

Statement of the Sultanate of Oman delivered

By

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Minister of Social Development

And

Head of the Delegation

On the occasion of discussing the Initial National Report of the

Sultanate of Oman regarding

the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

United Nations Office in Geneva- ٢٠ February ٢٠١٨

Mr. Chairperson,

Honorable rapporteurs of this meeting,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Honorable Members of the Committee for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Distinguished guests,

I would like to start by conveying to you the greetings of the government of my country, the Sultanate of Oman, and the best wishes for success to you personally as professional experts and to your esteemed Committee in supporting the empowerment and advancement of persons with disabilities. It is my great honor to address this esteemed committee and outline a number of measures taken by the Sultanate in order to enforce the Convention at the national level, and refer to the progress made by the Sultanate in various relevant areas.

I also seize this occasion to reiterate my country's firm and continuous commitment to support Human Rights issues in general, and the rights of persons with disabilities in particular, embodying thus visions pursued by the Sultanate by reinforcing the implementation of all the ratified international agreements, enhancing my country's position in international fora.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Honorable members of the committee,

It is a pleasure for me and for the members of the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman to hold this constructive dialogue with you on the

initial national report of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Sultanate. This dialogue is undoubtedly an opportunity for the Sultanate's delegation to benefit from your international experience in assessing our efforts to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities in our country.

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

١. HE Ambassador\ Abdullah bin Nasser Al-Rahbi - Permanent Representative to the United Nations.
٢. Dr. Yahya bin Mohammed bin Issa Al-Farisi - Associate Professor, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Sultan Qaboos University.
٣. Mr. Hilal bin Mohammed bin Hilal Al-Abri - Director General of the Directorate General for Persons with Disabilities in the Ministry of Social Development.
٤. Mr. Mubarak bin Ali bin Saeed Al Rahbi, Head of our office.

- .Mr. Homoud bin Mardad bin Homoud Al-Shabibi - Assistant Director-General of the Directorate General for Persons with Disabilities in the Ministry of Social Development.
- ٦.Mr. Ali bin Hamad bin Ali Al-Adawi- Counselor Assistant- the Ministry of Legal Affairs.
- ٧.Mrs. Lamis Bint Abbas bin Asad Allah Al Bahrani - Assistant Director General for Special Education and Continuing Education at the Directorate General of Educational Programs at the Ministry of Education.
- ٨.Mr. Yousef bin Saeed bin Salem Al Mutawa - Assistant General Director of the General Directorate of Employment at the Ministry of Manpower.
- ٩.Mr. Yahya bin Abdullah bin Mubarak Al Amri - President of the Board of Directors of Oman Association for Disabled and a member of the Omani Human Rights Committee.
- ١٠. Mr. Homoud bin Nasser bin Homoud Al Shithani - Vice President of the Omani Association for the Hearing Impaired.
- ١١. Mrs. Jamila Bint Jumaa bin Darwish Al-Hadi – **member of** the Directorate General of Population Statistics at the National Center for Statistics and Information.
- ١٢. Mr. Khalid bin Zayed bin Hamad Al Amri- Sign Language Translator in the Ministry of Social Development.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Honorable members of the committee,

The Sultanate of Oman, reaffirming its commitment to the national reporting mechanism on international human rights treaties, worked on the elaboration of comprehensive periodic reports on human rights (٢٠١١ and ٢٠١٥), followed up on the implementation of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review of reports, and submitted initial and periodic reports on the treaties it has ratified. In this context, the Sultanate prepared the core document in ٢٠١٢ in accordance with the established guidelines for reporting to international human rights treaty monitoring bodies, and is currently finalizing the procedures for the submission of the updated core document to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in ٢٠١٨.

The Ministry of Social Development, being the body entrusted with the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, has attached a great importance on the elaboration of the initial report that is binding to the State Parties in pursuant to paragraph ١ of article (٣٥) of the Convention. In this regard, the Ministry worked to ensure that this report comprises governmental and non-governmental bodies, by setting up committees from various ministries and bodies related to the rights of persons with disabilities. NGOs were represented in all these committees, in the preparation and training workshops on the guidelines, in the elaboration of the report drafts at different stages, and later in the preparation of responses to the list of issues. Representatives of these NGOs are also part of this high-level delegation.

The elaboration of the report coincided with structural changes introduced by the Ministry of Social Development in ٢٠١١ and ٢٠١٢ aiming at reinforcing the rights of persons with disabilities by the establishment of a Directorate General for Persons with Disabilities, replacing the department on the rights of persons with disabilities in the Directorate General of Social Welfare. This major change required rearrangement of departments, specialized units and centers dedicated to the training and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, making the supervision of Al-Wafa voluntary social centers under the Ministry instead of the private sector, with the aim of expanding services across all the Wilayats and governorates of the Sultanate, in addition to other technical arrangements such as the restructuring of the National Committee for the Welfare of the Disabled to ensure that it includes representatives of civil society institutions and the private sector. The implementation of these procedures and measures required some time, which was reflected by the timely submission of the report, as we reaffirm our commitment to submitting the reports in due time.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Honorable members of the committee,

The Sultanate was one of the leading Arab countries that contributed to the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and was one of the first countries to ratify it by Royal Decree No. ١٢١/٢٠٠٨. The Law for the Care and Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons was adopted pursuant to the Royal Decree No. ٦٣/٢٠٠٨ aiming at

reinforcing the services provided to persons with disabilities, in addition to the Child Law adopted by virtue of the Royal Decree No. ٢١/٢٠١٤.

