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**NATIONAL REPORT SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH
PARAGRAPH 15 (A) OF THE ANNEX TO HUMAN RIGHTS
COUNCIL RESOLUTION 5/1***

Yemen

* The present document was not edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

1. Introduction

Since the establishment of a unified State in May 1990, the Republic of Yemen has adopted democracy and political pluralism as the basis of governance and as the building blocks of the State and society. Since then there has been a growth in political activity based on the Constitution, which guarantees all citizens without discrimination the inalienable right to participate in political, economic, social and cultural life. Human rights are synonymous with democracy; they flow from international principles that are based on the need to protect human dignity and freedoms.

Today, human rights issues are a Government priority. The human rights situation has developed in terms of both constitutional and legal guarantees and their application in practice, allowing governmental and non-governmental human rights institutions to step up their activities in support of citizens' rights and civil liberties. The political leadership reaffirmed the importance it attaches to this matter in 2003, when the President of the Republic took the unprecedented decision to establish an independent ministerial portfolio for human rights within the Government, thereby demonstrating the increasing interest in human rights issues in Yemen.

Based on its belief that democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interlinked, Yemen welcomes the resolution of the Human Rights Council and its new universal periodic review mechanism. The present report reflects Yemen's commitment to the new mechanism, and to cooperation with the international community in the context of the universal review of human rights in Yemen with a view to identifying both positive achievements and shortcomings, so that it can consolidate and build upon strong points and address and remedy weaknesses in the foreseeable future.

2. Methodology and drafting of the report

- Establishment in mid-2008, on the basis of a decision by the Prime Minister, of a national committee to draft the report composed of NGO stakeholders and representatives of the relevant government departments
- Preparation of a time-bound action plan to gather information for the report and to organize consultations with stakeholders and involve them in the drafting process
- Design of a website on the report to involve members of the community and professionals, and to obtain their comments and views on the report's priorities and content
- Sending of six members of the drafting committee to Geneva in 2008 to attend the first session of the universal periodic review so that they could benefit from the discussions and gain experience of the preparatory procedure
- Sending of some members of the drafting committee to Bahrain to attend the regional conference on the outcome of the participation of Bahrain, Morocco and the United Kingdom in the universal periodic review
- Invitation of an international expert to train members of the drafting committee in the methodology and procedures to be followed at each stage of the drafting process
- Organization of a workshop to discuss the final draft of the report and add supplementary material reflecting the observations and proposals made by the participating governmental and non-governmental organizations

- Posting of the report on the Internet to ensure broad public participation in the drafting process and to reflect people's views and comments on the content of the report
- Submission of the final report to the Human Rights Council for translation into the Council's working languages

3. Background information on the Republic of Yemen

The Republic of Yemen is an independent Islamic Arab State. It has a population of 22,052,656 and an area of 555,000 square kilometres.

Yemen has a democratic republican system of government based on the principle of separation of powers. The people are the holders and source of authority, which they exercise directly through referendums and general elections and indirectly through the legislative, executive and judicial bodies and local councils. The political system of the Republic of Yemen is based on multiparty political pluralism and on the rotation and peaceful transfer of power. The Constitution of the Republic of Yemen reaffirms the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the League of Arab States.

The judiciary is independent. The Supreme Council of the Judiciary ensures that the constitutional and legal guarantees in respect of the appointment, promotion, dismissal and removal of judges are applied in accordance with the law. It is chaired by the President of the Supreme Court. The country has a free market economy, which serves the interests of the individual and society.

4. The legislative framework for human rights in Yemen

(a) **The Constitution.** The Constitution explicitly sets forth a number of basic principles and guarantees for the promotion and protection of human rights, in particular the following:

- All citizens are equal in terms of their rights and duties (art. 41).
- The State shall guarantee equal political, economic and cultural opportunities for all citizens and shall enact the necessary laws to achieve that aim (art. 24).
- Every citizen has the right to participate in political, economic, social and cultural life. The State shall guarantee freedom of thought and expression of opinion in speech, writing and images within the bounds of the law (art. 42).
- Citizens have the right, provided that their actions are not contrary to the Constitution, to organize themselves politically, professionally and in trades unions, and the right to form scientific, cultural and social organizations and national associations to further the aims of the Constitution. The State shall guarantee this right and take all necessary measures to enable citizens to exercise it, and it shall guarantee the freedoms of political, trade union, cultural, scientific and social institutions and organizations (art. 58).
- The right of every citizen to vote and to run for office (art. 43).
- Every citizen has the right to vote and to run for office as well as the right to express his or her view in a referendum. The law shall regulate the exercise of this right (art. 43).
- The extradition of political refugees is prohibited (art. 46).

- The President of the Republic shall be elected by the people in competitive elections (art. 108 (e)).
- Yemeni nationality shall be regulated by law. No Yemeni may be deprived of his or her nationality. Once Yemeni nationality is acquired, it may not be withdrawn save by due process of law (art. 44).
- Criminal responsibility shall be personal. The principles of *nulla poena sine lege*, *nullum crimen sine lege* and non-retroactivity shall be observed. The accused shall be presumed innocent until proved guilty by a judicial decision (art. 47).
- Work is a right and an honour and is necessary for the progress of society. Every citizen has the right to engage in work of his or her choice within the bounds of the law, and no citizen may be compelled to perform any kind of work ... (art. 29).
- The State shall guarantee the personal freedom of citizens and safeguard their dignity and security. The law shall define the circumstances in which citizens may be deprived of their freedom and no one may be deprived of his or her freedom save by order of a competent court (art. 48 (a)).
- Citizens have the right to institute legal proceedings to protect their legitimate rights and interests, and the right to submit complaints, criticisms and proposals directly or indirectly to government bodies (art. 51).
- Residences, places of worship and educational establishments are sacrosanct and may not be placed under surveillance or searched save in accordance with the law (art. 52).
- The freedom and confidentiality of postal, telephone, telegraph and all other means of communication is guaranteed. They may not be placed under surveillance or inspected, their confidentiality may not be breached, and they may not be delayed or confiscated save in accordance with the law and by court order (art. 53).
- Freedom of movement within the territory of Yemen is guaranteed to all citizens and may not be restricted save in accordance with the law ... (art. 57).
- The State shall guarantee access to social security for all citizens, especially the families of war victims, in the event of illness, disability, unemployment, old age or loss of support, in accordance with the law (art. 56).

