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Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review

Bahrain *

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Introduction

1. The Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), established in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 of 18 June 2007, held its first session from 7 to 18 April 2008. The review of Bahrain was held at the 1st meeting held on 7 April 2008. The delegation of Bahrain was headed by H.E. Mr. Nizar Albaharna. For the composition of the delegation, composed of 31 members, see appendix below. At its 6th meeting held on 9 April 2008, the Working Group adopted the present report on Bahrain.

2. On 28 February 2008, the Human Rights Council selected the following group of rapporteurs (troika) to facilitate the review of Bahrain: Slovenia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka.

3. In accordance with paragraph 15 of the annex to resolution 5/1, the following documents were issued for the review of Bahrain:

- (a) A national report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 (a) (A/HRC/WG.6/1/BHR/1);
- (b) A compilation prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in accordance with paragraph 15 (b) (A/HRC/WG.6/1/BHR/2);
- (c) A summary prepared by OHCHR, in accordance with paragraph 15 (c) (A/HRC/WG.6/1/BHR/3).

4. A list of questions prepared in advance by Italy, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark and Finland was transmitted to Bahrain through the troika. These questions are available on the extranet of the Universal Periodic Review.

I. Summary of the proceedings of the review process

A. Presentation by the State under review

5. At the 1st meeting, on 7 April 2008, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, Nizar Albaharna, presented the national report of Bahrain. Bahrain was deeply committed to human rights and at the forefront of United Nations reform efforts that led to the creation of the Human Rights Council and the UPR. It welcomed its selection, by drawing of lots, as the first State to undergo the review, and regards this as a privilege and a responsibility. The strength and size of its delegation is one indicator of how seriously it takes the UPR. The national report has been prepared through a process that sought the full involvement of the country, and civil society has been consulted in the process of its preparation. Bahrain had also developed a media and communications strategy to raise public awareness and encourage participation in all aspects of the UPR process.

6. Bahrain then addressed questions raised in advance by some of the countries. It responded that (a) civil society had been consulted on the preparation of the national report; (b) the reform programme culminating in the adoption in 2002 of the National Charter confirmed the principles of equality, non-discrimination and the rule of law and democracy; (c) the people of Bahrain enjoy equality before the law without discrimination, as manifested in the coexistence of different religions and other creeds; (d) public assembly is recognized in accordance with the law, however, if the meeting is non-peaceful or is harmful for public security, it would not be permitted; (e) that there is cooperation between Government and NGOs, and if NGOs or human rights defenders have a complaint, they have access to the judiciary in accordance with the law. Bahrain added that protecting society against terrorism does not affect human rights defenders as their action does not come under the definition of terrorism; (f) that freedom of the press is assured in accordance to the constitution and relevant laws. In addition a new draft law on freedom of the press is the subject of consultation; (g) that the Constitution guarantees equality between men and women; (h) that corporal punishment is prohibited in schools and a new draft law on the child interest is being considered; (i) that capital punishment, while in the book, is hardly applied as its application is limited to most serious crimes and usually is commuted to life imprisonment; (j) that migrant workers are protected by labour law and that female domestic workers are governed by the civil law in accordance with their contracts. A new draft law is being considered on this issue. The Government has taken several measures to prevent and punish possible violence or abuse of female domestic workers including adopting the law against trafficking in persons; (k) that a draft law on citizenship is being debated to avoid the negative effect which could result from not granting nationality to the children of Bahraini mothers who are married to non-Bahrainis; (l) that the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court was signed and Bahrain is in the process of studying the issue of ratification; (m) that a national human rights institution would be established soon, in accordance with the Paris Principles. The institutions which are already operating in a specific field are the Supreme Council of Women and the National Committee on Childhood; (n) that any proven cases of forced marriage will be dealt with in accordance with the law; (o) that Bahrain

has already pledged to considering those international human rights instruments which have not yet been ratified; and (o) that the Constitution provides for the full independence of the judiciary and ensures the equality of everyone before the law as well as judicial remedies.

7. Bahrain asked whether good practices and experiences could be shared in the areas of protecting human rights in counter-terrorism activities; preventing occasional abuse of freedoms of speech, expression, assembly and association to promote xenophobia, hatred and incitement to violence; and protecting and preventing violations of rights of children, women and workers.

