



UAHR | جمعية الاتحاد لحقوق الإنسان  
Union Association for Human Rights

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Issue No. 1 - December 2024  
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# Magazine Emirates

for Human Rights  
Emirates magazine for Human Rights



The UAE and Freedom of  
Expression:  
A Studied Balance between  
Rights and Freedoms According  
to the International Covenant on  
Civil and Political Rights

## A Rich Humanitarian Journey Since the Founding of the Union

Dr. Ibrahim Salama:  
**The Multiplicity of International  
Mechanisms Concerning Human  
Rights Weakened Their Credibility  
and Qualitative Impact, and  
Their Recommendations Are  
Contradictory**



Balakrishnan Rajagopal:  
**The right to development  
is not part of international  
law, because we do not  
have a legally binding treaty  
concerned with it.**

## “A Human Rights Platform” from the Land of the UAE to the World

# EDITORIAL



In an era where information has become a major force shaping reality, and with the massive flow of information spreading within seconds, it has become extremely easy to influence people’s opinions and orientations on various issues. This reality has created a fertile ground for the spread of misinformation, which could threaten human security and safety.

In the face of these challenges, the need to promote a human rights culture becomes paramount, given the fundamental role that human rights play in the lives of individuals and communities. In this context, the Union Association for Human Rights has taken on the responsibility of promoting truth, raising human rights awareness, and playing an active role in the media landscape by launching an independent media platform called “The Emirates Human Rights Magazine.”

This magazine is the first independent platform of its kind dedicated to human rights in the UAE, issued by a non-governmental organization in both Arabic and English. It aims to provide an interactive space for specialists, stakeholders, international experts, and researchers to broaden the scope of discussion on human rights issues and promote a culture of human rights.

Through the launch of this human rights media platform, the Union Association for Human Rights is charting a path that strengthens the commitment to international principles derived from the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This approach reflects alignment with global and international efforts aimed at building a sustainable model that balances authentic societal values with a more inclusive and forward-looking vision of knowledge and expertise.

The magazine also focuses on highlighting the efforts of the United Arab Emirates to promote and protect human rights. The UAE and its wise leadership have established a tolerant society that embraces a unique cultural pluralism, guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of all without discrimination. The UAE has further cemented this advanced position with a track record of accomplishments and initiatives that strengthen civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, ensuring justice, equality, and the entrenchment of a state of institutions and the rule of law.

The Emirates Human Rights Magazine is committed to engaging with all regional and international human rights events and issues, offering objective analyses and comprehensive insights on various human rights topics with the aim of building more advanced and just societies.

We promise our readers that the magazine will be an effective tool to support both the national and global community, offering perspectives and ideas drawn from our firm belief in the importance of human rights as a means to drive positive change. We believe that human rights are the cornerstone for building advanced societies that uphold the values of justice and equality, ensuring a dignified and sustainable life for every individual in accordance with the rights enshrined in the international human rights charter.

We welcome all scientific contributions and valuable opinions, which will receive our attention and appreciation, as we believe that societal and scientific engagement is the cornerstone of enhancing the magazine’s message and achieving its goals.

Together, we create a future with greater respect for human rights and a stronger pursuit of justice and equality.

**Dr. Fatima Khalifa Al Kaabi**  
President of the Union Association for Human Rights  
Editor-in-Chief



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A rich humanitarian  
journey since the  
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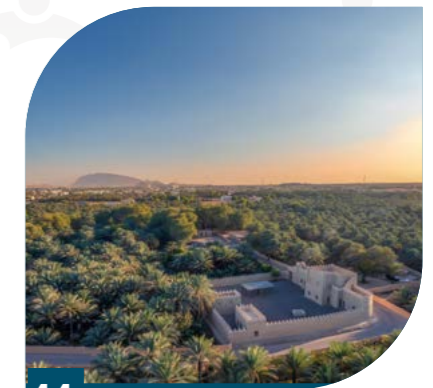
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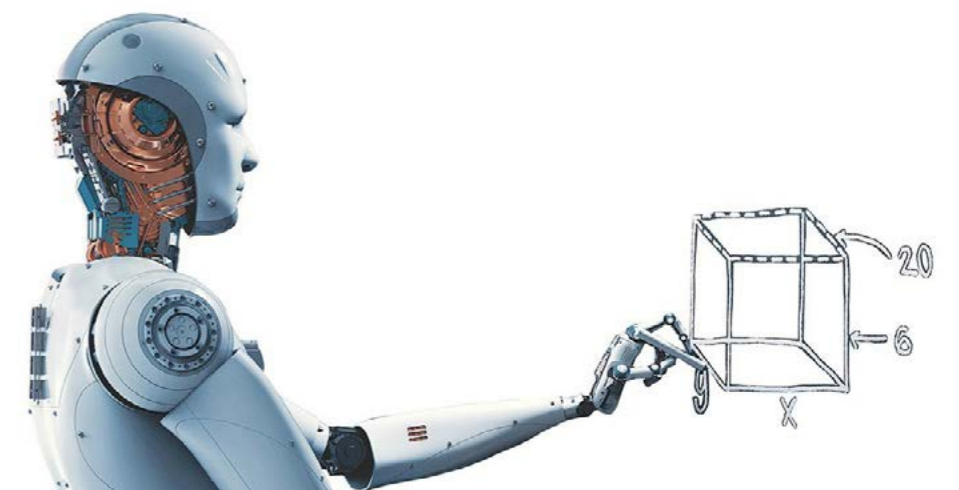
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## A rich legacy of humanitarian endeavors, extending back to the nation's founding

Since its establishment on December 2, 1971, by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the United Arab Emirates has consistently positioned itself as a beacon of humanitarian leadership. With a vision that embraces both development and relief, the UAE has worked tirelessly to offer assistance to those in need across the globe.

In the five decades since its founding, the UAE's foreign aid initiatives have transcended borders, reaching regions in urgent need of support. By the third quarter of 2024, the country's foreign aid contributions had surpassed AED 360 billion (USD 98 billion), a testament to its unwavering commitment to humanitarian values. These efforts are not merely an act of generosity; they reflect the deeply ingrained principles upon which the UAE was built—principles that prioritize peace, security, stability, and prosperity for all.