(b) **Domestic laws in force:** In addition to the constitutional provisions that guarantee equal citizenship as well as rights and freedoms to all citizens, Yemen has enacted laws to support those provisions and ensure that they are implemented in practice, in particular:

- The Offences and Penalties Act, No. 12 of 1994, which characterizes offences and prescribes appropriate penalties in accordance with the principle of individualized sentencing
- The Code of Criminal Procedure (Act No. 13 of 1994), which guarantees protection of the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Constitution, for which there is no statute of limitations, and lays down the rules governing pretrial proceedings (evidence gathering and investigation), trials and the enforcement of judicial decisions

- The Rights of the Child Act, No. 45 of 2002, which focuses on children, highlighting their special needs and emphasizing their best interests; the provisions of the Act are in conformity with those of the Convention on the Rights of the Child)
- The Welfare and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities Act, No. 61 of 1999, which identifies the special needs of persons with disabilities in all areas with a view to integrating them into society effectively and on an equal footing with other members of society
- The Juvenile Welfare Act, No. 24 of 1992, which guarantees special safeguards for juvenile offenders and ensures that measures consistent with their legal status are implemented with a view to their rehabilitation
- The Anti-Corruption Act, No. 39 of 2006, the purpose of which is to develop and strengthen the role of oversight and accounting agencies in order to detect financial and administrative irregularities and monitor public funds to ensure that they are used for financial and administrative reform
- The Prisons Act, No. 48 of 1991, which regulates prisons, provides for improvements in prison conditions, and enhances the role of prison officers while monitoring their implementation of stipulated rights and holding them accountable for any violations
- The Judiciary Act, No. 1 of 1991, which regulates the actions, rights and duties of judges and prosecutors, the conditions of their appointment and other procedures and issues related to the judicial system
- The Personal Status Act, No. 20 of 1992, which regulates family affairs, the rights and duties of spouses and children, and other family-related matters
- The Labour Act, No. 5 of 1995, which regulates the right to work, the rights and duties of workers, and the obligations of employers in the private sector
- The Civil Service Act, No. 19 of 1991, which regulates the civil service and the rights and duties of civil servants, providing for gender equality with respect to appointment, pay, promotion, training and leave entitlements, taking into account the situation of women
- The Press and Publications Act, No. 25 of 1990, which grants journalists the right to disseminate their ideas and opinions, the right to protect the confidentiality of their sources in accordance with the procedures and limits laid down by law, the right to obtain information, the right to make information available to journalists and the right to organize their work
- The Civil Associations and Institutions Act, No. 1 of 2001, the purpose of which is to promote the involvement of civil society organizations in development alongside the Government, to facilitate the exercise of the right of association and to regulate special procedures, rights and obligations
- The Cooperative Associations and Federations Act, No. 39 of 1998, which regulates the activities of cooperative associations and federations, gives them the right to exercise their rights and carry out their activities freely, and provides them with facilities to enable them to achieve their aims to the full

- The Nationality Act, No. 6 of 1990, which regulates nationality procedures in various circumstances
- The Political Parties and Organizations Act, No. 66 of 1991, which provides the necessary guarantees to enable political parties and organizations to operate freely and transparently
- The General Elections and Referendums Act, No. 31 of 2001, which deals with individual and party political rights and freedoms and the rules and procedures governing the exercise of such rights, and regulates the constitutional mechanism applicable to the administration of the electoral process
- The Trade Unions Act, No. 35 of 2002, which provides for the democratic regulation of trade union activities
- The Local Authority Act, No. 4 of 2000, which confers broad powers on local authorities in the governorates to ensure the decentralized administration of local communities
- The Demonstrations and Processions Act, No. 29 of 2003, which regulates peaceful demonstrations and processions, protects demonstrators and guarantees them the right to hold peaceful marches in order to express their views and convictions at any time and in any place
- The Social Welfare Act, No. 31 of 1996, which regulates the provision of financial assistance to the poor

5. Institutional mechanisms for the promotion of human rights

1. Government mechanisms

(a) The Ministry of Human Rights

The establishment of an independent Ministry for the protection and promotion of human rights represents the culmination of a series of previous efforts, beginning with the establishment of the first national committee which focused on civil and political rights. As work on human rights issues expanded, awareness of the importance of the principle of the complementarity and indivisibility of political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights grew. The Government then decided to establish the National Higher Committee for Human Rights, composed of members of major government bodies. This action was carried further by the decision to establish a separate and independent Ministry of Human Rights in 2003.

Although the Ministry of Human Rights is part of the executive branch, its organizational structure, tasks and functions are consistent with the Principles relating to the status and functioning of national institutions for protection and promotion of human rights (the Paris Principles) adopted by the Commission on Human Rights (now the Human Rights Council) in its resolution 1992/54 of 3 March 1992. The Ministry's mandate is to promote and protect human rights in coordination with the competent agencies and bodies and in partnership with civil society organizations engaged in promoting rights and freedoms, and to revitalize national mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights in keeping with Yemen's commitments under the international conventions, charters and covenants that it has ratified. Furthermore, the Ministry organizes unannounced visits to inspect custodial conditions and the state of prisons in general and to investigate any violations of the law.

(b) The International Humanitarian Law Committee

The Committee was established in 1999. It reviews the relevant legislation to assess its conformity with international humanitarian law and submits proposals for amendments to the legislation to keep pace with developments in international humanitarian law and for the adoption of plans and programmes to disseminate international humanitarian law, develop public awareness of the rights it enshrines and oversee its implementation.

(c) The National Committee for Refugee Affairs

The Government of Yemen has taken a strong interest in asylum issues because of its sense of humanitarian responsibility towards refugees. Yemen's concern is reflected in its accession to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. With a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention and the Protocol and establishing a national institutional mechanism for dealing with refugee issues, the National Committee for Refugee Affairs was established pursuant to Cabinet Decision No. 64 of 2000.

(d) Higher Committee to Investigate Prison Conditions and the Treatment of Detainees

The Committee was established on the instructions of the President of the Republic in early December 2000. It is chaired by the President of the Supreme Court and the Deputy Director of the Office of the President of the Republic and its members include representatives of a number of ministries and relevant bodies (Ministries of the Interior, Justice, Human Rights, Social Affairs and Labour, Public Health and Population, Education and Technical Education) and the Office of the Public Prosecutor. The Committee performs various functions, the most important of which are: investigating prison conditions and prisoners' problems and developing appropriate solutions, proposing financial assistance for destitute prisoners and their families, and conducting regular visits to prisons. Since its establishment, the Committee has succeeded in releasing a large number of prisoners who had served three quarters of their sentence, and has distributed the financial aid allocated by the President of the Republic annually for the release of destitute prisoners who have special victims' rights. In addition to its regular visits to penal institutions to ensure permanent oversight of the health, cultural and recreational conditions of prisoners, the environment in which they serve their sentence, and their rehabilitation so that they can be reintegrated into society after their release, the Committee investigates the factual situation and the legal procedures followed in respect of inmates' rights.

(e) The Civil Liberties and Human Rights Committee of the House of Representatives

The House of Representatives established this Committee to address citizens' complaints and grievances as well as human rights issues in general. The Committee reviews and examines draft laws and conventions relating to civil liberties and human rights. It also reviews, studies and monitors all issues relating to the protection of rights and civil liberties in accordance with the Constitution and the laws in force. Moreover, the Committee oversees relevant bodies to ensure that the laws on human rights and civil liberties are properly implemented and are not violated.

