

Statement by Her Excellency
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In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful,

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May God's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you.

It is a particular pleasure at the beginning of this meeting to convey, on my behalf and on behalf of the accompanying delegation, our warm congratulations to Ambassador Joachim Rucker on his assumption of the presidency of the Human Rights Council. We are confident that his wise management will contribute to strengthening the work of the Council. Congratulations also extended to your Excellencies Vice-Presidents of the Council. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation for the outstanding efforts exerted by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, under the direction of High Commissioner Prince Zeid bin Ra'ad.

Mr. President,

The first report of the State of Kuwait and the resulting recommendations have had positive effect on the reality of human rights in the State of Kuwait.

Although basic principles of human rights are enshrined in the constitution of the State of Kuwait and the laws issued in implementation thereof, those recommendations have led to progress in this field, whether in the laws and legislation system, or in policies and plans adopted by the State for the purposes of safeguarding, protecting and promoting Human rights.

Moreover, In spite of the negative regional variables, as well as the political and security unrest witnessed by the region surrounding the State of Kuwait, my country is determined to add more achievements in the promotion and protection of Human Rights.

Mr. President,

My country considers interactive dialogue as a process for exchanging views that can reinforce mutual understanding with the Working Group. Thus, the State of Kuwait seriously take into consideration all the issues related to the promotion and protection of Human Rights. For this reason, an expanded delegation of all state organs and institutions has come here to participate in this interactive dialogue. This reflects the seriousness and aspiration of the State of Kuwait to implement its obligations under the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism.

It should also be noted that the State of Kuwait, in seeking to follow-up on its international human rights obligations and commitments, has established a standing committee (working group) with the task of supervising and preparing all national reports on human rights and the follow-up. Therefore, the second report of the State of Kuwait has been prepared by all government agencies, in coordination and consultation with civil society and non-profit organizations... Hence, it is the result of joint effort of various state institutions, including parliament, to fulfil a number of goals, including the following:

I. National Human Rights mechanisms:

Since the previous review of the State of Kuwait before your distinguished Council in 2010, the executive and legislative institutions took the lead to establish national mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights that functions on the side of existing mechanisms.

At the forefront of these mechanisms are:

- The National Assembly's Committee for the Defence of Human Rights
- The Public Anti-Corruption Authority
- The Public Authority for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities
- The Public Manpower (Labour) Authority

- The Public Food and Nutrition Authority

Our second national report before you, provides the terms of reference of the mechanisms and their role in the promotion and protection of Human Rights.

I would like to highlight the fact that the executive branch has drawn up a bill to establish an independent human rights institution in a manner consistent with the Paris Principles. The executive branch has also drafted three bills emanating from our voluntary pledges or from recommendations received from your distinguished Council during the UPR of our national report in May 2010. These bills are:

- The bill of law on the Rights of the child
- The bill of law on the establishment of a Family Court
- The bill of law on Juveniles

These three bills of law were referred to the Parliament for approval.

II. Women's Rights and empowerment:

The State of Kuwait attaches great importance to women's Rights and their protection, which resulted in several achievements that have contributed to the promotion of women's Rights in recent years, including:

- The increase in labour market participation by Kuwaiti women during the period (2010 - 2013) up to 51% in the private sector and 45% in the government sector. The proportion of women in senior posts in both sectors has reached 20%.

- Establishment of the principle of equal pay between men and women for work of equal value in the private sector.

- Approval for employment of women in the judiciary, while it was previously limited to men only.

- Promulgation of a new law on public assistance in 2011 and its executive decree issued in 2013 concerning entitlement to, and assessment of, public assistance. This law aims at ensuring better standards of living for members of society, especially those with low-income groups such as Kuwaiti women married to limited-income non-Kuwaiti men, as well as to women over 55 years of age with no income and to married students. In 2013, the total amount of assistance granted to these categories amounted to more than 370 million USD.

- The Act no. (2/2011) has introduced amendments to the Housing Welfare Act. Housing requests from Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaiti men after they obtain the citizenship are now taken into account, in addition to granting them housing loans from the Kuwait Credit Bank.

- The State of Kuwait has included in its Development Plan 2015/2016- 2019/2020 objectives for the empowerment of women and enhancement of their capacities, by reviewing legislation related to women and supporting their empowerment in the community, as well as by suppressing discrimination against women through a joint committee of representatives from civil society institutions. This committee shall review existing legislation and propose amendments to ensure equality between men and women.

III. Rights of the child:

The Constitution considers the protection of children as a fundamental social principle, through which the integrity of the family is preserved and its ties strengthened (Article 9). As for children, the state is obligated under the constitution to protect them from exploitation and from moral, physical, and spiritual neglect (Article 10).

Based on the above, the state has continued its efforts in promoting the rights of children on both legislative and executive levels, and decided to raise their standard of living by issuing the new Public Assistance Act No. 12/2011 and decree No. 23/2013 concerning entitlement to, and assessment of, public assistance, as well as provide a suitable environment for children

that prepares them psychologically, socially and culturally for pre-public education, through the Private Crèches Act No. 22/2014.