As the UAE continues to extend its hand to less fortunate nations, its role as a global leader in humanitarian aid remains steadfast, setting a powerful example for the world to follow. Through these actions, the UAE reaffirms its dedication to fostering global solidarity and improving the lives of countless individuals worldwide. The United Arab Emirates' foreign aid strategy has been marked by significant diversification, with development assistance comprising 88.5% of the total contributions, amounting to AED 318.8 billion. This positioning has established the UAE as one of the leading global donors in the field of development. These resources have been directed toward essential projects, including the development of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and water and electricity networks. These initiatives are instrumental in driving economic growth and enhancing the overall quality of life in recipient countries.

These projects have acted as a vital lifeline for communities experiencing economic and development challenges, contributing to the improvement of living standards for tens of millions of individuals. They have also created opportunities for employment, education, and access to decent housing. Moreover, the UAE has provided substantial support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and has financed initiatives that foster entrepreneurship. This support has strengthened the productive capacity of recipient countries, while also



**Emirati aid has contributed to improving the living conditions of tens of millions of people around the world**

**The aid covered 25 main sectors and 147 sub-sectors, reflecting a deep understanding of the diverse needs of different communities**

generating sustainable job opportunities.

Humanitarian aid, amounting to AED 34 billion, which constitutes 9.5% of the total contributions, has exemplified a swift and effective response to crises, natural disasters, and armed conflicts. Through this aid, the UAE has provided food, shelter, and healthcare to regions affected by wars and natural disasters, such as Yemen, Syria, Pakistan, Sudan, and other countries around the world.

In terms of charitable aid, which amounted to AED 7.2 billion, it included various projects that strengthened human bonds and shared cultural and civilizational values between nations. These three categories of assistance are not merely figures; they are a clear reflection of a strategic vision aimed at building genuine humanitarian partnerships between the UAE and recipient countries, with the goal of enhancing their self-reliance and helping them effectively address their challenges.

A key characteristic of the UAE's aid is its breadth and diversity, spanning 25 primary sectors and 147 sub-sectors, which demonstrates a thorough understanding of the varying needs of communities. While the support has primarily targeted sectors such as education, health, energy, and agriculture, the UAE has also addressed the social and cultural dimensions that are essential for achieving sustainable development. Through these initiatives, the UAE has established itself as not only a committed partner but also a source of inspiration and capacity in global humanitarian efforts.

The significance of these humanitarian endeavors is underscored by their substantial impact at both regional and global levels. The UAE's aid initiatives have considerably improved the living standards of millions worldwide, contributing to poverty reduction, unemployment alleviation, sustainable development goal achievement, educational advancement, and political and social stabilization in recipient nations. Moreover, these initiatives have solidified the UAE's position as a prominent leader in humanitarian and development work, setting a benchmark for global humanitarian action and emphasizing its commitment to state responsibility in a world characterized by increasing conflict. Furthermore, these efforts have fostered trust and cooperation with communities and nations, reinforcing the UAE's role as a positive force for international stability and peace.

In essence, the UAE's foreign aid goes beyond financial support, conveying a message that reflects the values of cooperation and human solidarity. These efforts demonstrate that the UAE does not limit its humanitarian principles to its national borders but considers humanity a collective home, where the responsibility for its welfare and development lies with all. Through this approach, the UAE continues to serve as a distinguished and inspiring example of humanitarian values and generosity.





## Declaration of Human Fraternity from the Emirates Remains a Beacon of Peace Ahead of Its Fifth Anniversary

**In his messages commemorating the International Day of Human Fraternity, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres underscored the importance of working together to create a world founded on dialogue, compassion, and the respect for human dignity. He highlighted the Declaration on Human Fraternity, signed by Pope Francis and His Eminence Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, as a powerful symbol of global unity in the pursuit of human rights, the eradication of hate speech, and the prevention of violent extremism.**

In two months' time, the world is set to mark the fifth anniversary of the landmark declaration that was launched from the United Arab Emirates under the auspices of the UAE President, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The declaration stands as a watershed moment in promoting worldwide peace and coexistence among humanity.

World religious leaders' endorsement of the historic declaration has garnered significant international attention. The United Nations General Assembly, through a unanimous resolution in December 2020, designated February 4th as the International Day of Human Fraternity. The resolution recognized the UAE's pioneering role and the declaration's humanitarian values. The UN resolution highlighted how mutual understanding and meaningful dialogue contribute to establishing worldwide peace and collaboration for humanity's future.



During the signing of the historical document

### The Declaration's Path

The Higher Committee of Human Fraternity has pursued the Declaration on Human Fraternity's objectives since its formation in August 2019. His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in his capacity as Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, demonstrated his dedication by designating land on Saadiyat Island for the Abrahamic Family House. This architectural marvel serves as a tangible embodiment and a cultural expression of the historic declaration.

Religious leaders joined the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity within one month of the Document on Human Fraternity's implementation and the Abrahamic Family House's construction initiation. The Chief Rabbi of the Hebrew Congregation in Washington joined following a human fraternity celebration in New York State. Moreover, Former UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova became a committee member in September 2019. The committee further expanded in March 2020 with the appointments of Nobel Peace Prize recipient Leymah Gbowee and World Council of Churches General Secretary Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence, in partnership with the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity, organized the second Human Fraternity Festival from February 2nd to 5th, 2022, to commemorate the International Day of Human Fraternity.

### Establishment of Human Fraternity Majlis for Promoting Dialogue for Peaceful Coexistence

A landmark event took place on February 4th 2024 with the inauguration of the Human Fraternity Majlis. This gathering of world leaders and international dignitaries sought to promote dialogue and cooperation, with the ultimate goal of realizing the aspirations set forth in the Declaration on Human Fraternity. The event was organized under the auspices of the Muslim Council of Elders, the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence, and the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity.

A collaborative effort between the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity and the University of Oxford led to the launch of the 'Leadership in Peaceful Coexistence' Program in August 2024. The program is dedicated to developing young leaders by providing training in dialogue, negotiation, and peaceful conflict resolution.

The General Secretariat of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity received the Magos Award for Promoting Peaceful Coexistence at an international ceremony

**The Declaration of Human Fraternity is a significant message that fosters unity in the endeavor to protect human rights and address hate speech and violent extremism: UN Secretary General**





**By incorporating this landmark declaration into their educational systems, various nations are seeking to foster peace, brotherhood, and coexistence among future generations**

in Spain on November 16th. The Magos Foundation bestowed the honor in recognition of the committee's global efforts to advance harmony and intercultural understanding.