(f) The Human Rights, Civil Liberties and Civil Society Committee of the Advisory Council

This Committee performs various tasks related to the protection of human rights and civil liberties. It gives opinions and advice on the promotion of human rights, reviews and promotes the human rights enshrined in the Constitution and the laws in force, and expresses opinions on their

implementation and on the extent to which they are upheld in practice by government agencies and non-governmental organizations. In addition, it observes the activities and promotes the role of civil society organizations and advises them on how to surmount the difficulties that they encounter in the course of their work.

(g) The Higher Council on Women

The Council, which was established in 2000, was restructured by Republican Decree No. 125 of 2003 and its work was reorganized. It represents a significant step forward in the advancement of the status of Yemeni women and reflects the State's genuine interest in women's issues throughout the country. The Council is chaired by the Prime Minister and its members include a number of senior decision-makers representing governmental and non-governmental bodies. One of the Council's main functions is to incorporate women's issues in political, social, economic and cultural policies and in all integrated development plans.

(h) The National Commission on Women

The Commission was set up in 1996 by a decision of the Prime Minister and in response to the recommendations of the 1995 Beijing Conference. The decision assigned the Commission a number of tasks, the most important of which were: to propose and contribute to the formulation of policies, strategies and plans relating to women; to improve the situation of women in rural and urban areas; and to identify priorities for development projects on behalf of women.

(i) The Higher Council on Mother and Child Affairs

The Council was established by a presidential decree in 1991. It is chaired by the Prime Minister and its members include a number of ministers whose portfolios include mother and child affairs. One of the Council's most important tasks is to formulate strategies and public policies relating to mother and child affairs that are consistent with the Constitution, the laws in force and national human development strategies.

(k) The Local Authority and Civil Society Organizations Department in the Office of the President of the Republic

This Department was established to submit studies and proposals on strengthening the role of local authorities, to carry out the tasks and duties in respect of local community development assigned to it under the Local Authority Act, and to overcome difficulties and impediments. The Department also receives, studies and analyses complaints and petitions submitted to the President of the Republic by citizens, civil society organizations and other bodies concerning diverse issues relating to rights and freedoms and women's issues in rural and urban areas. The issues raised are regarded as a useful indicator, for assessment purposes, of any shortcomings or flaws in performance. The Department monitors action taken in respect of such complaints, proposes the necessary remedies and brings the most important complaints to the attention of the President.

(l) The Civil Society and Human Rights Department in the Office of the Prime Minister

This Department checks citizens' complaints addressed to the Office of the Prime Minister and forwards them to the competent authorities in accordance with established legal procedures. It monitors the action taken and notifies complainants of the outcomes. It also analyses trends in complaints, which facilitates the development of appropriate solutions that eliminate the causes. The Department refers serious complaints to the Prime Minister for appropriate decisions.

(m) The International Organizations and Conferences Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

This Department was established to serve as a link between international human rights organizations abroad and governmental and non-governmental organizations in Yemen. It handles all correspondence and follows up on human rights requests and appeals from Yemen's embassies abroad.

(n) Departments for the advancement of women in the provinces

Established pursuant to Republican Decree No. 265 of 2001, these departments carry out studies to ascertain the situation of women in local communities, submit proposals for various kinds of improvements and encourage women to participate in public life.

Voluntary commitments

- The Yemeni Government is studying a European Union initiative to establish an independent national human rights institution that complies with the Paris Principles, and has begun work on establishing a committee composed of representatives of the Ministry of Human Rights and the Office of the Prime Minister to study the feasibility of establishing such an institution in the foreseeable future
- The Yemeni Government is preparing a national human rights strategy in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

2. Non-governmental mechanisms

Since 1990 far-reaching developments have taken place in civil society as a result of the political and economic policies pursued by the State, which has stepped up its commitment to guaranteeing freedom for its citizens and their right to form political and civil organizations, creating an enabling environment for their programmes, broadening the scope of their actions and partnerships, and increasing the number of civil society organizations, cooperatives and trade unions to 6,000. The aims of these organizations overlap; they include social welfare, citizens' rights, human rights, environmental protection, the advancement of women, promotion of a civil society culture, upholding of the principle of citizenship, improvement of the situation of children, and other aims related to human rights and civil liberties. The State has promulgated a number of laws in response to these legal requirements.

The following are the most active non-governmental organizations in the field of human rights: the General Federation of Trades Unions of Yemen; the Teachers' Union; the Foundation for Civil Democracy; the Arab Organization for Human Rights; the Democratic School; the Human Rights Information and Training Centre; the Yemeni Institute for the Development of Democracy; the Yemeni Women's Union; the Civil Society Forum; the Sisters' Arab Forum for Human Rights; the Women's Study and Training Group; associations of human rights activists; the National Election Monitoring Organization; the National Commission for the Promotion of Freedoms; the Aden Centre for Human Rights.

Voluntary commitments

- The Government of Yemen is prepared to promote the principle of a broad partnership between the Government and civil society organizations in the area of human rights and to support their active involvement in the integrated development process

6. International and regional human rights commitments

(a) International human rights treaties

Yemen has ratified most of the international human rights treaties (conventions, covenants, instruments, declarations). It is a party to 56 treaties and has also signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The State agrees to be bound by these international treaties in accordance with its domestic legislation.

(b) Regional human rights treaties

Yemen was one of the first seven Arab countries to ratify the Arab Charter on Human Rights, pursuant to Act No. 45 of 2008 concerning ratification of the Charter.

Voluntary commitments

- The Republic of Yemen is committed to establishing an institutional mechanism to implement the recommendations of the universal periodic review and to deal with its findings in a responsible manner.

7. The human rights situation on the ground

(a) Harmonization of domestic legislation with ratified international treaties

The Government has set up a number of committees to study the current domestic legislation and propose appropriate amendments to bring it into line with the international treaties that Yemen has ratified and to eliminate any discrepancies. The following action has been taken under this heading:

- The establishment of a national committee pursuant to Prime Ministerial Decision No. 29 of 2004 to study domestic legislation and bring it into line with the international treaties that Yemen has ratified
- The establishment by the National Commission on Women of a team of legal experts to study domestic legislation concerning women and eliminate any discriminatory provisions that are incompatible with international treaties dealing with women's rights
- Appointment of two legal experts (one domestic and one international) to review legislation concerning children's rights and to propose amendments in order to strengthen such rights
- Establishment of a ministerial committee pursuant to Prime Ministerial Decision No. 69 of 2008 to review and discuss ways of implementing the recommendations of the Conference on Criminal Justice organized by the Ministry of Human Rights in cooperation with the Danish Institute for Human Rights in February 2008, with a view to bringing the legislation into line with international treaties and strengthening human rights in practice

The work of these committees and groups produced the following results:

- Amendment of article 90 of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps Act, No. 2 of 1991, concerning the employment of women in the diplomatic corps in order to permit a husband and wife to be appointed to different missions or a single mission