The state has also drafted a bill of law on the rights of the child, a bill of law on Juveniles and another bill on family nursery. These bills, as a whole, ensure the creation of an environment based on respect and care for the child. Such environment shall induce better education for the child and prevents the risks of abuse, exploitation and neglect.

IV. Foreign workers:

Kuwait is one of those countries that attract foreign workers. The number of these workers is constantly increasing and has exceeded 1.496 million workers, in addition to domestic workers and workers in public sectors. In total, foreign workers mount up to more than two-thirds of the population, representing more than 164 different nationalities.

This increase in the number of foreign workers can be explained by the quality of the political and legislative environment, in addition to the respect of professional safety standards. The State of Kuwait has made sure during the review of its labour regulations that the new Private Sector Employment Act No. 6/2010 includes more rights and legal safeguards for workers, the details of which are included in our report that you have before you.

In this context, The Public Manpower Authority has been established under act no. 109/2013. This authority has the exclusive responsibility of bringing over foreign workers based on employers' requests to facilitate their transition and mitigate the influence of the employer on them. In addition to that, a permanent shelter was inaugurated at the end of last year to house foreign workers facing labour disputes. It provides health, social, psychological and recreational services to workers, whose rights were violated. They can stay there pending the settlement of their affairs with employers. The number of workers that have been harboured by this institution and had their situation resolved has exceeded 2,800 workers.

V. Addressing the situation of illegal residents

The State of Kuwait has been providing care to all of its residents, on the basis of its commitment to the principles enshrined in the constitution and by respect of international covenants. Therefore, the State of Kuwait is determined to provide a decent life for illegal residents, through the following legislations and procedures:

- Amiri Decree No. (467/2010) on establishing the Central Agency for Regularization of the Status of Illegal Residents.

- Ministerial Decision No. (409/2011) concerning the provision of facilities and services for illegal residents, to enable them to live in dignity through the following aspects:

- Medical treatment to illegal residents: Until the end of 2012, a total of 56,547 persons benefited from health care at a cost of 13,010,604 USD.

- Education to illegal residents: In the academic year 2014/15, a total of 15,105 male and female students were receiving education at a cost of approximately 16 million USD.

- Issuance of official documents to illegal residents, such as birth and death certificates, marriage and divorce certificates, succession certificates, passports and driving licenses.

- With regard to employment, the number of persons employed in the civil service up until March 2014 amounted to 1,419 men and women, and 630 in cooperative societies.

- Issuance of ration cards to illegal residents for foodstuffs on equal terms with Kuwaiti citizens. More than 98,384 persons are benefiting from this scheme at a cost of 2,387,464 USD.

- Care for persons with disabilities: the provisions of Act No. 8/2010 concerning the rights of persons with disabilities apply to illegal residents with disabilities without discrimination or exclusion.

In addition to that, illegal residents are entitled to housing welfare and social services. They also have the right to seek legal redress and enjoy public freedoms, etc.

VI. Promotion of Human rights:

As a result to the rapid evolution of the system of laws and concepts of human rights on the international level, and to keep pace with these developments, the State of Kuwait has been adamant to promote and disseminate the culture of human rights. For this purpose, it adopted a constructive approach to promote awareness by following these steps:

- A legislative amendment was introduced to the law of the Constitutional Court, which opened the way for citizens, in their personal capacity, to directly address this court to challenge the constitutionality of laws.

- In the education sector, human rights curricula are taught in general and higher education segments in the framework of the Arab Plan for Human Rights Education (2009 - 2014) and the Arab Plan for the Promotion of Human Rights (2010 - 2015). Teachers are receiving training in this domain and are regularly updated on human rights issues, and are provided the "Human Rights Education Manual", which is a booklet published in 2013.

- Train and educate workers in the judiciary and law enforcement, as well as prison supervisors, through scientific sessions in Kuwait and abroad in collaboration with international organizations concerned with human rights.

- In the same context, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has included in its development plan a major project that seeks to consolidate the concepts and values of human rights, through specialized training courses in collaboration with local and international agencies.

VII. Cooperation with Human Rights periodic mechanisms:

Mr. President,

Bound by the pledges it made, the State of Kuwait remains firmly committed to submitting its periodic reports to contractual bodies. During the period that followed the review of its first periodic report in 2010, the State of Kuwait submitted the following reports:

1. The second periodic report to the Committee against Torture in May 2011.
2. The third and fourth periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in October 2011.
3. The second periodic report to the Human Right Committee in October 2011.
4. The fifteenth to the twentieth periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in October 2012.
5. The second periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in September 2013.
6. The second periodic report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in November 2013.