In the light of these laws and conventions, the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Social Development, proceeded from the welfare notion to the developmental notion that adopts the human rights approach ensuring the protection of human rights, the rights of persons with disabilities and other groups of society. This shift was clearly noticeable in the policies, plans, legislation and programs of the Ministry of Social Development and other relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Health, Education, Manpower, Housing, Sports Affairs, and Municipalities, etc.

And in order to illustrate the great attention given to persons with disabilities in the Sultanate, the Oman Council (which includes the Shura Council and the Council of State) in charge of enacting laws and legislations as well as protecting rights related to this group of society has mandated committees to conduct exploratory visits to centers and departments, assess the services provided to persons with disabilities and work with the government on a new legislation for persons with disabilities, which takes the recent findings into account and is in conformity with the Convention on Persons with Disabilities.

It is also important to mention that during the previous five years (٢٠١٢-٢٠١٧), these specialized committees of the two councils have worked on specific reports related to aspects of the rights of persons with

disabilities in the areas of education, social integration, health, housing, social security and other issues.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Honorable members of the committee,

In line with what was presented in the initial national report, and in response to the list of issues, allow us to shed the light on the most important updates, developments and challenges, as well as future orientations:

-At the policy level, the Eighth Five-Year Plan (٢٠١١-٢٠١٥) and the Ninth (٢٠١٦-٢٠٢٠) adopted major orientations on the advancement of the rights of persons with disabilities in various sectors. On this basis, the relevant ministries, such as Social Development, Health, Education, Housing, and others, have developed their five-year plans and worked to implement their programs according to the tasks and roles of each ministry.

The Ministry of Social Development worked on the preparation of the Social Action Strategy (٢٠١٦-٢٠٢٥) and its Executive Plan, which included an integrated focus on the rights of persons with disabilities. In ٢٠١٤, the Ministry of Health established an overview of the health system in the Sultanate until ٢٠٥٠, ensuring health rights of persons with disabilities in all aspects.

The orientations of these plans and strategies are reflected in the areas of work of all ministries and entities in charge of the development in general and of services and programs of persons with disabilities in particular.

- At the institutional structures and mechanisms' level: The Sultanate has accomplished the following:

- a) Establishing the Directorate General for Persons with Disabilities by Royal Decree No. 11/2014 dated 24 March 2014.
- b) Allocating a number of seats to **NGOs** in the State Council, including an association for persons with disabilities.
- c) Signing a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Social Development and the Oman Human Rights Commission on March 2, 2010 concerning the transfer of the monitoring mechanism of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to the Oman Human Rights Commission.
- d) The National Center for Statistics and Information issued in 2010 a booklet to shed the light on Omanis with disabilities in the Sultanate from the 2010 Census data and the latest data related to persons with disabilities in terms of their geographical distribution, social and educational status, and causes and degrees of disability by gender.

- e) The National Center for Statistics and Information conducted a study on the situation of persons with disabilities in the Sultanate of Oman in ٢٠١٧ according to ٢٠١٦ data.
- f) Increasing financial support for the services of persons with disabilities, including the Association for the Welfare of Children with Disabilities that has ١٠ centers and the Association for Early Intervention for Children with Disabilities that has one center.
- g) Restructuring The National Committee of Disabled Persons Welfare (NCDPW) under Ministerial Resolution No. ١٧٩/٢٠١٤
- h) Setting up a technical commission of The National Committee of Disabled Persons Welfare (NCDPW) under Ministerial Decree No. ١٩٣/٢٠١٥ of ٨ December ٢٠١٥, and the abolition of the former sub-committees.
- i) Appointing a representative of persons with disabilities in the Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) by Royal Decree No. ٢٤/٢٠١٦.
- j) The adherence of Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) to The National Committee of Disabled Persons Welfare (NCDPW) in ٢٠١٦.

k) The adoption of Government agencies concerned with persons with disabilities in the Sultanate of professional development programs for workers in the field of education, rehabilitation and training of persons with disabilities.

-At the Legislation level: The Omani legislator has worked to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are enshrined in a number of laws, such as:

(A) The Shura Council Elections Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. ٥٨/٢٠١٢ guaranteed the rights of citizens to vote and stand for election to the Shura Council without discrimination based on disability.

(B) The new Oman's Penal Code promulgated by Royal Decree No. (٧/٢٠١٨) specifies an explicit clause on the penalty for the crime of carrying out acts such as rape or sexual molestation in Article ٢٥٧, thus ensuring the protection of children and girls with disabilities from sexual violence.

(C) The new Penal Code also provides measures to protect children with disabilities from "honor crimes", in particular from infanticide by the mother.

