a key priority in the national plan/strategy for SDG implementation:

261. The Ministry of Economy and Planning established the Assistant Deputyship for Sustainable Development Affairs, which is tasked with cooperating with stakeholders in order to develop a plan to implement the sustainable development goals (SDGs), including gender equality, and the empowerment of women and girls and promotion of their rights and opportunities across various domains in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, given their status as a core component of the Kingdom’s strength and a large portion of its society. Saudi Vision 2030 and its implementing programs include several relative objectives, focusing on developing the talents of women, utilizing their potentials and enabling them to seize the appropriate opportunities to build their future and contribute to the development of their society, given that the Basic Law of Governance in Saudi Arabia is based on Islamic Sharia, which calls for justice, consultation and equality.

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Section Four: Data and Statistics

Thirty-six: The top three areas in which your country has made the most progress over the past five years when it comes to national gender statistics:

262. The Council of Ministers Decision No. 11, dated 13/01/1437 H (corresponding to 17/10/2015), approved the establishment of the General Authority for Statistics, which was entrusted with the technical supervision and organization of the statistics sector, and the creation of a comprehensive system of national statistical databases by developing a central information center at the national level that can be digitally linked to all public entities, and by participating

in the development of all information and statistical work systems to create a comprehensive, accurate and unified statistical system. The Saudi statistical data and information sector is a productive sector that regulates the production of statistical data, information, studies, research, and all related services, including gender statistics.

263. With regard to gender statistics, the Kingdom's achievements include: (i) the issuance of laws, regulations and statistical/strategic programs which develop gender statistics; (ii) the establishment of inter-agency coordination mechanism for gender statistics (such as a technical working group and an inter-agency committee); and (iii) reprocessing existing data (i.e. censuses and surveys) to produce more classified and/or new gender statistics.
264. As an example of the measures taken in light of the above three areas, the General Authority for Statistics developed a gender statistics publication, currently still a work in progress. In addition, several meetings were held and an inter-agency coordination mechanism for gender statistics was introduced, following which a 5-axes indicator (economic, educational, organizational, social and health) was developed to measure the participation of Saudi women in development, divided into 72 variables. This indicator was designed based on a perspective commensurate with the various development needs of the Kingdom that serve to achieve Saudi Vision 2030. It can also be used to identify appropriate strategies to increase women's participation in development. The National Observatory for Women produces such indicator based on the data provided by the General Authority for Statistics.
265. The Kingdom aims to integrate a gender perspective into its statistics, which will result in the preparation and development of gender disparity statistics that can be used as a tool to measure gender-based gaps and identify the necessary action. They will also provide data required by decision makers for the empowerment of women and development of their capacities in line with Saudi Vision 2030. Furthermore, attention will be given to monitoring the development and impact of public policies related to gender equality and women's empowerment by providing government agencies and civil society institutions with data and indicators which provide an accurate view of the dynamic relationship between both genders, as well as its social, economic and cultural circumstances. Such data can also be used for local, regional, and international benchmarking purposes, and as a reliable database and reference by stakeholders and specialists in gender statistics (locally, regionally and internationally). With regard to the scope of measures, it includes surveys and censuses conducted by the General Authority for Statistics and some authorities concerned with women's issues at all levels, such as the National Observatory for Women and the Family Affairs Council. A joint cooperation mechanism has been established between the General Authority for Statistics, the Observatory, the Council, and Alwaleed Bin Talal Foundation on the indicators of women and their participation in development and empowerment.

266. Below are links to some of the surveys conducted by the General Authority for Statistics, and processed based on gender:

- [Demographic Survey](#)
- [Disability Survey](#)
- [Family Health Survey](#)
- [Education and Training](#)

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Thirty-seven: The State’s top three priorities for strengthening national gender statistics over the next five years:

267. The future road map of Saudi Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Program 2020 has identified clear tracks for the comprehensive development of the Kingdom. It was accompanied by a transformation in the statistical sector, as it is the base upon which the development decisions are built and the solid structure that decision and policy makers rely on. The transformation took place in light of the rapid changes towards social and economic change, a massive data and information revolution and non-stop qualitative leaps in technology and solutions. Accordingly, the Kingdom will continue to issue laws, regulations or statistical/strategic programs that develop gender statistics; establish inter-agency coordination mechanism for gender statistics (such as a technical working group and an inter-agency committee); and reprocess existing data (i.e. censuses and surveys) produce more classified and/or new gender statistics.

268. The most notable plans for gender statistics can be summarized as follows: (i) monitoring development in policies and indicators related to gender statistics; (ii) providing data on the indicators of the 5th sustainable development goal; (iii) conducting surveys to complete data of indicators, such as a gender-based domestic violence survey or a time-use survey; and (iv) ensuring that decision makers are provided with the necessary data.