8. The State had also formulated a draft action plan on implementing Bahrain's voluntary pledges to the Human Rights Council, its voluntary commitments contained in the national report and the outcomes of the UPR. Following the outcome of the present review, Bahrain will hold a national consultation to discuss ways of implementing the recommendations of the UPR and include them in the action plan. Bahrain is committed to monitoring and evaluating its implementation and will report annually thereon both to the Human Rights Council and at the national level.

9. Bahrain informed the Working Group of its draft action plan to implement its pledges, voluntary commitments and UPR outcomes. Bahrain informed also that in November 2007, the Cabinet approved the creation of a national human rights institution, which is expected to be formed during 2008. Bahrain is actively studying the need for a National Human Rights Action Plan. Bahrain committed to reviewing all existing international human rights instruments with a view to ratifying them as soon as possible. For this purpose, Bahrain will seek international cooperation and assistance to strengthen its capacities. Bahrain also reiterates its commitment to review existing reservations made upon ratification, with a view to ascertaining the feasibility of withdrawing such reservations. Thus, for example, Bahrain has already withdrawn its reservation to article 20 of CAT. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs created an Inter-Ministerial Task Force to study and make proposals to the appropriate authorities regarding ratification and national legislative incorporation of human rights instruments. These will focus on human rights treaties such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Conventions on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Protection of Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Convention against Corruption and the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, as well as on provisions of the Optional Protocol and declarations under treaties already ratified, such as articles 21 and 22 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and article 14 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). A further focus will be on incorporating treaty definitions of concepts such as "torture" and "racial discrimination" into national legislation. Having just ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Bahrain welcomed the dialogue about ways to provide effective remedies in cases of violations of human rights.

10. The Inter-Ministerial Task Force will further undertake monitoring of implementation of treaty obligations, develop specific implementation activities and strengthen capacities for implementation. Training on human rights for the police, law enforcement officials and the staff of other government ministries and authorities relevant to the implementation of such treaty obligations will be increased, as determined and directed by the Task Force. Bahrain had also pledged to ensure timely reporting under the treaties and to provide follow-up to concluding observations of the treaty bodies.

11. As regards cooperation with special procedures, Bahrain committed to responding in a timely manner to requests for country visits or for requests for information by mandate holders and is examining the feasibility of extending a standing invitation approach to all special procedures, beginning with a case by case approach to individual special procedures. Bahrain will also follow up, in a timely and effective manner, on the findings and recommendations of special procedures of particular relevance to Bahrain. Bahrain also committed to participating in various United Nations organs, as well as continuous and effective participation in Global Conference follow-up/periodic review processes, including the forthcoming Durban Review Conference. Starting with a regional seminar on UPR experiences during the year 2008, Bahrain will foster regional cooperation with the Human Rights Council and will work to integrate human rights considerations in regional processes such as the Forum for the Future.

12. The draft law on NGOs will be fast-tracked for enactment and its implementation will be monitored and reported on annually. Bahrain also pledged to adopt a human rights-based approach to development and hold workshops and seminars on human rights to increase public awareness.

13. Regarding the rights of all workers in Bahrain, inspection of workers' housing will be intensified, ensuring its suitability from the humanitarian, health and security aspects. Work will commence to monitor and regulate the private sector with regard to the human rights of workers, especially in respect of their housing. The protection of the rights of domestic workers will be enhanced, especially foreigners or women.

14. Bahrain's legislature will be presented with the issue that domestic law continues to lack a definition of racial discrimination that embodies the terms set out in article 1 of ICERD.

15. Even though cases of torture do not exist in Bahrain, Bahrain constantly strives to improve the performance of law enforcement personnel in this area, including by requesting United Nations assistance in further developing human rights educational curricula, as well as in holding workshops on human rights.

16. Bahrain is in the process of implementing the articles of its new anti-trafficking law and developing its campaign against trafficking in human persons. Campaigns against trafficking in human persons and on empowerment of women will be monitored and reported on at six-monthly intervals.