- Addition of an article to the Police Authorities Act, No. 15 of 2000, granting women the right to serve in the police force and to oversee the conditions of women prisoners
- Addition of two new articles to the Labour Act, No. 5 of 1995, as amended; the first amendment requires employers to take the necessary precautions to protect pregnant workers from any risk to their health or pregnancy and reserves their right to treatment or compensation; and the second requires employers to grant male or female workers a month's marriage leave with full pay
- Amendment of articles 45 and 47 of the Labour Act, No. 5 of 1995, as amended; article 45 grants pregnant women the right to maternity leave with full pay for a period of 70 days, prohibits the employment of working women during maternity leave and grants an additional 20 days of maternity leave in the event of a difficult birth or the birth of twins; article 47 prohibits employers from dismissing pregnant women during their maternity leave under any circumstances, and requires them to provide a place where women may pray and spend the work breaks required by law
- Amendment to the Social Insurance Act, No. 26 of 1991, by the addition of an article permitting a husband or wife to combine a retirement pension with a monthly salary
- Addition to the Nationality Act, No. 6 of 1990, of a new article guaranteeing Yemeni nationality to a Yemeni child of unknown paternity as well as the right of the child of a Yemeni mother and non-Yemeni father to nationality in the event of the parents' separation
- Promulgation of Act No. 23 of 2003 amending the Republican Decree enacted by Act No. 23 of 1991 concerning civil status and civil registration to ensure that births are registered and that birth certificates are issued free of charge
- Amendment of article 47 of the Personal Status Act, No. 20 of 1990, in order to grant women the right to request the annulment of a marriage in the event of a defect in the husband

(b) Yemeni women

- During the past 10 years Yemen has given considerable attention to increasing women's involvement in education, employment and public life and encouraging them to participate in decision-making
- Women have succeeded in attaining high leadership positions (see annex 1, List of leadership positions held by women)
- The Government has adopted a national gender strategy to promote women's political, economic, social and cultural advancement
- A tripartite programme has been implemented to raise awareness of concepts of labour and social justice among 12,000 women working in the private and public sectors
- A number of seminars, conferences and workshops have been held to raise community awareness of the importance of increasing women's involvement in public life and various areas of development

- Female enrolment rates in general and higher education have been increased through the provision of more accommodation for female students, payment of study fees for indigent female students, introduction of new fields of specialization at women's colleges and the establishment of women's summer and sports centres
- Women's departments have been established in all ministries and government agencies

Voluntary commitments

- Narrowing the gender gap in education and illiteracy
- Raising the indicator for Yemeni women's access to health care and services, facilitating their access to economic and environmental resources, encouraging their integration into the labour market and ensuring that they have greater access to loans to meet their needs
- Development of policies to create rural employment opportunities, launching of projects, and encouragement of capacity-building and higher levels of training for women in local communities
- Establishment of a national shelter for the rehabilitation of former women prisoners upon release and their reintegration into society

(c) Yemeni children

- The Rights of the Child Act sets the age of majority at 18 years, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Adoption of the National Strategy for Children and Young People.
- Establishment of centres for the care and rehabilitation of street children and child workers, and provision of facilities and resources for their reintegration into society.
- Lowering of the under-five mortality rate from 102 to 78 per 1,000 live births.
- Raising of the routine immunization coverage rate for quintuple and polio vaccines to 87 per cent.
- Protection of Yemeni children from the risks of child-smuggling; implementation of awareness campaigns to counter the smuggling of children to neighbouring countries in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); and equipment of a special centre in the Ministry of Human Rights to monitor cases of smuggling and to receive reports and complaints in this regard.
- In coordination with the Government, the Democratic School is overseeing the elections to the Children's Parliament. The political leadership follows these elections with keen interest, since they develop young people's awareness of the importance of political participation and opens up their minds to democratic thinking.
- The Government is paying increasing attention to the role of orphans and young people, and is providing them with appropriate educational and cultural tools and ensuring a calm and stable environment for their intellectual, physical and psychological development.

(d) Refugees in Yemen

- Refugees from the Horn of Africa enjoy all the rights enshrined in the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees
- The Yemeni Government, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Sana'a, has held a number of training courses for the competent authorities in the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice to raise awareness of the importance of comprehensive humanitarian welfare for refugees
- The Yemeni Government, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Sana'a, has conducted a nationwide registration programme for refugees

Voluntary commitments

- Continued humanitarian support for refugees from the Horn of Africa and provision of all humanitarian welfare requirements within the limits of available means
- An increase in the number of shelters for refugees in Yemen

(e) Action against corruption

- Being aware of the dangers that corruption poses to society and development, the Yemeni Parliament has ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption and has established an independent anti-corruption body composed of civil society organizations, academics and social figures known for their incorruptibility
- The Government has amended a number of domestic public fund management laws (the Financial Disclosure Act requiring all holders of public office to submit a statement of financial assets, the Anti-Corruption Act, the Investment Act, the Tenders and Auctions Act, the Levying of Public Funds Act)
- The national anti-corruption body has received a number of complaints about cases of corruption. After studying the files, it referred them to the Office of the Public Prosecutor dealing with public funds
- Yemen has signed up to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
- Comprehensive awareness campaigns have been conducted to counter corruption and to alert people to the dangers posed by corruption to society and development

Voluntary commitments

- The Government is committed to bringing any person involved in a corruption case before the competent judicial authority, regardless of his or her professional rank or status in society
- It is committed to supporting the higher national anti-corruption authority in discharging its mandate to the full

8. Cooperation with United Nations mechanisms

The fact that Yemen is serious about cooperation with United Nations mechanisms is demonstrated by the voluntary commitments to which the present report refers, which are consistent with Yemen's undertakings in its periodic reports to the United Nations treaty bodies. They confirm Yemen's sincere commitment to cooperating fully and transparently with the United Nations.

The following are some examples of cooperation with United Nations mechanisms:

- Commitment to submit reports to the relevant treaty bodies.
- Yemen received the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances in August 1998 and allowed it to meet government officials and the families of the victims. The Government also transmitted all available information and data to the Working Group, which announced that it would cease its investigations of all cases but one, in respect of which the information is currently being updated.
- A government delegation met with the Special Rapporteur on the question of torture in 2006 to respond to questions raised regarding torture-related issues; it also undertook to receive the Special Rapporteur's team when it visits Yemen at a future date.
- Yemen invited Ms. Anne-Marie Lizin, Independent Expert on human rights and extreme poverty, to visit the country in 2003.
- It also invited Ms. Asma Jahangir, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, and facilitated her mission by arranging a meeting with government officials, who responded to all her queries.
- Yemen has taken into account the recommendations and observations of the international committees.
- It has responded to communications from a number of special rapporteurs working for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (see annex 2, List of communications from special rapporteurs).