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Thirty-eight: Indicators for monitoring progress made towards the sustainable development goals:

269. There is a total of 244 indicators, of which 96 were provided and the remaining are underway, given that 80 of them are gender-based. Moreover, a national indicator (the Saudi Women Participation in Development Indicator) was introduced. The National Observatory for Women is responsible for providing and measuring such indicators which fall under the following axes:

1. The economic axis, which focuses on changes in women's income and their direct contribution to the national economy and development. This indicator is directly related to the Women Participation in Development Indicator.
2. The educational axis, which focuses on changes to women's level of education and its impact on their contribution to the national economy and development. This indicator is indirectly related to the Women Participation in Development Indicator.
3. The organizational axis, which focuses on changes to the number of women in leadership positions across various ranks and its impact on supporting the national economy and development. This indicator is indirectly related to the Women Participation in Development Indicator.
4. The health axis, which focuses on changes to women's health and easy access to health care and its impact on their support to the national economy and development. This indicator is indirectly related to the Women Participation in Development Indicator.
5. The social axis, which focuses on changes to the social status of women and the extent to which society supports their work and its nature and its impact on their support to the national economy and development. This indicator is indirectly related to the Women Participation in Development Indicator.

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Thirty-nine: Data collection and compilation on SDG 5 indicators and on gender-specific indicators under other SDGs:

270. The gender indicator is used to refer to indicators which explicitly call for classification by gender and/or gender equality as the main objective. For instance, the SDG 5.c.1. indicator reflects the percentage of countries with systems to track general policy-oriented allocations as well as programs that enhance gender equality. The main objective is to enhance equality between genders. The term is further used to refer to indicators wherein women and girls are referred to as the female targeted population (See UN Women (2018): Turning promises into action: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda, New York).
271. Data collection and compilation for SDG No. 5 indicators have already commenced, and the following percentages were calculated: (i) seats held by women in national parliaments (Shura Council) and local governments; (ii) women holding middle and senior management positions; (iii) women aged 15-49 who make informed decisions on sexual relations, use of contraceptives and reproductive health care; (iv) people who own agricultural land or have secured rights in agricultural land (out of the total agricultural population) by gender, and the share of women owning or having rights in agricultural lands by possession type; (v) Saudi women aged 20 to 24 who married or entered into a union prior to 15 and 18; and (vi) cell phone owners by gender.

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Forty: Information routinely provided by major surveys in the State:

272. In response to the rapid quantitative and qualitative developments in the State, the statistics and information sector needs to develop a mechanism which enables continuous and sustainable development of its work, and to keep it abreast of new developments inside and outside the Kingdom simultaneously. Accordingly, the sector must develop a national strategy for statistical development (the first of its kind in the Kingdom) which continuously develops statistical work in all areas, including geographic location surveys; income surveys; and age, education, marital status, disability, family health, and elderly surveys, etc.

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Annexes

Annex no. 1: Saudi Vision 2030 and Women Initiatives

Analysis of Saudi Vision 2030 and its various Vision Realization Programs (VRPs) indicates that there are significant initiatives already identified by different ministries and deputyships inside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In addition, 26 initiatives were identified as part of three VRPs which focus on women and family empowerment.

- Initiatives under the National Transformation Program to improve women's labour market participation:

Initiative	Description
Raising awareness regarding the importance of women's participation in the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raising awareness in support of women employment and increasing their participation in the local market - Launching media campaigns which aim to change stereotypes associated with women's work and urging society to support them - Shedding light on excellent role models, success stories and exemplary professions through media and social media. - Giving women the greater role in leading and marketing events through several channels
Women's Resettlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Studying and reviewing the current situation of all economic sectors in the local market to ensure elimination of challenges and obstacles and achievement of integration between the relevant authorities to increase women's employment opportunities and participation - The labour market sectors will be studied to identify ways to increase women's participation in each sector and encourage women's entry into promising sectors. Moreover, sectors of interest will be identified through studies to be undertaken in the initiative
Promoting flexible work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing comprehensive laws for part-time work - Launching a media campaign to promote the culture of part-time work

	- Providing incentives to employers to provide part-time employment contracts
Providing childcare services for working women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing affordable nurseries and the appropriate support for the target group - Increasing the number of nurseries by attracting and incentivizing investors - Supporting female graduates specialized in kindergarten education and the unemployed
Providing leadership training and mentorship to women cadres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing training programs which aim to improve the skills of working women and prepare them for leadership positions - Increasing employment of women in leadership positions, as well as senior and middle management levels (by incentivizing listed companies and their managers) - Assisting women at the beginning of their career through mentorship programs
Supporting and facilitating transportation of women	This initiative seeks to support the employment of Saudi women in the private sector and their job stability by implementing solutions to address the challenge of transportation to and from the workplace; and proposing and designing a system to provide a safe and high quality transportation service at an affordable cost for low-income people, in line with the applicable laws and regulations, as well as the special nature of Saudi society. The transportation system needs to be sustainable and to consider the special needs of female workers.
Empowering women in the civil service and enhancing their leadership role	The initiative seeks to increase the qualitative participation of women in all government sectors and at all career levels by empowering them to hold senior leadership positions in civil service agencies, fully utilizing their potential and abilities, expanding their employment options, and increasing their participation in order to achieve gender balance.
Promoting remote working	- Reaching job seekers in different regions of the Kingdom and creating a flexible employment method which opens the door for more national manpower in the Kingdom that cannot work in-house for one reason or another