### Zayed Award for Human Fraternity

The Zayed Award for Human Fraternity, which annually honors individuals or entities making significant contributions to promoting the values of coexistence and human fraternity, stands as a testament to this inspiring historical declaration. Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, announced the launch of the award, with its inaugural edition being bestowed upon His Holiness Pope Francis, Pope of the Catholic Church, and His Eminence Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, in recognition of their blessed efforts in spreading peace worldwide. Subsequently, His Holiness Pope Francis and His Eminence Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayyeb laid the foundation stone for the Grand Imam Ahmed Al-Tayyeb Mosque and the Church of St. Francis in Abu Dhabi.

### Historic Echoes

The Declaration on Human Fraternity achieved significant international recognition in 2022. Timor-Leste elevated the document to national status and integrated it into its educational curriculum on May 19, 2022. Religious leaders gathered in Kazakhstan endorsed the declaration as fundamental to peace and dialogue initiatives. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops disseminated the declara-



tion to more than 200 bishops across the United States in October 2022, committing to its use as a foundation for interfaith dialogue.

Furthermore, educational institutions across the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Bahrain, Lebanon, Italy, and the United States have integrated the Declaration on Human Fraternity into their academic programs. The declaration continues to attract scholarly attention worldwide. Georgetown University hosted a conference titled "Building Interfaith Solidarity" in September 2022, examining methods to advance the declaration's principles. The conference drew student participation from multiple nations.

### Twelve Key Milestones

The landmark declaration established twelve fundamental milestones, encompassing the advancement of peace, mutual understanding, human fraternity, and peaceful coexistence. The declaration affirmed freedom as a fundamental human right and underscored the necessity of respecting religious, racial, gender, and linguistic diversity. The declaration championed justice based on compassion to secure dignified living conditions for all people.

The declaration introduced a holistic framework highlighting the importance of dialogue, understanding, and tolerance. It called for advancing a culture of acceptance and human coexistence. The declaration emphasized the protection of places of worship and religious beliefs, grounded in universal human values and international standards. It denounced violence, extremism, and terrorism while championing the principles of good citizenship and equality.

Furthermore, the declaration embraced a comprehensive human rights perspective, affirming women's entitlement to education, employment, and complete human rights. It emphasized the protection of children's basic rights to family life, nutrition, education, and care. The declaration called for safeguarding the rights of elderly individuals, vulnerable populations, and People of Determination, founded on religious and societal values, reinforced by legal structures and international agreements.

**The document underscored the obligation to safeguard religions and places of worship, while preserving the cultural, civilizational, and historical heritage of humanity**



## From "Seeds of Zayed" to leading the climate action efforts Environmental Stewardship :Implementing the UAE Wise Leadership Vision Through Enhanced Public Awareness and Engagement

The wise leadership of the UAE has demonstrated unwavering commitment to embedding environmental stewardship principles to achieve sustainability within society. Numerous programmes, initiatives, and events have been launched aimed at protecting the environment from pollution. Most notably, the UAE President, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, launched the "Year of Sustainability" initiative for 2023 under the theme "Today for Tomorrow". His Highness subsequently announced the extension of the Year of Sustainability to encompass 2024, with the objective of promoting sustainable practices and collective action.

Since its inception to the present day, the UAE has instituted robust foundational frameworks focused on environmental protection and the conservation of its terrestrial and marine resources. The principles and practices relating to environmental sustainability, wildlife preservation, and biodiversity conservation represent a fundamental component of Emirati heritage, embodied significantly in the vision of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the nation's founding father. The late Sheikh Zayed made substantial contributions through the establishment of initiatives and programs dedicated to environmental preservation and resource conservation, founded upon his deep conviction regarding the essential integration of sustainable development's three pillars: economic, social, and environmental dimensions. This foundational vision continues to inform the nation's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable development implementation.



### "Plant the Emirates" National Program

Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, has recently introduced the 'Plant the Emirates' national program. This initiative aligns with the UAE leadership's commitment to fostering the growth of the agricultural sector, bolstering sustainable food security, and advancing the nation's strategic food security goals for 2051.

Furthermore, the 'Plant the Emirates' program aims to expand green spaces, advance environmental conservation efforts, and promote the perception of locally cultivated, nutrient-dense agricultural products. Furthermore, the program aligns with the 'Year of Sustainability 2024' and strengthens the environmental sustainability infrastructure by meaningfully mitigating carbon emissions through the production of indigenous, fresh agricultural commodities.

### COP-28.. Towards an emission-free world

In its environmental protection efforts, the United Arab Emirates transcended terrestrial and maritime resource conservation by hosting COP28, a pivotal initiative towards global decarbonization. Through this strategic diplomatic endeavor, the UAE successfully mobilized international collaboration among 198 states, achieving an unprecedented consensus on climate action and planetary preservation. The landmark declaration not only underscores the nation's global leadership but also reinforces its commitment to constructing a sustainable future for humanity, demonstrating a proactive approach to mitigating climate change and fostering multilateral environmental cooperation.



### Relevant legislative frameworks

The UAE has developed comprehensive legislative frameworks at both federal and local levels, targeting environmental conservation and natural resource protection. These legislative measures prohibit behaviors that potentially endanger environmental integrity, thereby solidifying the nation's sustainability approach and establishing its leadership within global competitiveness indices.

The environmental stewardship journey in the UAE commenced with the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who mandated the prohibition of cutting any ghaf or other trees under any circumstances, establishing legal accountability for violations. Subsequently, in 1975, the Cabinet established the "Supreme Environmental Committee" to coordinate environmental issues across the seven emirates.

This legal framework for environmental protection reached a pivotal milestone with the enactment of Federal Law No. 24 of 1999 concerning environmental protection and development. Subsequent legislative enhancements included Federal Law No. 11 of 2006, which established regulations for the trade of birds and animals and introduced stricter penalties for violations.

