Mission Permanente du Royaume
d'Arabie Saoudite auprès des Nations
Unies et des Organisations
Internationales à Genève

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

البعثة الدائمة للمملكة العربية السعودية
لدى الأمم المتحدة والمنظمات الدولية
جنيف

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The permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations Office and other International Organization in Geneva present its compliment to the Office of the High commissioner for Human Rights, and would like to refer to the letter received regarding to the request of Open-ended intergovernmental working group on an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to receive a relevant information for the preparation of the first session of the working group.

The permeant mission of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia has the honor to attach herewith the contribution to the afore-mentioned request.

The permanent mission of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the office of the High commissioner for human rights the assurance of its highest consideration.

Office of the United Nations High commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
Working group on an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child
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This document has been prepared in response to the Open-ended intergovernmental working group on an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child request. Below are the Kingdom's contributions in response to questions related to the aforementioned report:

Question (1)

What are the main obstacles preventing the provision of free pre-primary public education for all in law, policy, and practice in your country, and what is their impact on children's rights? Please consider the specific situation of marginalized children and those living in vulnerable situations.

There are no barriers to providing free public pre-primary education for all children. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is committed to offering equal opportunities for early childhood education without discrimination, in line with Saudi Vision 2030 and its initiatives.

Question (2)

What are the main obstacles to providing free public secondary education for all in law, policy, and practice in your country, and what is their impact on children's rights? Please consider the specific situation of marginalized children and those living in vulnerable situations.

There are no barriers to providing free public secondary education for all children. Secondary education is offered free of charge in public schools across the country, and the government ensures equal access for all students, including those from marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Question (3)

What are examples of innovative and sustainable financial mechanisms to support the full and effective implementation of free pre-primary and secondary public education available to all children in your country?

The Ministry of Education is committed to free public education as stipulated in Article 30 of the Basic Law of Governance: "The State provides public education and is committed to combating illiteracy." The Ministry has analyzed the future demand for public education and the projects required to provide a free and appropriate educational environment, within the framework of the "Capacity and Demand" project, which aims to achieve the sustainability of education and meet the growing needs for it in all neighborhoods in cities and villages in the Kingdom.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is working to provide a free, high-quality basic education system based on the principle of accountability and aligned with the highest standards. To ensure the sustainability of this system, the Kingdom has adopted innovative financial mechanisms that support the full and effective implementation of public education from pre-primary to secondary levels. Among the most notable of these mechanisms is the allocation of a significant portion of the national budget to education. In addition, the government invests in digital learning—such as the "Madrasti" platform

—to reduce costs and expand access. Moreover, the Kingdom promotes public-private partnerships to develop infrastructure and provide services.

Question (4)

What steps is the government taking to remove barriers and make pre-primary and secondary public education available for free to all, including through the allocation of adequate resources and integration between sectoral and international cooperation? Please provide examples of specific laws, regulations, measures, policies, and programs.

As part of the state's commitment to education, it adopted the Education Policy Document of the Kingdom pursuant to Cabinet Resolution No. (779) dated 16/09/1389H, which affirms that education shall be provided free of charge. Paragraph (233) of Chapter Nine of the Education Policy Document explicitly states: "Education is free in all its types and stages, and the state does not charge tuition fees for it."

With regard to pre-primary education, the Ministry of Education has adopted the strategic objective of "ensuring quality, equitable, and inclusive education for all, and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all," as reflected in the key indicator "gross enrollment rates in kindergartens." This indicator aims to raise the enrollment rate of children in kindergartens to 90% by 2030. Efforts by all relevant stakeholders are currently focused on raising public awareness to increase children's enrollment in early childhood programs. Notable examples include the issuance of the Early Childhood Development Policy, approved by the Cabinet in 2023, and the assignment of the Family Affairs Council to incorporate this policy into the National Family Strategy, ensure its implementation, and submit regular progress reports. This policy emphasizes the physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional development of children up to the age of five and addresses the four key domains of early childhood development: education, nutrition, health and well-being, and safety and social protection. With support from the Human Capability Development Program—one of the Vision Realization Programs—the Family Affairs Council is implementing the "Family Initiative," which includes a set of initiatives under the National Family Strategy, among them the Early Education Framework project. The Childhood Committee within the Family Affairs Council is responsible for conducting in-depth studies on early childhood development needs, enhancing the capabilities and competencies of professionals in the field, improving the quality and accessibility of services, and empowering families to benefit from them.