- At the rehabilitation programs level: The Sultanate has worked in the past five years, to expand rehabilitation services for persons

with disabilities, across all the provinces and all Wilayas, as it follows:

- a- Increasing the number of government rehabilitation centers (Al-wafa centers for rehabilitation of disabled children) to reach ٢٦ centers, which serve ٨١,٢% of beneficiaries within early rehabilitation programs.
- b. Increasing the number of special rehabilitation centers from ٧ centers to ٣١ centers with amounts to an increase of ٧٧,٤%.
- c. Opening the Diagnostic and Disability Assessment Unit at the Directorate General for Persons with Disabilities -The Ministry of Social Development in order to develop diagnostic, assessment and intervention mechanisms tailored to the needs of each case, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education.
- d. Implementing the vocational integration program through enrolling persons with motor and hearing disabilities in the vocational training centers affiliated to The Ministry of Manpower as well as training them in some professional fields with non-disabled peers.
- e. The joint national program work plan between the government of Oman and UNICEF, which will be implemented until ٢٠٢٠, will focus on integrated development, protection of children from violence and the integration of children with disabilities.

- With regard to equal opportunities, affirmative action in the area of education and employment and the encouragement of economic participation, Oman has taken the following actions:
 - a. The allocation of full scholarships in higher education institutions inside the country and abroad to ٥٠ persons in order to obtain Bachelor degrees.
 - b. By the end of ٢٠١٧, there were ١٧٥٢ students with hearing and mental disabilities enrolled in public-integrated schools.
 - c. By the end of ٢٠١٧ there were ١٠٩٥ persons with disabilities working in the public sector and ١٤٥١ persons working in the private sector.
 - d. The Sultanate of Oman established a number of mechanisms to support persons with disabilities in the economic field such as (Alraffid fund promulgated by the royal decree No. ٢٠١٣/٦ and the public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development) to be as a leading platform for Omani businessmen and businesswomen.
 - e. New specialized courses were introduced in vocational training centers for persons with disabilities that meet the demands of labor market.
 - f. Persons with disabilities reached senior supervisory and planning positions in NGOs, private and public sectors.

- At the accessibility level, Oman has taken the following actions:

- a. The National Committee of Disabled Persons Welfare (NCDPW) has approved in its meeting dated ١٤/January/٢٠١٨ the preparation of the Geometrical Specifications for the Integrated Environment of People with Disabilities Manual.
- b. In order to train the specialists and create an integrated environment for persons with disabilities, the Ministry of Social Development in cooperation with the International Rehabilitation Association for the Arab Region carried out a training workshop during the year ٢٠١٣ for employees and interested persons working in public and private sectors, NGOs and consulting firms regarding the implementation of Article ٩ of the Convention.
- c. With the view of identifying what is new in the field of information and communication technology and presenting international experiences, the Sultanate of Oman, represented by Sultan Qaboos University and Omani National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, in cooperation with the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) and Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) organized the Sixth Scientific Conference on Information and Communication Technology and Access for Persons with Disabilities during the period ١٩-٢١ December ٢٠١٧.

- At the community participation level: the Sultanate of Oman has taken the following actions:
 - a. The National Committee of Disabled Persons Welfare (NCDPW) approved a program "taf'eel" aimed at reinforcing the role of the administrative system in the State towards persons with disabilities. In order to achieve this, a workshop was held during the period from 9 to 13 April 2017 with the participation of 40 agencies to observe and monitor the respective roles of each institution in accordance with the articles of the Convention.
 - b. A panel discussion was held from 23-24 January 2018 in the area of disability with the participation of 60 persons representing NGOs, private and public institutions as well as representatives of persons with disabilities. Therefore, the initial national report, the new Persons with Disability Law, the responses to list of issues related to the initial national report and the section of person with disability on Persons with Disabilities' strategy were reviewed.
 - c. Conducting periodic meetings since 2011 until now for NGOs, public and private rehabilitation centers, in cooperation with specialists in the field of disability, in the purpose of reviewing the efforts undertaken and presenting challenges and consultation on solutions and proposals.

d. Workshops were held to introduce the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in partnership with UNICEF, to ٢٩٧ participants over a period of ٩ days in April ٢٠١٤.

Conclusion:

The Sultanate of Oman reiterates its commitment to keeping the esteemed Committee fully informed of the efforts deployed by the country in this important humanitarian sector. As a matter of fact, this task needs continuous efforts, as it faces some challenges that need to be addressed through the integration and partnership in the work between all sectors. In addition, among the most fundamental challenges are: early detection and diagnosis of disability that require further support; the lack of cadres working in the field of persons with disabilities; data and information on disabilities that have to be more accurate and accessible, along with the need for more financial resources.

My Government, through the next five-year plans, will seek to make a paradigm shift in the field of disability and ensure its advancement in all aspects of life. Furthermore, it will work to strike a balance between integrating the rights of persons with disabilities in public policies and targeting support in accordance with the needs of the individual through providing empowerment

services and removing community barriers with the view of integrating persons with disabilities in the society into all comprehensive development programs.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Honorable members of the committee,

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

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