17. The Ministry of the Interior stresses its continuous commitment to ensuring that peaceful and lawful assemblies and gatherings take place free from unlawful interference. A programme of human rights education will be developed, directed both at law enforcement officers and at civil society organizations to explore the possibility of developing a voluntary code of conduct and behaviour applicable to all present at lawful assemblies and gatherings to ensure full compliance with the rule of law.

B. Interactive dialogue and responses by the State under review

18. During the ensuing interactive dialogue a number of delegations welcomed Bahrain for its commitment and positive and highly constructive approach toward the UPR process, as illustrated, inter alia, by the attendance of a large delegation. Bahrain was also welcomed for the preparation of a report of high quality and civil society participation in the preparation thereof. Statements during the interactive dialogue were made by 36 delegations.
19. On behalf of the Arab Group, Palestine noted achievements in the area of human rights and welcomed that Bahrain had prepared in a democratic manner for the UPR review, including through wide participation. Palestine further welcomed the establishment of a human rights administration, even before the UPR mechanism had been established, reflecting Bahrain's commitment to the UPR mechanism. It further highlighted the number of voluntary commitments undertaken by the country. It also noted that Bahrain was ranking among the 40 countries with a progressive human development, despite its geographic position and condition, as well as its shortage of resources. Palestine suggested that the example of Bahrain could set an Arab standard, which has set an example to all.
20. India congratulated Bahrain for the cooperative, open and positive approach during the preparation of the review. India welcomed the assertion by Bahrain of its commitment to democratic and pluralistic principles and to respecting human rights. India inquired about the status of a legislative proposal to establish a national human rights institution and offered further bilateral cooperation in this regard. Furthermore, India asked for details about steps already taken as well as those planned, which could favourably impact on the condition of foreign workers.
21. Congratulating Bahrain for its national report, Pakistan suggested that the involvement of stakeholders and the setting up of a hotline should be replicated in other countries. Pakistan noted with appreciation efforts undertaken in the area of human development, to improve labour policies and the close cooperation with ILO and UNDP. Freedom of expression has been encouraged and the number of newspapers and media outlets has increased. It also noted Bahrain's efforts to enhance the situation of women in society, as well as women's increased political participation. Pakistan invited the delegation to comment on how these series of steps regarding the advancement of women were perceived by the citizens. It also asked about plans to synthesize the good work and to replicate the good consequences in comparable circumstances elsewhere.
22. Qatar welcomed the decision to establish a national human rights institution, adopted in 2007. It noted with appreciation the decision of the House of Representatives in 2005 to integrate a special course in human rights and democracy into all school curricula, as well as recent free elections and women's right to vote. Qatar invited the State under Review to provide information on human rights institutions Bahrain was planning to establish in the governmental or civil spheres.
23. Tunisia referred to the national association of journalists, who had received an international award. Noting with appreciation Bahrain's progress in the area of audiovisual media, Tunisia asked how the country intended to adapt to international developments in this area.
24. The United Arab Emirates welcomed the constitutional reform undertaken, which had required an in-depth study of the situation of human rights, and requested further information about efforts to give a higher profile to women.
25. Saudi Arabia welcomed a number of achievements, such as political will to ensure the implementation of international commitments, the renaissance of economic, social and cultural rights and efforts undertaken in the area of health, education and the situation of women. It also noted guarantees in the area of the media and journalism to ensure openness, tolerance, constructive criticism and appropriate judicial and non-judicial guarantees. Saudi Arabia wanted to know more about the cooperation of the country with relevant organizations such as ILO.
26. Turkey welcomed Bahrain's cooperation with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and noted that there were no requests for follow-up visits. It suggested that Bahrain should be acknowledged for its draft national action plan and the relevant high-level steering committee. It also noted Bahrain's campaign against human trafficking, and its participation in the preparation for the Durban Review Conference and welcomed Bahrain's consideration of the Convention on Migrant Workers. Turkey encouraged Bahrain to maintain active cooperation with the Human Rights Council and stakeholders.
27. Malaysia noted Bahrain's continuous commitment to enhance human rights, which began with the reform process in 2001. Malaysia was impressed by the action taken to meet the voluntary pledges, such as ratification of ICCPR and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the withdrawal of the reservation to article 20 of CAT. It further noted with appreciation achievements in the area of health, education and human and social development. Malaysia wanted to hear about efforts in promoting cultural education and raising human rights awareness.
28. While noting progress in the area of human rights, Algeria indicated that the UPR exercise must be an objective one, taking account of historical or cultural specificities. Algeria noted progress with regard to rights of children and women following the adoption of respective laws and encouraged Bahrain to continue to make progress.
29. In response to a number of questions, Bahrain reiterated its commitment to the protection of human rights and expressed hope for an increased cooperation with the international community in the area of human rights. With regard to the establishment of institutions, Bahrain noted that the Cabinet had passed a decision on the establishment of a national human rights institution in 2007, which hopefully would be formed during 2008. Referring to the rights of workers, it noted that a draft action plan reflected some of the issues to be supported and strengthened, such as intensifying the inspection of the workers' housing situation, and highlighted ongoing coordination with existing bodies in the area of workers' rights. Bahrain also referred to the law on unemployment insurance, which applied to both Bahrainis and non-Bahrainis. With respect to the dialogue in the country, Bahrain reported that it was received favourably by the community, and stressed that the process of the preparation of the State report had provided an opportunity to interact with all stakeholders who had provided comments both through a website as well as the press. Bahrain indicated that the