The state, through the Ministry of Education, is committed to the continuous development of all stages of education by establishing various bodies and centers aimed at enhancing the quality of education and its outcomes. Among these is the Education and Training Evaluation Commission, established in 1438H by Cabinet Resolution No. (94). The ETEC's updated Statute was approved in 1440H through Cabinet Resolution No. (108), strengthening its role in evaluation, assessment, and accreditation of qualifications in both public and private education and training sectors. Additionally, the National Center for Curriculum Development was established by Cabinet Resolution No. (631) in 1445H. The NCCD is responsible for a wide range of functions, including developing curriculum standards, study plans, relative weighting of subjects, printed and digital educational content, and

special education curricula. It also plays a key role in research, development, and innovation in the field of curricula, building the national curriculum strategy, and approving the national curriculum framework in coordination with the Ministry of Education, the Education and Training Evaluation Commission, and other relevant entities. Furthermore, the National Institute for Educational Professional Development was established by Cabinet Resolution No. (197) in 1441H. Its Statute was later revised to redefine its role within the educational system as the specialized authority and key reference body for teacher preparation and professional development.

It is worth noting that the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law, issued by Royal Decree No. (M/27) dated 11/02/1445H, aims to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities and ensure they receive all services on an equal basis with others. Article (8) of the Law affirms the right of persons with disabilities to access supportive educational and training services at all levels, within educational and training environments that enable the highest possible academic, professional, technical, and social development—free from discrimination and based on the principle of equal opportunity.

In addition, the Statute of the Authority for the Care of Persons with Disabilities, issued by Cabinet Resolution No. (266) in 1439H, was established to support the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities. This Authority works to ensure that individuals with disabilities obtain their full entitlements and to enhance the quality of services provided to them. Article Four of its charter mandates efforts to improve the standards, services, and requirements related to education, healthcare, rehabilitation, and employment opportunities. It also emphasizes the importance of facilitating accessibility and providing the necessary accommodations to enable persons with disabilities to benefit from public facilities and services.

It is also worth noting that the Ministry of Education, through the education and training system, contributes to achieving 14 out of the 16 strategic goals of the Human Capability Development Program by launching a number of key initiatives, the most prominent of which include:

- The Early Childhood Expansion Initiative aims to carry out the necessary construction, rehabilitation, and service-related efforts to support the expansion of early childhood schools and public kindergarten classes across various regions of the Kingdom. This initiative contributes to increasing enrollment rates in kindergartens by establishing new early childhood education buildings, adding classrooms to existing facilities, and upgrading current buildings to serve as early childhood centers. Additionally, the initiative seeks to strengthen the role of the private sector by developing and activating expansion models for kindergarten schools and classrooms.
- The Initiative to Develop Requirements and Conditions for Kindergartens aims to establish and implement regulatory policies, legislation, and standards related to the kindergarten and nursery stages. This includes developing guidelines for individuals and entities hosting children in this age group, in line with internationally recognized standards, to ensure a high-quality and safe educational environment for children. The initiative also seeks to encourage

- private sector investment in the kindergarten sector, in coordination with the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development.
- The Initiative to Develop Specialized Tracks in the Secondary Stage aims to design and implement a modern, high-quality educational model for secondary education in the Kingdom, featuring five specialized tracks. This initiative includes the development of regulations, frameworks, comprehensive guides, evaluation studies, assessments, interactive courses, and study plans. It also focuses on advancing teaching, learning, and operational processes within the system to improve educational outcomes and better prepare graduates to meet the demands of the labor market and future professions across all secondary schools in the Kingdom. Additionally, the initiative seeks to develop policies and legislation that facilitate student mobility between general and vocational secondary education. This includes issuing guidelines that ensure flexibility between the two paths and enacting regulations that allow secondary students to transition from general education to vocational education and vice versa.
- The Comprehensive Learning Journey Initiative in General Education for Students with Disabilities aims to design a holistic framework that addresses the diverse educational needs of students with disabilities across various categories and educational stages. The initiative seeks to ensure ease of access to education, improve learning outcomes, and enhance communication, vocational, and social skills. This is achieved through the development of supportive educational programs tailored to the comprehensive learning journey within less restrictive environments, as well as by training educators and staff working with students with disabilities using specialized training packages.
- The Policy Initiative to Ensure Access of Students with Disabilities to Education aims to develop inclusive policies in collaboration with relevant local and international stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, the Family Affairs Council, and the Authority for Persons with Disabilities. The initiative focuses on accommodating students with disabilities in general, higher, and vocational education by integrating their needs into all legislation, regulations, and student-related projects. It seeks to guarantee their access to education within their local communities, based on capacity and need, to ensure appropriate access and support. Additionally, the initiative aims to enhance school capacity to better accommodate students with disabilities and address the challenge of low enrollment rates among this group in general, higher, and vocational education across the Kingdom.
- The Initiative to Develop Education in Remote Areas aims to enhance access to quality education in remote regions by reviewing the existing school network and expanding the use of distance learning tools to ensure that all students receive high-quality education. The initiative begins with classifying the target beneficiaries and identifying suitable operational models for e-learning and distance education, selecting the most appropriate among them. It then proceeds to develop electronic courses tailored to these segments, update current and

new policies and legislation to support the implementation of the initiative's outcomes, and create a risk management guide for schools. The initiative also includes building a partnership framework to engage the private sector and non-profit organizations in supporting schools with special circumstances. Furthermore, it involves the launch of a virtual central school on the Madrasati platform to improve operational efficiency and educational delivery in remote areas.