Moreover, the Cabinet adopted Resolution No. 12 of 2006, addressing the prevention of air pollution, and Resolution No. 20 of 2008, which governs quarrying and stone extraction activities, reflecting a comprehensive strategy to mitigate adverse environmental impacts. Furthermore, Federal Law No. 12 of 2018 on Integrated Waste Management was enacted to regulate the handling of all types of waste, emphasizing the reduction of waste generation, the promotion of recycling, and the safe disposal of residual materials.

In pursuit of sustainability and energy diversification, the UAE issued Federal Decree-Law No. 17 of 2022, regulating the integration of distributed renewable energy production units with the electrical grid. The legislation aims to enable individuals to generate electricity from renewable sources, ensuring emissions reduction and progression towards climate neutrality.

The nation further advanced its environmental sustainability objectives by issuing Ministerial Resolution No. 380 of 2022, which regulates single-use product consumption in national markets. This measure represents a strategic intervention to mitigate environmental pollution arising from the consumption of such products.

The historic "UAE Consensus" established novel global climate action standards by facilitating a fair and equitable consensus aligned with scientific imperatives. The consensus strategically addresses the vulnerabilities of nations most susceptible to climate change impacts, carefully balancing developmental requirements with climate action objectives. By prioritizing an inclusive and scientifically grounded approach, the accord aims to mitigate environmental risks while supporting sustainable progress across diverse international contexts.

### A National Policy aimed at environment protection

The UAE has established a National Environmental and Climate Protection Policy, launching the National Environmental Sustainability Framework in 2023. This comprehensive framework encompasses all approved national strategies and policies governing environmental work, aimed at enhancing life quality, preserving sustainable environments, supporting long-term economic growth, and maintaining the nation's biological diversity.

By year-end, the Cabinet issued a resolution on industrial waste valorization policies, targeting circular economy advancement through waste utilization as manufacturing input and enhancing industrial capabilities to transform waste into value-added products. Continuing its commitment to environmental protection as a primary national achievement and in alignment with sustainable development goals, the United Arab Emirates persistently advances towards a zero-emissions society through federal and local strategies, reflecting dedicated efforts to realize the "UAE Centennial 2071" vision of becoming the world's leading nation.





**Mohamed bin Zayed**  
statements on the landmark  
UAE Consensus

Reinforced the global resolve to achieve a just and orderly transition in the energy sector.

Provided a roadmap for realizing the ambitions of the Paris Agreement.

Successfully restored confidence in the multilateral system of international cooperation.



# Climate UAE Consensus a True Catalyst to Azerbaijan Summit

The United Arab Emirates, under its visionary leadership, has established itself as a global leader in fostering international cooperation and encouraging nations to adopt a forward-looking approach that transforms climate challenges into opportunities for humanity. Speaking at the opening of the preparatory ministerial meetings for COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, Dr. Sultan Al Jaber, President of COP28, highlighted the historic “UAE Consensus” achieved during COP28. This landmark accord demonstrated the UAE’s pivotal role in uniting 198 nations around a common vision for climate action, sustainable development, and a future that benefits both humanity and the planet.





### COP29 President Mikheil Babayev:

In close collaboration with the COP28 Presidency, we are working to implement the landmark UAE Consensus.

COP29 presents a critical juncture to chart a course towards a sustainable future.

COP29 Presidency is committed to enhancing ambition, empowering action, and fostering trust among Parties.

There is an urgent need to agree on a new, ambitious climate finance milestone that is equitable.

Climate finance must adequately address the needs of developing countries, small island developing states, and least developed countries.



This landmark agreement has enabled the UAE to showcase to the global community the potential to elevate aspirations beyond past pledges. Moreover, it has facilitated a paradigm shift, transforming climate action from a perceived liability into a catalyst for comprehensive economic development and collective well-being.

#### New Benchmarks

The UAE's historic consensus has contributed to the establishment of new benchmarks for global climate action by facilitating the adoption of a just and equitable accord among Parties. This consensus mitigates the risks faced by the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change while balancing the imperatives of development and climate action.

Building upon the outcomes of COP27, held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, COP28 successfully operationalized the global climate fund and secured early pledges from countries to finance it.

COP28 has made significant strides in setting the stage for future achievements in implementing the outcomes of subsequent UN climate and biodiversity conferences. The COP28 Joint Statement establishes a comprehensive framework for integrating climate action and nature conservation, aligning efforts towards both COP30 and CBD COP16, and ensuring a coordinated and sustained global response.

#### Steadfast Commitment

The UAE Climate Consensus positions the country as a global leader in climate action, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to reducing carbon emissions, promoting renewable energy, and facilitating a low-carbon transition. Through a range of domestic and international initiatives, the UAE aims to enhance sustainability and resilience, thereby expanding its positive climate impact.

#### COP28 Achievements in Numbers

COP28 achieved several milestones that have established a historic legacy in climate action. By mobilizing over US \$83.9 billion, the conference ushered in a

The consensus marked the beginning of a concerted effort to support and implement projects and initiatives geared towards bolstering sustainability in the face of climate change.



The United Arab Emirates is committed to fostering rapid climate action and developing a future economy that is resilient to climate change.



new era for climate action and facilitated the adoption of 11 highly supported pledges and declarations. Notably, the conference secured US \$3.5 billion in international pledges to replenish the Green Climate Fund and US\$134 million for the Adaptation Fund. Moreover, US\$129.3 million was pledged to the Least Developed Countries Fund and US\$31 million to the Special Climate Change Fund. The UAE has launched a US\$30 billion catalytic climate investment fund, known as ALTÉRRRA, aimed at mobilizing and catalyzing private sector finance. This initiative seeks to attract an additional US\$250 billion in global investments. Additionally, the UAE has allocated US\$200 million in Special Drawing Rights to the Resilience and Sustainability Trust and US\$150 million to water security. In a collective effort to accelerate climate action, the World Bank has pledged to increase its annual climate finance by US\$9 billion for 2024 and 2025. Additionally, other multilateral development banks have announced a combined increase of over US\$22.6 billion in climate financing.

#### From the UAE to Azerbaijan: A Model for Climate Cooperation

The Azerbaijan Summit sought to consolidate international efforts in the shift towards clean energy and renewable energy investments. Building upon the UAE Consensus, which established a benchmark for climate cooperation, the summit promoted the implementation of projects with sustainable environmental and economic impacts. The shared focus on investing in renewable energy, most notably solar and wind power, and fostering a green economy underscores the alignment between the summit's goals and the UAE Consensus.

