



Statement by HE Dr. Abdulrahim Yousif Al Awadi

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High-Level Thematic Debate of the United Nations General Assembly

UN@70: Human Rights at the centre of the global agenda

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Mr. President, Excellencies,

The United Arab Emirates expresses our thanks to the President of the General Assembly for convening this high-level debate.

The UAE believes the foundations for human rights must be based on the principles of tolerance and respect for cultural and religious diversity, supported by the rule of law, strong institutions and good governance. Our constitution guarantees rights and freedoms for all citizens, which are underpinned by legal frameworks and mechanisms that have been set up to ensure human rights are enjoyed – by enacting and revising laws, and establishing national bodies that oversee human rights compliance.

Religious tolerance, for example, is a fundamental right in the UAE, and all are able to worship freely in churches, temples and mosques. Gender equality is considered the core of sustainable and peaceful societies, and women are well represented as equal partners throughout the UAE's economy and society. For example, women represent



20 per cent of the National Federal Council and 30 per cent of the federal cabinet. The rights of children are a further key concern, and we have introduced a new Child Protection Act which took effect last June strengthening the legal framework of our children according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

People from many nationalities have found economic opportunities in the UAE. Mindful of the contribution of foreign workers to development, the UAE introduced new reforms to the labor law effective last January to ensure voluntary conclusion of labor contracts, provide clear provisions for termination by either party, and to make it easier for workers to move from job to another.

We believe we have made considerable progress in strengthening the protection of human rights since our country was founded in 1971. In 2014, the UAE ranked 41st in the UN Human Development Index and 47th in the UN gender inequality index. But we know that promoting human rights requires continuous review and we are following-up on the second Universal Periodic Review recommendations and enhancing national mechanisms and institutions according to the Paris Principles.

Internationally, we are firm supporters of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as UN Women, including through establishing a liaison office in Abu Dhabi. As a member of the UN Human Rights Council, we initiated and led the efforts to adopt a resolution on the equal rights of girls to education.

Mr. President, Agenda 2030 represents our collective commitment to achieving peace, security, human rights and sustainable development worldwide. As such, the UN's role in supporting states to achieve these goals, and in upholding international law, is critical.



Mr. President, let me end by offering some recommendations for strengthening the UN System's response to human rights challenges:

- UN human rights bodies should increase efforts to support constructive dialogue, technical and development cooperation, the exchange of best practices, regional seminars and training to promote the implementation of human rights on the ground.
- In our diverse world, there is a continuing need for greater cultural and religious respect, understanding and sensitivity in the field of human rights – a 'one size fits all' approach will not work.
- The fight against racial and religious discrimination and intolerance, including Islamophobia must be prioritized.
- More must be done to protect the rights of the Palestinian people, who have been living under occupation for nearly 50 years, a source of great suffering and grievance.

Mr. President, the UAE is determined to continue our efforts to strengthen the protection of human rights at home, and to work constructively with the UN to address human rights issues around the world.

Thank you.