major problem is spreading awareness of human rights as a process. Furthermore, Bahrain informed about the Supreme Council of Women, which had been set up to ensure the rights of women, equality between men and women, as well as women's participation in human development. Relevant activities were being implemented in cooperation with civil society. A focus on action, decisionmaking and economic, social and cultural rights would ensure a better standard of living for women, through the active participation of women in this process. Bahrain emphasized that Islamic Sharia ensures the dignity of women.

30. Libya welcomed significant achievements, such as in the area of freedom of expression, the rights of prison inmates, a training programme on human rights and democratic principles, a successful campaign against illiteracy, and efforts to protect all workers, including foreign workers.

31. Noting the impressive economic and social indicators, Cuba invited Bahrain to provide more information on the "schools for the future project", which focuses on modern information technology as well as on cooperation with civil society, including during the preparation of the national report.

32. Slovenia asked the following questions which could lead to recommendations: how had Bahrain tried to achieve a gender perspective in consultations for the preparation of the national report; and what was being planned for the next stage, including the outcome of the review. Slovenia recommended that reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) be removed, that the Optional Protocol be ratified and that national legislation be harmonized with the Convention. Bahrain was invited to inform about plans in this regard.

33. China welcomed Bahrain's efforts in the area of judicial reform and the setting up of institutions to provide institutional guarantees. China asked how Bahrain will implement measures to create jobs and what difficulties they foresee.

34. Sri Lanka noted with optimism Bahrain's efforts to balance a number of challenges, such as political stability, social development, protection from terrorist threats with the protection and advancement of human rights. Furthermore, Sri Lanka noted with appreciation a reference to a UNESCO report indicating Bahrain's high rate of primary school enrolment, as well as an equally encouraging UNDP report documenting a decree that human rights education be taught in schools.

35. Switzerland welcomed the importance Bahrain's report placed on the recommendations of treaty bodies and special procedures, as well as the fact that each chapter was introduced by voluntary commitments. It recommended that a non-discriminatory family code which, according to UNDP had been drafted in 2005, be adopted and enter into force without delay. It was further recommended that an extensive information campaign be undertaken once the code was adopted. In the context of women migrant workers, Bahrain was invited to provide details on measures taken to guarantee the rights of foreign female domestic workers; and in particular about any measures to remedy the fact that this group was explicitly excluded from the labour laws for the private sector.

36. Bangladesh was encouraged by Bahrain's willingness to review its legal framework applicable to migrant workers; and welcomed plans in regard to the establishment of a national institution.