Voluntary commitments

- Implementation of all recommendations of international committees concerning the promotion of human rights in practice
- Continued submission of national reports to the treaty bodies by the due date
- Cooperation with the Human Rights Council in establishing a national mechanism to implement, over the next four years, the recommendations resulting from the universal periodic review

9. General measures and policies aimed at implementing civil and political rights

(a) The right to life

The increasing importance attached by the Yemeni Government to civil and political rights is reflected in action to bring national legislation into line with the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and measures to promote practical compliance with Covenant principles in practice. The Yemeni legislature has recognized the right to life as a core right from which there can be no derogation, not even in states of emergency, and has enacted legal measures to safeguard the Yemeni citizen's right to life and to protect people from arbitrary action by security and law enforcement agencies. Article 48 of the Constitution prohibits physical and mental torture, and there is statute of limitations in respect of torture. Moreover, coercion may not be used to obtain a confession during an investigation. Constitutional and legal provisions guarantee the right of everyone to liberty and security of the person. Nobody may be arbitrarily arrested or detained. In early 2008 the Government launched a national dialogue on "Criminal justice under Yemeni law". The participants discussed national legislation and made recommendations that will serve as the basis for practical action aimed at enhancing and protecting the right to life.

(b) The independence and efficiency of the judiciary

Yemen made considerable progress in enhancing the independence of the judiciary by separating the office of President of the Higher Council of the Judiciary from that of President of the Republic and by transferring it to the President of the Supreme Court under article 14 of Act No. 15 of 2006 amending some articles of Act No. 1 of 1991 concerning the judiciary. The Higher Council has thus become fully independent in financial, administrative and legal terms. A number of bills have been drafted with a view to strengthening the legal framework and the institutional and organizational structure of the judiciary and enhancing its efficiency (bill concerning commercial arbitration; bill amending the Code of Civil Procedure and Enforcement; draft implementing regulations to enforce the general provisions governing offences). These measures reflect the importance attached by the State to compliance with the Human Rights Committee's observations on Yemen's fourth periodic report submitted as a State party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in particular its recommendations to ensure that the judiciary is free from any interference, and concerning legal guarantees to ensure the security of tenure and promotion of judges as well as disciplinary sanctions procedures. In addition, many judicial reform measures are aimed at promoting judicial oversight of the work of judges, and at assessing the performance and modernizing the Higher Legal Service Institute and promoting its role in training qualified judges of both sexes.

(c) Democracy and elections

Political parties attach the utmost importance to electoral work in order to achieve the basic goal of their existence, which is accession to political power. With the establishment of democracy and political pluralism, which are expressed through diverse channels and mechanisms, political action has focused on elections (parliamentary, presidential and local elections), from which other patterns of political behaviour flow, since elections are the means whereby the wishes and demands of the population are channelled to the top levels of political decision-making authority.

General elections are an example of the right of everyone to participate in political life. The basis for participation has been expanded to cover the right to run for office in local council administrations in the governorates. The contemporary trend towards decentralization and the

exercise of authority at the local level is consistent with the democratic changes that have come about in Yemen since the beginning of the century. Local Authority Act No. 4 of 2000 brought about a qualitative transformation in the system of government, allowing Yemeni society to nominate governors, who were appointed under the previous system, lightening the burden on the central authorities, and broadening the basis for participation in decision-making. The inhabitants of the governorates and districts were given broader authority to run local economic, political and social affairs and to manage their investment budgets, and greater responsibility for implementing development plans and programmes. They were assigned a pivotal role in ensuring the success of the development process by monitoring the local executive authorities and ensuring their accountability. Elections are organized by a nine-member Committee representing the whole of the parliamentary spectrum so as to guarantee its independence and neutrality in the performance of its duties. The Committee is elected by Parliament from a list of 15 candidates and receives technical support from the European Commission and other international organizations who provide electoral oversight services and report on the elections. With a view to strengthening the right of political participation, a regional electoral training centre is currently being established. Action is also being taken to promote democratic concepts and incorporate them in educational curricula, thereby raising public awareness of the democratic process and electoral practice. Work has begun on a database of political parties and organizations, and of civil society organizations dealing with democracy and elections, with a view to involving them alongside the Higher Electoral Committee in consciousness-raising programmes, electoral oversight and reporting on elections. It should be noted that the Yemeni political parties and independent forces have engaged in seven free and clean electoral contests over the past 15 years (see annex 3: Data on elections during the period 1993-2008). Large numbers of international observers and foreign media representatives were present for each round of elections, which indicates that they were held in accordance with the Constitution, the legislation in force and the principle of freedom and complete transparency.

(d) Freedom of opinion and expression

The Constitution guarantees freedom of thought and freedom to express opinions in speech and in writing within legal bounds. The Press and Publications Act establishes the framework within which this right is exercised. With a view to consolidating freedom of opinion and expression, the Press and Publications Act is currently being reviewed to provide additional guarantees of sound journalistic practice and to enhance freedom of opinion and expression in the context of democracy and pluralism. The amendments include abolition of custodial sentences for journalists on account of their views, in accordance with instructions from the President of the Republic, reflecting the State's serious commitment to the basic principles of freedom of opinion and expression. During the period 2006-2008, the Ministry of Telecommunications granted licences to 32 newspapers. At present a total of 23 official newspapers, 47 community newspapers, 21 party newspapers and 6 civil society newspapers are distributed throughout the country. People can also obtain information from the Internet at a wide network of cafés or through their own service providers. An audiovisual information bill that is currently being finalized will lead to the establishment of community and private radio and television channels. The prosecutor's office responsible for the press and publications examines press-related crimes and refers them to the ordinary courts. There are three tiers of proceedings (first instance courts, appeal courts and the Court of Cassation). The reasoning contained in some judgements delivered in cases concerning freedom of opinion and expression is based on international law.

With regard to the regime governing demonstrations and processions, the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly is guaranteed by Act No. 29 of 2003. To ensure non-interference with the exercise of this right, demonstrations and processions must be authorized. Moreover, a person who trespasses on public or private property does not qualify for legal protection and is subject to the legal provisions in force.

(e) Best practices in the area of civil and political rights

- Provision for the election of governors with a view to enhancing popular participation and democracy, a measure which was implemented in May 2008 and which constituted a major advance in consolidating the principle of decentralization. For the first time ever, the Secretary-General of the capital city and the governors of the country's governorates were elected instead of being centrally appointed, as was the case under the former regime.
- Establishment of the Children's Parliament to promote awareness of democracy among children.
- Enhancement of the role of telecommunications by launching three Government-run satellite channels: a channel for young people, an educational channel and a channel to promote the unification of religious thought.

10. General measures and policies aimed at implementing economic, social and cultural rights

The goal of implementing this set of rights presents Yemen with a major challenge because of a backlog of problems related to external and internal circumstances, such as the return of a million Yemeni workers from the Gulf in 1990, the country's transition to democracy and the opening up of the political system, a development that has not yet been grasped by some traditional forces. At the same time, the Government is seeking to implement a comprehensive national reform package to enable citizens to enjoy all their rights, in partnership with the international community and with international development support programmes in Yemen.