Furthermore, the third periodic report was submitted to the Human Rights Committee in November 2014. The State of Kuwait will submit in 2015 the third periodic report to the Committee against Torture in June, the fifth and sixth periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in October, and the first periodic report to the Committee on Rights of Persons with Disabilities in September.

With regard to request by the special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery to visit the country during the period from January to March, the State of Kuwait has welcomed her visit.

The State of Kuwait has also welcomed the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, who submitted a request to visit Kuwait last November. However, the internal commitments in the state at that time have prevented that visit from taking place until now, as the concerned parties were engaged in commitments related to Kuwait's presidency of the GCC Summit, the Arab Summit, as well as the African-Arab Summit. The permanent Mission in Geneva will take the necessary measures to agree with the Special Rapporteur on a date for this visit acceptable to both parties.

VIII. Humanitarian assistance:

Mr. President,

The State of Kuwait has established consistent principles for providing humanitarian assistance to peoples of disaster-stricken countries and to poor nations. It has relied on guiding instruments that can assess the real humanitarian needs of these countries, bearing in mind that human rights issues cannot be divided.

This philosophy was summarized by H.H. the Amir when he said, and I quote: "since gaining its independence, the State of Kuwait had followed a consistent approach in its foreign policy, based essentially on the need to render humanitarian assistance to all needy countries, regardless of their geographic location, religious beliefs or ethnic composition...and that, in keeping with its firm faith in international partnership and the importance of activating global efforts to maintain and preserve the quintessence of life itself, namely the human spirit". End of quote. The national report that you have before you refers to some of the humanitarian contributions undertaken by the State of Kuwait, thus entrenching these principles.

Thus, we recall the complex humanitarian challenges in the world, which have emerged as a result of many natural disasters due to climate change, as well as the outbreak of many ongoing acute conflicts in many regions of the world, especially in the Middle East. These conflicts have resulted in high numbers of displaced persons and refugees that are unprecedented in modern history, affecting several human rights issues. Therefore, this

situation calls for synergy and cooperation more than ever before in order to overcome these humanitarian disasters in which peoples are living, particularly the Syrian people.

The State of Kuwait has not spared any effort to ease the humanitarian crisis in which refugees and displaced persons from the brotherly people of Syria are going through. It is aware of their suffering, especially the elderly and the children, who are exposed to the harsh winter conditions. For these reasons, His Highness Amir has accepted the appeal of His Excellency the Secretary General of the United Nations to host the third donor conference to assist the Syrian people in the State of Kuwait on 31 March of this year. We hope that this conference will achieve its objectives, support the strenuous efforts of countries that host refugees and meet the United Nations humanitarian appeal of 8.4 billion dollars to support the humanitarian situation in Syria. I would like to take this opportunity to launch a humanitarian message and urge you to participate and contribute to this humanitarian conference, which deals with the core of international human rights issues.

It should be recalled that the State of Kuwait did not hesitate in accepting the requests of the United Nations to host the last two donor conferences for the relief of the Syrian people in 2013 and 2014. The international community succeeded, back then, in raising 3.9 billion dollars, of which 800 million dollars were contributed by the State of Kuwait and paid in full to the United Nations relief bodies.

Accordingly, as a token of the international community's appreciation for the State of Kuwait's important humanitarian role in helping disaster-stricken countries, H.H. the Amir, may God preserve him, was granted the title of "humanitarian leader" by the Secretary General of the United Nations on 9 September 2014, and the State of Kuwait was considered a "humanitarian hub". In parallel, H.H. the Amir was also granted awards and certificates of appreciation by many international humanitarian organizations, including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Organization for Migration and UNICEF. These awards came in appreciation to The Amir's outstanding humanitarian efforts and the important role

played by the State of Kuwait through UN agencies and humanitarian organizations in many parts of the world.

Mr. President,

The second national report of the State of Kuwait reflects its tireless efforts to promote and preserve human rights. We do not pretend it is perfect or exemplary, but it represents a sincere desire to comply with the provisions of international human rights conventions and instruments ratified by the State of Kuwait.

We are fully aware that human rights issues are evolving and changing. Consequently, they always require more efforts in order to be guaranteed, preserved and enjoyed. We are aware of the responsibility of the state in this regard. The State of Kuwait will tirelessly pursue its endeavours to further promote human rights, in conformity with our national plans and objectives and our Arab and Islamic heritage, to create a world order dominated by love and peace.

In conclusion Mr. President,

We look forward today to discuss the report and to listen to your precious comments, stressing my full readiness to participate with members of the accompanying delegation in an interactive dialogue, and hoping that I have answered some inquiries. The members of the delegation will answer other inquiries through the interactive dialogue. I would like to assure you that The State of Kuwait is committed to work towards the protection, promotion and preservation of human rights at the national level, and contribute to that at the regional and international level.

Allow me now, Mr. President to give the floor to representative of the Women affairs Committee at the Council of Ministers Mrs. Huda AL-Shayjeji to shed light on a number of issues pertaining to women rights.

May God's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you