37. Bahrain noted several special measures for the protection of female migrant workers, including the establishment of a home to shelter victims of violence, which provides several services, and the setting up of a hotline for any kind of violence against domestic workers. Bahrain also discussed a law on the protection of victims of violence within homes, as well as of a special home for the protection of those who might be exposed to violence, including domestic workers, will soon be inaugurated. Bahrain indicated that it has been working on implementing CEDAW since ratification in 2002, to provide women full equality with respect to rights and obligations bearing in mind the Sharia. Family laws are based on Sharia; such laws are regulated in most Arab and Islamic countries in the same manner. Civil society is also working and participating in the process of encouraging the enactment of family law affairs in Bahrain, as well as awareness in universities and schools. With respect to trafficking, Bahrain has taken a responsible and realistic view of the problem, recognizing that it's a global problem. It listed certain measures taken to combat trafficking, such as participation in a conference on trafficking, accession to the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, the establishment of a 2002 inter-ministerial task force to address trafficking, which has been a source of many initiatives, the close cooperation with civil society in holding training and capacity-building programmes, the opening of a shelter to protect women who might be exposed to violence, provide health care, assistance and legal counselling. There is also a unit within the Ministry of Interior in charge of investigating cases of forced trafficking. Bahrain indicated that it is an observer at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and has worked closely in holding training and capacity-building programmes. Bahrain also noted the passing, last month, of a law banning human trafficking, including prosecution and providing resources, which contains a comprehensive definition of trafficking. Bahrain indicated that this law was hailed by IOM as a model for the region.

38. France raised the following issues which it indicated should lead to recommendations: (a) which measures were taken to strengthen the independence of the judiciary; (b) it requested more information on reforms with respect to forced marriage, particularly on providing assistance to victims of forced marriage; and (c) if Bahrain intended to sign the Convention on Enforced Disappearances.

39. The Russian Federation drew attention to Bahrain's request in its national report that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) undertake a programme for staff training of penitentiary bodies and asked the delegation of Bahrain for more information on this project. The Russian Federation also noted the draft law on the provision of citizenship to children where the father is not a Bahraini citizen, and indicated that it should be a priority when examined and should come into force as soon as possible.

40. The Netherlands was impressed by serious commitments taken by Bahrain regarding human rights defenders and the position of migrant workers, including women domestic workers. It invited and recommended Bahrain to keep the Human Rights Council informed of new legislation on this latter issue. The Netherlands firmly supported Bahrain's intention to move to a standing invitation to all special procedures, and asked whether the Minister could indicate which Special Procedures would be the first to enjoy such an

invitation. In this regard, the Netherlands recommended that Bahrain extend such an invitation to all special procedures as soon as possible.

41. Egypt noted difficulties faced by countries to ensure that legislation complies with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and requested information on this issue.

42. The representative of Sweden asked the following specific questions, indicating that they could be adopted as recommendations as well: (a) what measures are taken to ensure that the draft press law, which prohibits certain expressions of opinion and allows prison sentences to be extended in certain cases, is not unduly restrictive on freedom of expression; and (b) what measures are taken to ensure equality before the courts, including with respect to family law?

43. Sudan referred to Bahrain's human rights achievements, including medical care which has increased life expectancy; provision of clean water to all; the guarantee of first aid services; the issuing of Law No.1/2008 on the prohibition of trafficking; and providing decent housing to all. Sudan asked about efforts undertaken to implement CRC and its protocols to achieve human development.

44. Canada was struck by the innovative idea of using the Internet in the preparation of the report. It asked for more information on what Bahrain is doing to promote freedom of expression and association.

45. Mauritania indicated that Bahrain is moving toward increased compliance in areas such as health, education, women's rights and freedom of expression, and that Bahrain occupies a significant place in the human development index of the UNDP report, showing efforts to promote and protect human rights. In regard to the situation of women, Mauritania inquired about achievements in this area since 2001.

46. In its responses, Bahrain referred to significant progress with regard to freedom of expression, referring to eight newspapers and 66 publications reflecting the concerns of the population. An association of journalists was set up in 2003 to deal with the needs of journalists. Bahrain referred to modernizing legislation, particularly to ensure greater transparency, all with a view to ensuring constitutional rights. It also referred to considerable variety of the media, without interference of the State. TV and radio have undergone significant developments in regard to international programmes. Bahrain also submitted to the legislative authority amendments to its legislation in the area of freedom of expression. Bahrain indicated that article 104 of the Constitution provides for the independence of judges in their decisions and verdicts and in the exercise of their functions, also highlighting the fact that judges can only be removed, in accordance with the law and on the basis of judicial verdict, by Royal Decree.