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing the labour market by allowing employment in suitable, stable and productive jobs - Providing employers with a modern channel to manage and activate manpower in a more efficient and reliable manner from a financial and operational perspective
Incentivizing employers to develop adaptive environments for persons with disabilities (Women with disability)	This initiative aims to establish work environment standards for persons with disabilities and to provide them electronically through a platform that enables institutions to develop their work environments in a manner that is more disability-friendly.
Developing cooperation mechanism between all parties concerned with domestic violence	Developing a cooperation protocol between civil and governmental institutions concerned with the social protection system, including the formulation of clear mechanisms and specific definitions of domestic violence.
Launching awareness campaigns to protect society from domestic violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raising awareness in Saudi society about domestic violence in order to reduce this phenomenon - Familiarizing persons with their rights and obligations as well as the services provided to them if they experience violence

- Initiatives identified under the Quality of Life Program to improve women's engagement in fitness and sports:

Initiative	Description
Preparing family and women-friendly facilities and venues	Redesigning and renovating major sports facilities in the Kingdom to enable families/women to attend any type of sporting event. The 2020 objectives involve redesigning 23 sports venues.
Preparing and implementing a physical education BA program for girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing the physical education BA program under the Faculty of Education and Arts, Girls' Section, at the University of Tabuk, in addition to four other major universities - The BA program enables girls to improve the concept of quality as though graduating from physical education colleges. They are also allowed to work in fitness centers, and provide physical and competitive education in various sports - By 2020, the target will be 180 female students, at an average rate of 60 students per annum

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying the curriculum and academic issues of the BA program at the University of Tabuk and four other major universities - Establishing and equipping facilities, such as gyms, in the indicated universities
Promoting the participation of female students in various sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designing and implementing physical education programs and activities for females under the general education system - Specialized teachers will teach the curriculum in the classrooms as part of a study plan, while continuing to practice physical activities as part of the classroom activities during the school day - The 2020 objectives can be summarized as: 325 000 girls in sports classes, 7 500 qualified female teacher, and 1 500 schools with well-maintained sporting equipment - Providing suitable buildings for physical activities as well as well-equipped spaces in school buildings - Training and qualifying female teachers to train female students on these sports activities
Sports for people with special needs in educational institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing an enabling sports environment for students with special needs to practice all sports - 2020 objectives include: (i) construction of 10 facilities; (ii) preparing 240 and 180 male and female instructors specialized in teaching sports to persons with special needs - Other 2020 objectives include 9 000 male and 4 200 female beneficiaries - Providing sports fields, gyms, staff, technicians and administrators specializing in sports suitable for people with special needs - Providing world-class support services to help universities attract prominent athletes with motor disabilities, or visual or hearing impairments
Empowering women to contribute to the sports system (Diversity and Inclusion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing and integrating systems, structures and processes to work with key individuals, institutions and government bodies to remove legal obstacles that prevent women from fully participating in sports and related activities in the Kingdom

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2020 objectives include: (i) construction of 21 new operational clinics for women; and (ii) participation of 40 women in international sports, and (iii) participation of 2.1 million women in popular sports - Developing a strategy for diversity and inclusion - Preparing specialized clinics for women's health - Ensuring women's access to sports fields - Developing a program for the participation and support of outstanding athletes - Developing a program for the participation and support of sportswomen at the grass-roots level
Developing individual and team sports in public and private universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing the participation of university students in university championships in all regions of the Kingdom - 2020 objectives include: (i) attracting 800 male participants and 2 000 female participants; and (ii) establishing 30 university associations for males, and 30 university associations for females - Hiring administrative and professional staff specialized in university sports - Developing regulations to organize university sports activities - Preparing university sports programs that emphasize the importance of participating in sports competitions

Annex No. 2: Entities Involved in Information Collection

Sr.	Entity	Notes
1	The Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MLSD)	Government Sector
2	The General Authority for Statistics	Government Sector
3	The Human Rights Commission (HRC)	Government Sector
4	The Ministry of Education	Government Sector
5	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Government Sector
6	The Ministry of Health	Government Sector
7	The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center	Government Sector
8	The Ministry of Civil Service	Government Sector

9	The Ministry of Housing	Government Sector
10	The Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP)	Government Sector
11	The Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture	Government Sector
12	The Saudi Fund for Development (SFD)	Government Sector
13	The Ministry of Commerce	Government Sector
14	The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs	Government Sector
15	The Councils of Chambers of Commerce	Government Sector
16	The Bureau of Spending Rationalization	Government Sector
17	The Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC)	Government Sector
18	The Human Resources Development Fund	Private Sector
19	The Small & Medium Enterprises General Authority	Private Sector
20	The King Khalid Foundation (KKF)	Charity Sector
21	The Al Nahda Women Society	Charity Sector
22	The MiSK Foundation	Charity Sector
23	The Mawaddah Association	Charity Sector