At the opening of COP29, UAE President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed emphasized the country's dedication to advancing climate action and fostering a climate-resilient future. The UAE Consensus, a landmark outcome of COP28, demonstrated the international community's commitment to a just and orderly energy transition. It outlined a clear pathway to achieving the Paris Agreement goals and revitalized trust in the multilateral system by securing the delivery of past financial pledges and mobilizing climate finance for those most in need.

#### Climate Protection: A Lifeline for Human Rights

Building upon the UAE's significant contributions to shaping the future of climate action, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, seeks to promote a human rights-based approach to climate action. This requires States to adopt ambitious measures to adapt to and mitigate climate change, ensuring that these measures are inclusive and respectful of affected communities. A strategic approach is needed, centered around cooperation with partners to integrate human rights into environmental laws and policies, support civil society engagement in environmental decision-making, assist human rights mechanisms in addressing environmental issues, including climate change, advocate for environmental human rights defenders, and conduct research and advocacy to address the adverse impacts of environmental degradation on human rights.



Dr. Ibrahim Salama

80%

of nations worldwide demonstrate insufficient collaborative engagement with international human rights mechanisms, treaty bodies

In a revealing first interview following his retirement, Dr. Ibrahim Salama shares with the UAE Human Rights Journal an unprecedented insider perspective on the intricate world of international human rights institutions, drawing from nearly two decades of direct experience within the United Nations human rights infrastructure.

Dr. Salama spent 18 critical years navigating the corridors of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council, developing comprehensive insights into the complex mechanisms of global human rights governance. His unique vantage point offers a rare glimpse into the inner workings of these pivotal international bodies.



**Dr. Ibrahim Salama**

Former Chief of the Human Rights Treaties Branch at the Office of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Chaired the United Nations Secretariat for the Preparatory Process for the 2009 Durban Review Conference.

Served as an independent expert on the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, and as Chair of the International Working Group on the Right to Development.

In 2019, he was Visiting Fellow at the Geneva Academy, conducted research on the role and responsibilities of religious actors in the field of human rights.

Co-authored with Michael Weiner the book "Reconciling Religion and Human Rights: Faith in Pluralism" (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2022).

Contributed an article titled "Faith for Rights" on armed conflicts in the Human Rights Practice Journal (2023).

To begin, could you describe your extensive experience working in multiple roles across the United Nations system, particularly given the comprehensive and transformative nature of your professional journey spanning many years?

Those 18 continuous years represented an intellectually extraordinary period—undoubtedly the most substantive professional phase of my career. This chapter followed my extensive 25-year tenure in Egyptian diplomacy, marking a profound transition into international human rights mechanisms.

Working at the United Nations was akin to an intellectual crucible—a dynamic environment where diverse perspectives converge and are meticulously synthesized into cohesive, innovative initiatives. Therefore, I can say that the most significant skill I acquired during my many years at the UN was the art of listening—a critical skill that enables comprehensive understanding and strategic consensus building. Unlike traditional diplomatic environments, where institutional positions remain rigidly predetermined, the UN framework emphasizes collaborative knowledge production, dynamic intellectual exchange, and flexible conceptual development.

Moreover, my work at the United Nations provided ample opportunities to advocate for 'middle-ground' perspectives. By this, I mean that while I would attentively listen to formal statements often containing pre-packaged positions or viewpoints, I would pay even closer attention to the interactive dialogues that followed. These exchanges involved questions and ideas presented in diverse ways, opening up avenues to explore and develop consensus-based solutions to the issues under discussion at the United Nations.

#### Declining Engagement with Treaty Bodies

In light of your extensive 18-year United Nations tenure, including your most recent role

as Head of the Treaties Bodies at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, could you provide a comprehensive assessment of global state cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and bodies?

To be entirely frank, the trajectory of state cooperation with international mechanisms is not currently upward but rather beginning to decline. This is due to the exponential growth of international human rights mechanisms with which states must engage, many of which have overlapping mandates. This redundancy leads to a lack of coherence in the outputs of these mechanisms, diminishing their overall impact on the international stage. Imagine if every state were to ratify this vast array of treaties and undergo periodic reviews by the corresponding international bodies. In a single year, they could receive hundreds of recommendations, many of which would be overly general, repetitive, or even contradictory. Over time, such reports and recommendations would lose their significance, becoming mere formalities exchanged between states and the mechanisms. This would transform human rights mechanisms from effective oversight bodies into disorganized and inefficient entities, undermining their purpose and reducing their impact.

A significant number of states have expressed dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs, resulting in a marked decline in the number of countries engaging with international human rights mechanisms.

Currently, less than 20% of states are responding to these mechanisms, indicating that approximately 80% of the world's nations are not cooperating effectively with such frameworks.

In contrast, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) remains the sole procedure exhibiting a degree of consistency. It is a public and relatively equal process, offering states three clear options in their responses: acceptance, rejection, or taking note—signifying a neutral stance of neither acceptance nor rejection.



### Climate Justice

Environmental challenges have become a core component of human rights discourse. How do you view the contributions of states, institutions, and international mechanisms in bringing about the necessary change and achieving climate justice?

Human rights remain incomplete. This is a reality I state candidly. Civil, political, environmental, and social rights, as well as the rights of future generations, are not merely underdeveloped—they are profoundly compromised. Human rights today resemble a bird attempting to fly with only one wing: the wing of civil and political rights. But how can individuals fully contribute to civil and political rights if they lack access to education or the opportunity to participate in their nation's development? This incomplete framework demands urgent completion.

Protecting the environment and ensuring climate security, for instance, are responsibilities that lie heavily on developed countries—nations that have achieved progress in many areas at the expense of the environment. Consider the discussions at the COP27 climate summit in Egypt or COP28 in the United Arab Emirates. A central theme at both gatherings was the persistent call for developed nations to acknowledge and shoulder their environmental responsibilities. Yet, many Western states continue to resist this acknowledgment, leaving a significant gap in global accountability.

To move forward, a more holistic vision of human rights is essential—one that integrates environmental sustainability, climate justice, and the needs of future generations. Only by embracing this broader perspective can we ensure that the promise of human rights becomes a reality for all, underpinned by fairness, equity, and a commitment to shared responsibility.