47. Morocco indicated the great strides in the areas of democracy, state of the law and guaranteeing all human rights and fundamental freedoms, while respecting Islamic law, as stated in the Vienna Declaration. The policy of attaching as much importance to economic, social and cultural rights, as to civil and political rights, is manifested in the importance Bahrain attaches to the right to health, crystallized by a tenfold increase in its budget, as well as the promotion of the right to work as a fundamental right. Morocco asked Bahrain to provide statistics on coordination of the management of complaints between the Ministry of Interior and the royal *diwan*.

48. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland indicated that Bahrain has travelled a long way on the road to democracy since 1999 and welcomed the participation of the Shia political party, Al Wefaq, in the 2006 elections. This move towards democracy has been accompanied by an improvement in the human rights situation, particularly as regards civil and political rights. It also noted that there were no political prisoners in Bahrain. It hoped to continue regular bilaterals on press freedom, the elimination of discrimination, and all obligations under the ICCPR. It (a) requested details on steps taken to ensure that counter-terrorism legislation complies with the ICCPR; (b) asked whether Bahrain was willing to set a deadline to introduce its press law; (c) requested further information on equalizing parliamentary constituencies; and (d) recommended that Bahrain consider inviting the United Nations to a workshop on follow-up to the UPR.

49. The representative of Kuwait noted that Bahrain's report indicates the indivisibility of human rights, pursuant to the Vienna Declaration, and that Bahrain was granted the highest award of the United Nations HABITAT programme. It requested information on effective steps taken to widen and enhance freedom of expression and opinion in Bahrain.

50. In its responses, Bahrain indicated that the Ministry of Education has developed a new school subject dealing with citizenship, human rights and democracy, which is taught from primary school through to secondary school, and explains the content of relevant international human rights instruments, in particular the rights of children and women. There were also human rights subjects in all curricula. Bahrain also referred to a programme ensuring computer and Internet access, aimed at ensuring that coming generations can enjoy new technologies. Bahrain indicated that it ensures the settlement of any conflict related to the migrant workers through arbitration and/or the courts irrespective of gender or nationality. Bahrain added that there is a hotline to deal with violence against women domestic workers, and ongoing inspection of employment agencies and houses. Contracts are for a limited time, and the salaries of workers are clearly set out. Legislation also indicates that migrant workers can become union members without any conditions, and Bahrain referred to the law regarding unemployment benefits which are available if migrant workers lose their jobs. Bahrain also indicated that in the area of equality between men and women, it is always seeking to ensure and enhance the principle of equality without discrimination, and to enact laws to promote equality, for instance for retired women, or for those who decide to stay home. Bahrain referred to laws enacted to ensure maternity leave, to ensure integration of women, and to support those who choose to stay at home to be involved in convenient economic activity if they so choose. A law was also enacted with the aim of enshrining the equality between men and women in the State budget law.

51. Azerbaijan noted Bahrain's accession to relevant international instruments and the adoption of many important national laws such as the exercise of political rights, freedom of expression, political societies and social security. Azerbaijan also noted current Bahraini policy regarding assistance to unemployed people as well as the impressive record of educational and health services. Health services cover 100 per cent of Bahrain and the State provides free health care. It also noted that steps initiated by the Government, particularly the establishment of the Supreme Council for Women, create favourable conditions for women to participate actively in

public life of the country. According to the national report, it can be concluded that Bahrain includes human rights dimensions into all its relevant policies. According to Azerbaijan, Bahrain sets a good precedent for UPR and looks forward to benefiting from some of the useful practices in this regard.

52. Indonesia noted Bahrain's institutional framework for the rule of law which guarantees human rights, constitutionally protected human rights norms, distinct roles of the executive and the independent judiciary, and ongoing efforts to advance women's rights. Indonesia was also encouraged by national provisions for the protection of people with disabilities and expressed an unambiguous commitment to combating trafficking in persons. Indonesia sought clarification on what Bahrain currently considers as the greatest challenge in its long term strategies to take the promotion of human rights to the next level. In this regard, does Bahrain consider the role of national human rights institutions inseparable from its future endeavours to apply human rights norms?