(a) Lowering of poverty and unemployment rates

Poverty grew during the period following the country's unification because of the upheavals generated by the economic circumstances and the impact of the war of summer 1994. The Government took vigorous action to address the problem of poverty, establishing a social safety net to alleviate the adverse impact of the economic reform programme. The safety-net institutions include the Social Development Fund, the Social Welfare Fund, the Public Works Project, the National Productive Families Programme, the National Poverty Eradication and Job Creation Project, and other institutions and programmes designed to prevent a further increase in poverty. The State also adopted a national poverty eradication and job creation strategy for the period 2001-2005.

These efforts led to a significant decline in poverty ratios during the period 1998-2005, from about 41.8 per cent of the population, or almost 6.9 million people, in 1998 to about 34.8 per cent of the population, or 7.3 million people, in 2005. Nevertheless, the people of Yemen were unable to meet food and non-food requirements such as clothing, housing, health care, education and transport to the extent envisaged in the development plans. While the ratio of persons affected by food poverty (extreme poverty) declined from 16.6 per cent of the total population in 1998 to 12.5 per cent in 2005, the number of persons affected remained unchanged at 2.9 million.

According to the data, the decline in poverty was more pronounced in urban than in rural areas. Thus, poverty ratios in urban areas dropped from about 32.2 per cent to 20.7 per cent of the urban population during the period 1998-2005, while only a limited decline was recorded in rural areas during the period, namely from 42.4 per cent to 40.1 per cent of the rural population. This decline reflects the scale of the development achieved by the various policies pursued by the Government in recent years. It shows, however, that they tended to favour urban areas at the expense of rural areas although the latter account for about 72 per cent of the country's total population. Moreover, the poverty deficit is estimated at about 497 Yemeni rials per capita per month. This means that a poor person needs monetary support of about 1,431 rials a month to be lifted out of poverty, so that a sum of 124.4 billion rials annually, or 4 per cent of gross domestic product, would be required to close the gap between poor families' actual income and the poverty threshold. Moreover, the high unemployment rate in Yemen is one of the most urgent problems being addressed by the Government. The unemployment rate for economically active members of the population stands at about 16.5 per cent. This is due to widespread illiteracy, failure to ensure that the qualifications of students graduating from intermediate and higher education establishments meet the needs of the market, and other factors related to the design of development plans and policies, which may not adequately reflect the prevailing situation.

Table showing indicators of poverty in Yemen during the period 1998-2005

Indicator	1998	2005
Number of poor persons (millions)	6.9	7.3
General poverty (percentage of the population)	40.1	34.8
Food poverty (percentage of the population)	17.6	12.5
Poverty in urban areas (%)	32.2	20.7
Poverty in rural areas (%)	42.4	40.1
Poverty gap	12.1	8.93
Extreme poverty	5.2	3.32

The third economic and social development plan for poverty reduction (2006-2010) reaffirms the importance attached to the goal of raising per capita income and creating job opportunities. To that end, the State has set aside a total area of 74.3 m² metres for agricultural projects on behalf of young people. The following table shows the governorates benefiting from such projects.

Governorate	Area in square metres	Proportion of total area (%)
Lahij	2 150 000	3
Al-Hudaydah	67 002 170	90
Hadramaut (Al-Wadi)	5 181 930	7
Total	74 334 100	100

Other measures include the adoption of a national microfinance strategy, promotion of the establishment of national small-scale and microcredit institutions, and the opening of Al-Amal microcredit bank. Employment was found for 11,000 jobseekers in private-sector establishments through employment agencies and for 8,000 jobseekers through employers. With a view to increasing and improving the income of poor families, 57 productive family centres were established in all the Republic's governorates to provide training for women in a variety of technical and occupational skills. Over the past seven years, these centres have trained no fewer than 61,000 women in 16 occupations such as dressmaking, knitting, computer skills, printing and secretarial skills, domestic economy, etc., and 20 schools have provided training courses in leatherwork and wood and glass engraving. A General Association for Fish Production and

Marketing has also been established, and the role of the federations of agricultural, fishery and housing cooperatives has been strengthened to meet the needs of farmers and fishermen. With regard to credit and with a view to promoting small-scale income-generating projects, 5,000 small-scale loans were granted to social security beneficiaries through the Social Welfare Fund, which provides direct financial assistance to the poor and needy. In this context, training was provided for 24,000 male and female beneficiaries. Total assistance of 40 billion rials was granted to 1,050,000 persons, an increase of 4.7 per cent compared with the previous period; 54 per cent of the total were men and 46 per cent women. The State also took steps during the period 2006-2008 to increase development spending on poverty reduction and the lowering of unemployment rates by increasing funds for intensive employment projects by 2 billion rials, an increase of 0.5 per cent compared with the previous period, supporting technical education with a sum of 17 billion rials, an increase of 3.7 per cent, creating 17,000 jobs and replacing foreign employees with local staff in 362 posts.

(b) Fund for the Care and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities

Programmes and other activities implemented by 75 centres and associations, including eight government bodies, were financed by the Fund for the Care and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities during the period 2001-2005. About 106,800 persons of both sexes and from different governorates benefited from the programmes and activities. Of this total, some 12,500 persons with disabilities benefited from institutional or individual social welfare services, with 63.9 per cent falling into the latter (individual) category. The number of persons benefiting from institutional or community-based social rehabilitation services totalled about 94,300 persons of both sexes, with 96.1 per cent falling into the institutional rehabilitation category. Social rehabilitation services are also provided for orphans, children and adolescents living in the street, and child workers. The number of beneficiaries increased from 568 to 5,905 in 2005. Furthermore, the number of beneficiaries from services for older persons and invalids increased by an average of 4.3 per cent during the same period. The figures for beneficiaries of action against begging showed the largest rate of growth during the period: from 220 children to 2,737, representing an average annual increase of 65.5 per cent.

(c) The high cost of living and achievement of food security

Yemen, like the rest of the world, has experienced a sharp rise in the cost of living. To address the problem and raise living standards, the State has implemented a package of administrative reforms and taken steps to develop the structural and institutional framework of government bodies. By the end of 2008 the following action had been taken:

- Implementation of the first and second stages of the national wage strategy, which led to an annual increase in basic pay of 138.5 billion rials for 864,500 employees and an average annual increase of 11,100 rials per employee
- An increase in pensions of 23.2 billion rials for 226,200 pensioners, corresponding to an average monthly increase of 5,800 rials per person
- Payment of a “nature of work allowance” to 212,200 employees in the healthcare and education sectors at a total annual cost of 25 billion rials

In addition, the State has adopted the following measures and policies aimed at containing inflation and fighting against monopoly in order to protect consumers:

- Establishment of export centres and cold storage plants
- Implementation of reservoir, dyke, road-building and drinking-water projects
- Implementation of nine water projects and four electricity projects
- Signing of a loan agreement with the Abu Dhabi Fund to finance the building of a number of dams
- Support for various agricultural products
- Agricultural land reform in Wadi Hadramaut
- Support for livestock breeding and preservation of the country's livestock resources
- Implementation of a number of activities aimed at preserving groundwater resources and exploiting rainwater
- Completion of the Agricultural and Seafood Export Development Centre

Yemen is represented in the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development pursuant to Prime Ministerial Decision No. 53 of 2006, which provided for the appointment of a Yemeni Board member at the Authority. Moreover, the term of office of the Permanent Representative to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations was extended by Prime Ministerial Decision No. 64 of 2006, and the Special Rapporteur on the right to food has recently been invited to visit Yemen.