## The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process reveals a significant correlation between states' collaborative engagement with international human rights mechanisms and the comprehensiveness of their received observations and recommendations.

### National Human Rights Capacity Development

In my assessment, one of the most pressing challenges facing states globally is the development of specialized national expertise in human rights. Comprehensive human rights protection must originate within societies themselves, rather than relying solely on international human rights mechanisms, particularly given the current growth, contradictions, and redundancies within these frameworks.

In this context, I was pleased to learn about the Union Association for Human Rights, an Arab civil society organization committed to fostering and promoting a human rights culture within communities. Through its initiatives and publications, the organization plays a vital role in strengthening societal engagement with human rights principles.

### More Recommendations Indicate Greater Positivity

With the launch of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism, there was a prevailing belief among states that receiving fewer recommendations indicated an exemplary human rights record. However, we now observe that states with outstanding human rights practices tend to receive more recommendations. How do you interpret this shift based on your experience within the United Nations framework?

Naturally, when a state is more committed to cooperating with international mechanisms, it bears a greater responsibility and consequently receives more recommendations. In contrast, states that are less cooperative tend to receive fewer recommendations. For instance, if a state refrains from signing treaties or protocols and declines visits from Special Rapporteurs, it will inevitably face fewer questions and recommendations.

I have often received remarks from representatives of European countries on this matter. Some expressed concern about receiving an overwhelming number of recommendations and observations, questioning whether it implied they were neglecting human rights. I consistently reassured them that this is, in fact, a paradox—one that reflects transparency and engagement with international mechanisms. It also highlights the advanced state of their civil society.

In light of this, I believe the time has come for the Arab world to cultivate a vibrant civil society and foster positive public participation in addressing societal issues, including human rights. This engagement is essential for advancing collective progress and ensuring inclusive dialogue.

**The exponential growth of international human rights mechanisms has compromised their institutional credibility, undermining the qualitative efficacy of their recommendations and introducing substantive normative inconsistencies within the global human rights framework.**

**Arab communities require targeted capacity-building initiatives and specialized human rights training to strengthen their institutional capacities, enabling their effective engagement in monitoring mechanisms and contributing to the development of constructive solutions.**

### Variations in Arab Civil Society

How do you assess the progress of Arab civil society in the field of human rights at the national, regional, and international levels?

Arab civil society experiences varying

degrees of stability across the region. While some communities are on a trajectory of progress, others face significant challenges. Nevertheless, the revolution in communication and digital technology has made public participation in societal issues an inevitable necessity. Technology has emerged as a powerful tool for advancing freedom and vitality. Positive strides have been made in developing policies aimed at protecting human rights, and national human rights institutions have experienced significant growth, with some achieving "A" status accreditation.

However, Arab civil society grapples with the conflation of independent human rights work with political opposition. It is imperative for civil society organizations to clearly define their role within the framework of human rights work, ensuring independence and neutrality. This approach enhances credibility and empowers civil society to achieve justice and support societal development, free from political polarization.

Civil society activists should be viewed as agents of positive change, provided they focus their efforts on improving society and collaborating with various mechanisms without overstepping their mandates. When their aim is constructive change and the promotion of development and progress, it is essential to empower them to fulfill their roles. International mechanisms should continue to engage with states worldwide to emphasize the importance of listening to civil society and considering its perspectives on various issues. To further strengthen Arab civil society, access to expertise and academic centers is crucial. Such access can contribute to the development of human rights knowledge and the creation of national expertise. This expertise can empower civil society organizations to offer diverse perspectives, not only in monitoring or supporting human rights but also in proposing well-researched solutions to societal and human rights issues.

Human Fraternity

The Human Fraternity Declaration and its values of human coexistence represent a pioneering Emirati initiative. It has been adopted by the United Nations and has led to the establishment of the International Day of Human Fraternity. There is now a growing focus on this topic. How do you view the UAE's initiative?"

The Human Fraternity Declaration, signed in Abu Dhabi in February 2019, represents a paradigm shift in documenting the interrelationship between religions and human rights. The United Arab Emirates had previously introduced the foundational framework of this declaration during an international symposium convened by the Human Rights Council several years earlier.

As a representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, I had the privilege of participating in this symposium. In my address, I underscored that the declaration stands as a unique and significant initiative worthy of recognition. However, its true impact lies in the subsequent measures for implementation. This entails the development of high-quality, internationally focused programs that draw upon the values and principles enshrined in the Human Fraternity Declaration. These programs must seek to embed these values into the policies, initiatives, and frameworks of states and international actors alike.

The principles articulated in the declaration must be translated into our legal systems, daily lives, public policies, and societal frameworks. This transformative process constitutes the most critical element of the UAE's initiative, enabling the declaration to evolve from a foundational document of principles into actionable national, regional, and international programs. Such programs have the potential to advance human values, promote the principles of human fraternity, and foster human coexistence at all levels.



## In the UAE, the Principles of the Pact Have Been a Reality for Years

# The Pact of the Future: A “Roadmap” for a More Just World That Upholds Human Rights

The Pact of the Future, adopted during the UN Summit on the Future in September, serves as a comprehensive roadmap for building a future for humanity that transcends current global divisions and places youth participation and the role of future generations at the heart of the global agenda.

The idea of the Pact was a “call to action” from the United Nations Secretary-General through his report, “Our Common Agenda”, aimed at rekindling global solidarity and overcoming international divisions.

The Pact is not merely an agreement adopted by world countries by consensus – without a vote – in the United Nations General Assembly. It represents a comprehensive study of the world’s current state and offers a vision for the return of human solidarity. The Pact aims to eliminate poverty, hunger, and disease, achieve true development of human economic conditions, and implement reforms to ensure justice and equality among all people. It also calls for a halt to armed conflicts, leading to comprehensive and fair peace for all.

### UN Secretary General Call

These same principles were highlighted in a report by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in 2021, titled “Our Common Agenda.” The report proposed holding a Summit on the Future to achieve a new global consensus on shaping the future. The Secretary-General emphasized that, for the past 75 years, the United Nations has mobilized the world to address numerous challenges, many of which continue to plague humanity, including conflicts, hunger, and diseases, while underscoring the need to uphold human rights, promote disarmament, and strive for peace among all people. He further noted that, in an era of division, fragmentation, and mistrust, the world must restore global solidarity to secure a better future for humanity. He also stressed the importance of environmental stewardship to ensure a sustainable and natural way of



life for future generations.