53. Djibouti took note of efforts to expand the political space, including the new draft law of freedom of the press, and to future empower women. It also welcomed the establishment of a committee to deal with human rights issues and was encouraged with sound economic decisions that have improved health, education and housing. It asked Bahrain to elaborate on specific measures to address problems of unemployment.

54. Oman drew attention to the fact that Bahrain has taken concrete steps to ensure cooperation with human rights bodies. It noted that Bahrain's national UPR report proves that the Government has been constantly working to draft a wide-ranging human rights programme.

55. Jordan indicated that Bahrain has set a high standard and a model to be followed in the UPR process. Bahrain has taken giant steps in promotion and protection of human rights. Human rights can only be improved in a healthy environment, which is why Bahrain attaches importance legislatively (i.e. against discrimination) and institutionally to protect human rights. Freedom of belief and expression are sacred rights and Bahrain is known for support of pluralism and freedom of belief. Jordan requested more information on the way in which it has proceeded to guarantee monotheism and freedom of expression. While welcoming Bahrain's achievements, it called on Bahrain to follow the example of other countries, for instance in the area of impunity.

56. The United States of America appreciated the delegation's highly constructive approach, including concerning the role of civil society in the preparation of the reports. Bahrain's openness and constructiveness towards the UPR process is vital and deeply appreciated. The United States hoped to hear more in the future on the integration of the Shia in society, the impact of the 2002 constitutional reforms on human rights, and the situation of expatriate workers. The United States welcomed Bahrain's addressing these issues today and previously, and Bahrain's continued efforts towards improving its human rights performance.

57. Lebanon was most struck by Bahrain's education indicators, as illustrated in the national report and in the UNDP report. Education is compulsory and free to all in Bahrain. It requested information on what sorts of solutions have been found to guarantee this educational renaissance which has made this country an example to follow.

58. Yemen asserted the statement made by the representative of Palestine, welcomed Bahrain's efforts to promote and protect human rights and requested information about efforts invested by Bahrain to improve education in the country.

59. In response, Bahrain indicated that reforms initiated by the King and reflected in the adoption of the National Charter and the constitutional amendments have enabled women to participate actively in political life, including the right of women to stand for election and to vote. A broad range of laws were enacted to combat corruption; efforts were taken to regulate work in the home. All political societies agreed to the establishment of the Supreme Council for human rights. Regarding commitments under international human rights instruments, in addition to those already mentioned, Bahrain began to consider, as to the human rights instruments, with the view to acceding to such relevant instruments. Bahrain has also begun studying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as with the Convention on the Protection of Persons from Enforced Disappearance with the competent authority with the view to adopting relevant procedures. Bahrain highlighted that the judiciary is independent and that there is a separation of powers. The Islamic Sharia prohibits forced marriage. Bearing in mind the Constitution and relevant rules, there are two levels of legal reforms: (i) amended procedure of Sharia courts along with the establishment of Solidarity Fund for Women; (ii) the training of judges, lawyers and other jurists by the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs through the Institute of the Judicial Training in cooperation with other bodies such as the Association of American Bar. Bahrain also indicated that health is guaranteed to all residents without discrimination. On the issue of unemployment, Bahrain insisted that it must invest in its people, and that all reforms are based on truly human development. Although the number of unemployed people in Bahrain is small (7,000 people), Bahrain does not want this number to grow. The Government has established the labour market reform authority and a labour fund, with financial resources invested in training to cut unemployment and to improve living conditions of people, to ensure greater salaries and compensation, for Bahrainis and non-Bahrainis working in the country. In preparation for this dialogue and in the four years to come, the two guiding concepts were commitments and results. The concepts that will guide Bahrain in four years are achievements and sustainability.