(d) Economic growth and the increase in gross national product (GNP) per capita

The Yemeni economy recorded a real growth rate of 3.2 per cent in both 2006 and 2007 and, according to preliminary expectations, gross domestic product (GDP) will rise by about 3.6 per cent in 2008. Most of the increase in GDP was attributable to the non-oil sectors, which recorded growth rates of 4.7 per cent in 2006, 5.5 per cent in 2007 and 6.2 per cent in 2008. The oil and gas sectors recorded negative growth rates of 8.8 per cent and 11.9 per cent respectively during the period. A considerable increase was recorded in GNP per capita: from \$760 in 2005 to \$965 in 2007, which represents an average annual growth rate of 14.3 per cent.

(e) Education

Following unification in 1990 and throughout the intervening period, Yemeni society has experienced far-reaching changes in the field of education. The education systems were integrated and harmonized and growing importance was attached to educational policy. The Constitution of the Republic of Yemen guarantees the right of every citizen to education. Education has also been given high priority in the Government's plans. Among the general goals set out in the development strategy, the State undertakes to make basic education available to all citizens; to expand secondary and higher education; to promote access to technical and vocational education; to extend educational services to disadvantaged areas; to promote girls' education and welfare, especially in rural areas; to develop and support technical and vocational training, to increase the number of students attending such courses and to raise awareness of its importance; to improve and develop teacher training courses; and to promote and develop literacy and adult education. Furthermore, the education plans provide for a set of policies and measures designed to achieve a variety of

objectives, including the construction and maintenance of educational facilities; improvement of school management skills; increasing enrolment in basic and secondary education; promotion of involvement of the private sector in educational activities; curriculum development and guidance; implementation of the school map; development and improvement of the examination system; reduction of school wastage such as academic failure and dropping out; meeting the requirements of basic, secondary and technical educational establishments; and linking training programmes with the demands of economic and social development. At the higher education level, the universities have adopted objective standards aimed at meeting the needs of society and the requirements of development, while ensuring that qualifications are of a high quality and are linked to the labour market. Other aims include expansion of university projects in the governorates; oversight of community universities; raising of levels of admission to fields of scientific specialization; and improvement of university administration. With a view to achieving these aims, the Ministry of Education developed a basic education strategy in 2001 and proposed the adoption of a fast-track plan based on the strategy with effect from October 2002. As a result, Yemen was admitted to the Fast-Track Initiative at a meeting in Paris in 2003. The Yemeni Government has made considerable progress in raising standards at the different levels of education. The most important points are highlighted below.

1. General education

- A commitment to the standardization of curricula and educational administration, in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act, and to the elimination of duplication and overlapping
- Completion of the school map project with a view to ensuring the equitable distribution of educational establishments and effective school management
- Special action in support of education for girls, inter alia through continued implementation of the relevant national strategy
- Free education for all, improvement of the quality of general education and restructuring of general education establishments
- Promotion of community-based and private education; catering for outstanding students and giving them priority for grants to study abroad
- Expansion of infrastructure, capacity-building, and development and modernization of education and training curricula
- Development of secondary education through the adoption of a national secondary education strategy, and preparation by development partners of a secondary education project
- School fee exemption for girls enrolled in the first to the sixth grade and for boys enrolled in the first to the third grade of basic education
- Two studies of the educational situation of girls in Yemen, and a national review of projects undertaken in support of education for girls in Yemen

2. Technical education and vocational training

- A quantitative and qualitative expansion of the foundations of technical education through the establishment and promotion of new educational and training establishments in the Republic's governorates and the retraining of teaching staff
- Finalization of the legislation concerning technical education and vocational training
- Action in support of technical education and vocational training on behalf of women and various categories of persons with special needs so that they can be integrated into the educational process
- Enactment of a law on technical and vocational education
- Adoption by the Cabinet of a bill providing for a vocational training fund
- Capacity-building for 1,012 technical and vocational staff members in the following areas of specialization: agriculture, veterinary medicine, administration, computer science

3. Higher education and scientific research

- Completion of institution-building and the legislative framework for higher education and scientific research
- Provision of modern technology and establishment of a network of academic and research data
- Preliminary work on the establishment of a modern scientific research base and expansion of existing facilities
- Organization of a scheme to enable students to study abroad, focusing on rare fields of scientific specialization that cannot be studied at Yemeni universities
- Restructuring of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
- Drafting of a higher education bill
- Preparation of the final draft of the project to establish an agency for academic recognition and quality assurance
- Preliminary studies aimed at restructuring the universities
- Establishment of boards of trustees in some Yemeni governorates

In spite of these efforts, the educational situation in Yemen still presents major challenges. For instance, the gross enrolment ratio is still low compared with the total number of children of school-going age. Moreover, the illiteracy ratio in Yemeni society is still one of the highest in the Arab world. The overall ratio is about 45.3 per cent and the ratio for females is 61.6 per cent. Moreover, the proportion of children in the 6 to 14 age group attending basic education is 75 per cent. At the secondary education level, the enrolment ratio is about 40.5 per cent.

In this context, the State has not neglected extremely poor and low-income groups. In addition to action to promote education for girls and increase their enrolment ration, it has undertaken other important activities such as the following:

- Opening of five centres to provide courses in women's skills for rural women
- Organization of five workshops to establish coordinating councils in support of education for girls
- Conduct of three field studies to examine expenditure on education for girls
- Capacity-building for establishments dealing with education for girls and promotion of social involvement at the local and central levels

(f) Public health

Yemen has endeavoured to improve the coverage of health care and to enhance the quality of health services by adopting various kinds of measures including legislative enactments aimed at developing the health sector:

- Approval by the Prime Minister of two bills on health insurance, the contribution scheme and social participation
- Provision of free family planning services and expansion of the number of centres providing such services; a total of 4,087 centres have now been established in 90 per cent of health facilities
- Drafting of a mental health bill
- Adoption of Prime Minister's Decision No. 41 of 2008 granting financial and administrative independence to a number of hospitals
- Oversight and monitoring of health services provided by the private sector
- Launching of a programme to develop the health-care system by extending the coverage of primary health-care services to 35 per cent of the population of the Republic
- Organization of a polio vaccination campaign on behalf of 1,300,000 children under 5 years of age
- Preparatory work on the establishment of cancer centres