In his report, the Secretary-General asserted that the COVID-19 pandemic turned the world upside down, threatening human well-being, negatively impacting global economies, deepening poverty, and exacerbating inequalities. He emphasized that the only way to confront such challenges is through solidarity and collective action.

Responding to the Secretary-General’s call, the past two years have witnessed continuous international efforts to shape the Pact of the Future. These efforts have been driven by both official state representatives through negotiations at the United Nations and civil society organizations through discussions and conferences. The outcome of these engagements has been a collection of ideas and recommendations that were ultimately reflected in the final version of the Pact of the Future that was adopted.

### 56 Measures

According to UN Resolution No. A/79/L.2 “The Pact of the Future”, Member States of the United Nations have committed to undertaking 56 measures in the areas of sustainable development and development financing, international peace and security, science, technology, innovation, and digital cooperation, youth and future generations, and transforming global governance. These measures are distributed across key thematic areas as follows:

**Sustainable Development Plan:** The Pact includes 12 measures aimed at achieving the goals of the Plan. These measures focus on addressing critical global challenges, such as mitigating the effects of climate change and environmental protection, eradicating poverty and hunger, promoting equality, and empowering women and girls.

**International Peace and Security:** The Pact includes 15 measures aimed at promoting peace and justice, as well as addressing the root causes of armed conflicts. These measures emphasize the protection of civilians in insecure environments and ensure that those affected by humanitarian emergencies receive the necessary support and assistance. The measures also aim to encourage cooperation and dialogue among Member States to defuse international tensions and support global efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the measures seek to promote peace-building while ensuring commitments related to the roles of women and youth in peace and security, ultimately striving for a future free from terrorism.

**Science, Technology, Innovation, and Digital Cooperation:** The Pact includes 6 measures aimed at harnessing the opportunities provided by science, technology, and innovation for the benefit of humanity as a whole. These measures focus on enhancing the achievements of developing countries in these fields and ensuring that innovations are developed with a commitment to upholding human rights. By doing so, they contribute to promoting gender equality and improving the lives of all women and girls. The measures also emphasize the protection of information flows and the promotion of international cooperation in science, technology, and innovation, ensuring that technological advancements are inclusive, ethical, and beneficial for society.

**Youth and Future Generations:** This area includes 4 measures aimed at investing in the social and economic development for youth and children. The measures call for the promotion and protection of human rights for all youth, ensuring that their rights are upheld and respected. They also focus on fostering social inclusion and enabling youth to participate actively in the development of their local communities as well as at the international level.



António Guterres

**Secretary-General: Our (Joint Plan) included a proposal to hold a summit on the future to reach a new global consensus.**





56

measures to activate the Pact, including:

12 for sustainable development and development financing

15 for international peace and security

6 for science, technology, innovation, and digital cooperation

4 for youth and future generations

19 for global governance

Global Governance: The topic of global governance within the Pact of the Future includes 19 measures aimed at reforming the Security Council to make it more inclusive, representative, transparent, and efficient, without delay. The measures also aim to enhance the Council's response to safeguarding international peace and security, while advancing efforts to revitalize the work of the General Assembly. Additionally, the measures call for strengthening the role of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promote multilateral cooperation to address international challenges. They also emphasize strengthening the role and functioning of the United Nations system, ensuring that human beings fully enjoy all their human rights and dealing seriously with new and emerging challenges.

The measures also include the reform of the global financial structure, with a focus on enhancing the representation of developing countries within this structure to ensure the mobilization of additional financing for the Sustainable Development Goals, including addressing the climate challenge and meeting the financial needs of developing countries. In parallel, the measures call for strengthening the international response to complex global shocks and enhancing international cooperation for the exploration and peaceful use of outer space for the benefit of humanity.

The Summit on the Future also resulted in the adoption of the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations. The Global Digital Compact includes 6 different objectives related to establishing the foundations needed to bridge the digital divide and ensure the inclusiveness of the digital economy. It also aims to enhance access to a comprehensive digital space for all and to strengthen international governance of artificial intelligence (AI) in a way that serves the interests of humanity.

#### The UAE and the UN Pact

The United Arab Emirates welcomed the adoption of the Pact of the Future, the Global Digital Compact, and the Declaration on Future Generations, emphasizing the importance of building bridges, promoting multilateralism to address global challenges, and working toward a more peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations. The UAE also highlighted the need to develop and rely on modern technologies to accelerate the engines of development and sustainability.

The UAE embodies its commitment to the principles and objectives of the Pact of the Future through its strategic initiatives across all its pillars, reflecting its ambitious vision to build a better and more sustainable world for all.

#### The Union Association for Human Rights

The Union for Human Rights Association actively participated in the preparatory stages of the Pact of the Future, notably through its engagement in the United Nations Civil Society Conference 2024 under the theme "Impactful Alliances" in Nairobi. During the conference, the Civil Society Alliance for Shaping the Future was launched, providing a platform for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from various countries around the world. The alliance aims to enhance cooperation among civil society institutions, propose initiatives and ideas to support international efforts to activate the UN Pact of the Future and advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Additionally, the Association's participation in the Future Summit in New York highlighted the essential role of national civil society in the development and adoption of the Pact.

Comprehensive Strategies for the Future



The United Arab Emirates has demonstrated its commitment to global leadership in future foresight by relying on the principles of knowledge and strategic planning. The UAE established the world's first Ministry of Artificial Intelligence, now known as the "Ministry of State for Artificial Intelligence, Digital Economy, and Remote Work Applications." The country also launched the Mohammed bin Zayed University for Artificial Intelligence and introduced the UAE Artificial Intelligence Strategy, which aims to achieve the objectives of the UAE Centennial 2071. This strategy focuses on accelerating the implementation of development programs and projects, as well as achieving 100% reliance on AI in services and data analysis by the year 2031.

#### A Sustainable Future

In terms of sustainability, the UAE has launched several strategic projects in this field, most notably the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park, one of the world's largest projects for new and renewable energy. The UAE has also introduced initiatives to promote clean energy and digital transformation.