II. Conclusions and/OR recommendations

60. The State under review considered the recommendations made during the interactive dialogue which are contained in section II B above, and agreed on the following:

1. A gender perspective be included in the planning of the next stages, including the outcome of the review (Slovenia).
2. Initiating a public campaign with the view to removing reservations to CEDAW, ratifying the Optional Protocol and harmonizing national legislation with the Convention. Bahrain was invited to inform about plans in this regard (Slovenia).
3. With regard to the recommendation of Switzerland reflected in paragraph 35 above, Bahrain can conduct wide consultations between different partners, in particular the legislative authority, with the view of adopting a family law.

4. Bahrain could consider signing the Convention on the Protection of Persons from Enforced Disappearance (France).
5. The draft law on the provision of citizenship to children where the father is not a Bahraini citizen would be considered a priority (Russian Federation).
6. With regard to the recommendation of the Netherlands reflected in paragraph 40, Bahrain would inform the Human Rights Council in the next review of Bahrain that will be held after four years on the status of adoption of new legislation on female domestic workers.
7. The draft press law ought not to be unduly restrictive on freedom of expression (Sweden).
8. Bahrain could consider inviting the United Nations to a workshop on follow-up to the UPR (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).
9. The positive dynamism of the information sector of Bahrain be recorded (Tunisia).
61. With regard to the other recommendations, the State under review offers the following comments:
 1. While independence of the judiciary is preserved by the Constitution and laws, efficiency and performance are the main areas that the judiciary and the Government are working to enhance.
 2. Forced marriage is a crime in the laws of Bahrain and is covered by the Criminal Code and the anti-trafficking law. Victims are entitled to remedies and protection in accordance with the laws of Bahrain.
 3. Bahrain would consider inviting special procedures in the future.

III. VOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS OF THE STATE UNDER REVIEW

62. Reference is made to the commitments made by the State under review in its national report to the UPR.

Annex

Composition of the delegation

The delegation of Bahrain was headed by H.E. Dr. Nizar Albaharna, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, and composed of 30 other members:

- H.E. Sh. Abdelaziz Al-Khalifa, Assistant Undersecretary for Coordination and Follow-up, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- H.E. Mr. Abdullah Abdullatif Abdullah, Ambassador, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Bahrain in Geneva;
- Dr. Shaikha Maryam Al-Khalifa, Deputy Chairwoman, Supreme Council for Women;
- H.E. Dr. Abdulaziz Hamza, Undersecretary, Ministry of Health;
- Mrs. Sameera Rajab, Member of Shura Council (Consultative);
- Mrs. Latifa Algaoud, Member of Nuwab Council (Representative);
- Mrs. Masooma Mohamed, Deputy President, Legal Affairs Service;
- Colonel Mohamed Buhamooda, Assistant Undersecretary of Legal Affairs, Ministry Of Interior;
- Sh. Muneera Al-Khalifa, Director of Referendum and Elections Department, Legal Affairs Service;
- Dr. Yusuf Abdulkarim, Director of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- Mr. Osama Alofi, Director of Public Prosecutions, Ministry of Justice And Islamic Affairs;
- Mr. Ali Alaradi, Counsellor of the Minister On Legal And International Affairs, Ministry of Information;
- Mr. Ali Jasim Alardi, Director of Information Systems, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- Mr. Abdullah Aljowder, Head of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Social Development;
- Mrs. Suha Ali, Director of the Secretary-General Office, Supreme Council of Women;
- Mrs. Nadia Alqahiri, Acting Director of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Labour;
- Dr. Ibrahim Ali Badawi Elsheikh, Legal Counsellor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

Mr. Khalid Alkhaja, Senior Specialist, Ministry of Education;
Captain Rashed Bunajma, Adviser, Legal Directorate, Ministry of Interior;
Mr. Khalifa Alkaabi, Minister Plenipotentiary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
Mr. Yasser G. Shaheen, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Bahrain in Geneva;
Ms. Muna Radhi, Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of Bahrain in Geneva;
Mrs. Arwa Ebrahim, Second Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
Mr. Mohamed Al-Haidan, Second Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
Mr. Bader Al-Helaibi, Second Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
Mr. Khaled Almansour, Second Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
Mr. Hamad Sayyar, Third Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
Ms. Latifa Al Khalifa, Third Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
Mr. Ammar M. Rajab, Third Secretary, Permanent Mission of Bahrain in Geneva.

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