

UPR MONITOR

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Overview	1
General information on the United Arab Emirates	1
Information submitted to the Working Group	1
Interactive dialogue.....	2
Presentation by the State	2
Themes and issues	2
Adoption of the report	4

Overview

The delegation of the United Arab Emirates(UAE) was headed by Dr Anwar Muhammad Gargash, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. Mr Gargash provided detailed information about the policy and programmes that aim to protect and promote human rights in the country. He was well prepared for his presentation during the session and answered the questions thoroughly. However, there were remarkably few critical questions and recommendations, as most States that took the floor had purely laudatory comments for the UAE.

General information on the United Arab Emirates

- UAE is not a member of the Human Rights Council.
- The members of the troika for the examination of UAE were Indonesia, Argentina, Cameroon.¹
- According to the state report, all national stakeholders were invited including NGOs, civil society organisations, human rights and journalists to review the initial draft of the report and make suggestions and recommendations for the final version.

Information submitted to the Working Group

¹ UAE requested that a member of its regional group be among its troika. There were no objections by UAE or by the members of the troika to the selection. For a full summary of the selection of troikas, see ISHR's *Daily Update* of 8 September 2008, available at www.ishr.ch.

The **national report**² of UAE focuses on different national programs that protect and improve human rights and its obligations in this regard. The report focuses particular to women's rights, migrant workers, death penalty, civil rights, political participation and social security. The State acknowledges the major challenges its is facing. It claims that different measures are being taken to address the issues.

The OHCHR **compilation of UN information**³ focuses on: establishing national human rights institution, a national plan of action for child rights, discrimination against women, corporal punishment at home, curriculum and teaching methodology reforms, discrimination against migrant workers and refugees.

Seven non-governmental organisations (NGOs) submitted information for the OHCHR **summary of stakeholders' information**.⁴ The concerning issues in the information were about equality and non discrimination, the death penalty,⁵ the rule of law,⁶ freedom of movement,⁷ freedom of religion,⁸ rights to social security,⁹ issue of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.¹⁰

Interactive dialogue¹¹

Presentation by the State

Mr Gargash provided a comprehensive presentation focusing on major achievements in the country during the past years. He mainly highlighted the issues of women rights, child education, the issue of stateless people, migrants' workers rights related to social, economic, civil and political rights, women empowerment, and educational development. He stated that the Government has to legislate according to its Islamic and the social values in the country, keeping the view to protect human rights at all level.

Themes and issues

During the interactive session many States appreciated and applauded the UAE's efforts in promoting and protecting human rights.

Child rights were one of the main themes. Some States asked questions about issues related to women's rights and child rights, and the living conditions of migrant's workers.¹² Venezuela asked as to what steps are taken towards ensuring primary education for all, while Kuwait appreciated the efforts made in the development of children's education. Bahrain asked what steps are taken to stop child employment while Djibouti appreciated the coordination of the UAE with UNICEF for its positive steps to end child camel racing. Many other States recommended that UAE take more concrete measures to stop this practice. Particular focus was put on the protection migrant children and their future.

² A/HRC/WG.6/3/ARE/1. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/PAGES/AESession3.aspx>.

³ A/HRC/WG.6/3/ARE/2.

⁴ A/HRC/WG.6/3/ARE/3

⁵ Alkarama for Human Rights.

⁶ Institute on Religion and Public Policy.

⁷ Mafiwasta.

⁸ Institute on Religion and Public Policy.

⁹ Mafiwasta.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch.

¹¹ Most statements made at the UPR Working Group can be found at <http://portal.ohchr.org/portal/page/portal/UPR>. Fill in the form at www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/form.htm to receive username and password. Audiovisual archives of the meetings of the Working Group 'webcast' are available at www.un.org/webcast/unhrc/index.asp.

¹² Sri Lanka, Finland, Mexico, Jordan, Turkey, Yemen.

Civil and political rights of migrants were the main theme of the interactive dialogue during the session. Many States including Cuba, Pakistan, France, India, Libya asked about health care facilities for migrant workers and their living conditions. China wanted to know if migrant workers were provided with adequate wages, housing, and other social services while Mexico was interested to know about protection mechanisms to safeguard the rights of undocumented migrant workers.

Women empowerment was another key theme during the dialogue. Jordan, Norway and the Philippines wanted to know about the rights of women, their political and civil participation since it was pointed out in the summary of NGOs reports that women have less access to education, political participation and they do not have a major contribution to decision making processes at the national level. Turkey appreciated the efforts made for gender empowerment in UAE, but recommended more effective steps to improve the protection of women and child rights.

Sweden and Norway recommended that the UAE consider additional policy measures to promote tolerance and non-discrimination on the grounds of **sexual orientation**. In this context, Egypt recommended that the UAE ‘continue to refuse to apply any standards which are outside agreed upon international human rights principles including any attempt to impose foreign values and customs on its citizens’.

Oman posed a question in regard to the welfare of the **aged people**, their health care facilities and what particular programmes the UAE has in place to ensure their social wellbeing. A number of States expressed concern about **capital punishment** in UAE and recommended the UAE abolish this practice.¹³

A number of States supported the UAE’s intention to accede to basic human rights instruments and made recommendations in this regard, in particular the Convention against Torture,¹⁴ the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),¹⁵ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).¹⁶

The UK welcomed UAE’s efforts to involve civil society in the preparation for their review and further recommended to continue dialogue with civil society in the follow up and implementation of this review. Other issues raised in the interactive dialogue included religious freedom,¹⁷ human trafficking,¹⁸ drugs,¹⁹ sexual harassment,²⁰ terrorism,²¹ freedom of expression including the blocking of web sites,²² and development of remote areas.²³

At the end of the interactive dialogue, the delegation expressed its gratitude to take part in the UPR. Mr Gargash said that the UAE is a young community and is doing its utmost to protect and promote human rights.

¹³ Italy, France, Spain, Chile, Albania.

¹⁴ Switzerland, Japan, Maldives.

¹⁵ Indonesia, Canada.

¹⁶ Japan, Switzerland.

¹⁷ Singapore.

¹⁸ Djibouti.

¹⁹ Italy.

²⁰ Italy.

²¹ Algeria.

²² Norway.

²³ Syria, Malaysia.

Adoption of the report

The Working Group adopted its draft report¹ on the UAE by consensus on 9 December 2008.²⁴ Indonesia, on behalf of the troika, expressed its satisfaction with the approach of the UAE to the UPR. It furthermore expressed its hope that the UAE will be able to take ‘positive encouragement’ from this experience and apply constructively all recommendations that enjoy its support.

For its part, the UAE pointed to its acceptance of a number of recommendations but also rejected others. Recommendations that did not enjoy the support of the State mostly relate to promotion of gender equality, abolition of the death penalty, and improving the situation of migrant workers.

²⁴ A/HRC/WG.6/3/L.7. States have two weeks to make editorial changes to the report.

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