During the past few years, a tangible improvement has been recorded in some health indicators. For instance, there has been a rise in average life expectancy at birth to 62 years, which represents an increase of 15 years. There has also been a sharp increase in the number of health facilities: an increase from 688 to 895 (30 per cent) in health centres; an increase from 1,818 to 2,730 (45.1 per cent) in health units; and an increase from 241 to 460 (90 per cent) in mother and child centres. In spite of these developments, the supply of health-care services is still limited. According to the available data, the rate of access to health services is 58 per cent for the population as a whole; 80 per cent of this total relates to urban areas and 20 per cent to rural areas; moreover, 40 per cent of the total have access to public-sector services and 60 per cent to private-sector services. The State's plans and programmes are designed to broaden access to curative and

preventive health services. The third five-year plan (2006-2010) provides for an expansion of the coverage of basic health services to 67 per cent of the population by 2010. The Government has also adopted a population policy aimed at achieving socio-economic balance, on the one hand, and population growth, on the other. The population policy for the period 2001-2005 sets the following health targets: a lowering of the average infant mortality rate to 35 per 1,000 live births by 2015 and a lowering of the average child mortality rate for children under 5 years of age to about 45 per 1,000 live births by 2015. These targets are to be achieved by boosting curative and preventive health care, expanding and improving the quality of health-care services, and promoting universal access to integrated health care, especially in rural areas, with a view to achieving average coverage of at least 90 per cent of the population by 2025 and guaranteeing safe drinking water for a similar proportion of the population by the same date. Provision is also made for the prevention of disability and for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. In addition, the Government has taken steps to increase the availability of reproductive health services. By 2005, such services were provided in 1,273 public health facilities. The scope of the food programme was expanded through social participation in 16 governorates, and the food support programme for mothers, pregnant women and children was boosted in 47 health centres in target regions. However, the health sector still requires greater support and continuous cooperation if higher standards of health are to be achieved in all governorates of the Republic.

(g) Best practices in the area of economic, social and cultural rights

- Award of a young people's prize, sponsored by the President of the Republic, for science, culture and literature
- Award of a book and literature prize, sponsored by Al-Afif Cultural Foundation
- Award of a culture and creativity prize, sponsored by the private sector
- Allocation of more than 11.5 million square metres of land to develop housing projects for young people and low-income groups in nine governorates
- Opening of Al-Amal microcredit bank to reduce unemployment and create job opportunities
- Hiring of 19,000 jobseekers through employment agencies and employers to work in private-sector establishments
- Reform and development of the legislation governing the water and environmental sector and improvement of water resources management
- Achievement of an annual increase in basic wages of 138.5 billion rials for 864,500 employees and an average annual increase of 11,100 rials per employee
- A rise in the wages of street cleaning staff to the minimum wage of 20,000 rials
- Exemption of poor families from payment of fees for health care and education by issuing them with a social welfare card, and encouragement of civil society organizations to provide poor people with health services free of charge

(h) Economic and financial reforms implemented during the period 2006-2008

During 2006 and 2007 the Yemeni Government implemented a wide range of reforms involving a variety of elements and policies aimed at promoting rational management of the economy, enhancing global and sectoral economic performance, building donor confidence, developing political participation, promoting freedom of the press and freedom of publication, and reinforcing the role of local authorities in economic and social affairs. The reforms affected many different sectors. For instance, the independence of the judiciary was strengthened in accordance with the principle of separation of powers. The main administrative reforms involved: modernization of the civil service; reform of the employment, wages and salaries regime; introduction of a fingerprint system; capacity-building for government training institutions in terms of organization, human resources, and material aids and facilities; and simplification of the procedures for providing government services to the general public and investors. In the area of economic and financial reform and improvement of the investment climate, agreement was reached on a financial management reform strategy. In addition, the first stage of the project to facilitate and simplify commercial and investment start-up procedures was completed, and a business sector efficiency project was implemented with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) has been set up and is being applied in all the main customs offices and most of the secondary offices.

The Government is endeavouring to implement a package of policies and measures as part of the National Reform Agenda (second stage) in 2009 and 2010.

(i) Impact of the global financial crisis and the food crisis on human rights

The global and regional food crisis, which escalated during 2006 and 2007, had an immediate adverse impact on the economic and food supply situation in Yemen. Comparative food-price figures rose in 2006 and 2007 by about 28.6 per cent and 23.5 per cent respectively. The following price rises were recorded in 2007 for agricultural products: about 148 per cent for wheat, about 62 per cent for dairy products and 66 per cent for vegetable oils. The rise in oil prices on international markets contributed to an increase in shipping costs which was compounded by cost increases in producing countries.

As a result of the sharp increase in the prices of many imports, especially foodstuffs, the scale of Yemen's food deficit rose in recent years to attain about 233 billion rials in 2006. The grain deficit accounted for roughly 73 per cent of Yemen's total food deficit, followed by dairy products and meat.

With a view to cushioning the impact of the rise in food prices and addressing the crisis, the Yemeni Government adopted a large number of measures, including the following:

1. Intensification of procedures for monitoring and curbing offences related to failure to declare prices and commercial fraud as well as specification and measurement offences in all governorates and districts of the Republic;
2. An increase in the number of Social Welfare Fund beneficiaries;
3. Implementation of the second stage of the wages and salaries strategy.

There are also preliminary indications that the global financial crisis will have an adverse impact on economic growth in Yemen.

11. Difficulties and challenges faced by Yemen in implementing its human rights policies

- Limited resources and the lack of material and economic assets
- The social structure with its cultural heritage
- Terrorism and counter-terrorist issues
- The continuous inflow of refugees into Yemen from the African continent
- The difficulty of providing certain basic services in some regions because of the country's geographical characteristics
- The growing disability problem and the large swathes of territory lost to mines (inherited from the political struggle that preceded unification)
- The low level of awareness of human rights in Yemeni society
- Failure to complete the establishment of many civil society organizations
- Exploitation of human rights issues for political and self-serving aims by opposition forces and some civil society organizations
- Lack of coordination and complementarity between civil society organizations and government agencies
- Inadequate qualifications and skills of persons monitoring human rights violations

12. Expectations and technical assistance

1. Establishment of a data and knowledge centre at the Ministry of Human Rights that is linked by an automated network to other stakeholders for the purpose of sharing information and building cooperation in the area of human rights protection and promotion;
2. Support for the National Mine Clearance Commission so that greater progress can be made in reducing the risks incurred by inhabitants of regions in which mines have been laid;
3. Support for the establishment of a shelter for released women prisoners where they receive post-release care and are prepared for reintegration into society;
4. Support for the convening of an international conference to discuss the problem of refugees in Yemen and ways of dealing with its consequences;
5. Technical support for dealing with the groundwater shortage and for acquiring seawater desalination equipment and plants;
6. Support for the implementation of human rights awareness-raising and training programmes;

7. Support for human rights studies and research;
8. Civil society support for partnership activities with the Government aimed at the development of human rights;
9. Development of the mechanisms and role of the Ministry of Human Rights.

13. Conclusion

Given its serious political will to promote, protect and develop human rights, the Government of Yemen views the universal periodic review mechanism as a means of improving the human rights situation by applying principles of impartiality, objectivity and full transparency, and fostering a constructive dialogue and cooperation to strengthen and protect human rights. The Republic of Yemen hopes to receive recommendations and technical assistance from international bodies and the Human Rights Council with a view to promoting human rights and ensuring that the country's hopes are realized.