The UAE launched its Fourth Industrial Revolution Strategy and a series of major national projects as part of its future foresight plan. Among these projects is the UAE Mars Exploration Project (Hope Probe), which has become a successful model for international cooperation and knowledge expansion in space sciences. This initiative opened new horizons for scientific opportunities for youth and the region as a whole.

The UAE also plays a key role in supporting the United Nations' climate change response, hosting climate summits and conferences, most notably COP28 in 2023, to strengthen global climate action. The UAE launched the UAE Net Zero 2050 Strategic Initiative to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, reflecting its proactive role in addressing climate challenges and supporting sustainable development.

#### A Global Model

The UAE is committed to human development, as emphasized in the Pact of the Future. The country has made significant efforts to empower youth and women across various sectors, while also promoting the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. This commitment is rooted in the UAE's vision to achieve social justice and support a sustainable economy, reflecting its dedication to the global alliance for the protection of human rights and equality.

In addition, the UAE actively supports efforts to promote peace and justice. As a member of the UN Security Council and the Human Rights Council, the UAE plays a key role in conflict resolution, providing mediation in regional disputes and ensuring the protection of civilians. The country is also known for its generous humanitarian aid to conflict-affected areas. Furthermore, the UAE supports nuclear disarmament and counter-terrorism efforts, working in partnership with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to ensure the peaceful use of nuclear energy and support the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Through its humanitarian initiatives, the UAE has led efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the national and global levels.





# UAE Journey began 8 years ago Human Rights Challenges in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

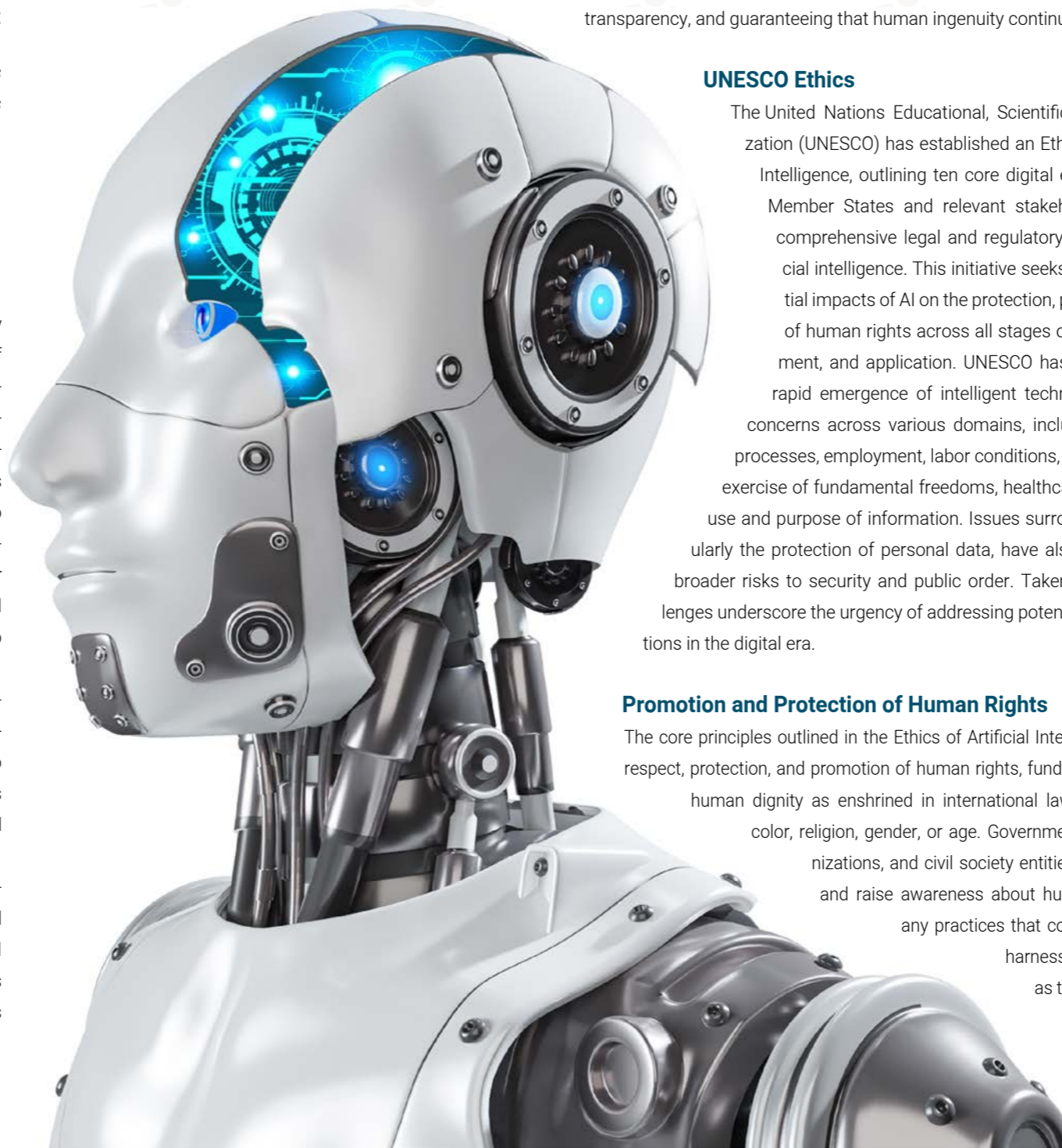
**The rapid developments that the world is currently experiencing, particularly in the era of digital transformation and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), have become one of the most significant challenges to the protection and promotion of human rights. These advancements have led to the emergence of new forms of violations that were not foreseen at the time of the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action in 1993, which remains a cornerstone for ensuring the continued global commitment to human rights protection.**

## A Digital Charter Without Guarantees

The Global Digital Compact (GDC), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September as an annex to the Pact for the Future, emphasizes the importance of fostering a digital space that is inclusive, open, secure, and protected while respecting, safeguarding, and enhancing human rights. The Compact calls on states to ensure that national legislation related to emerging technologies is designed and implemented in accordance with international law, including international human rights law. It further stresses the need for states to establish appropriate safeguards to prevent and address any negative impacts on human rights resulting from technology use, protecting individuals from violations, and creating effective mechanisms for oversight and redress. Furthermore, the GDC advocates for strengthening legal and policy frameworks to protect children's rights in the digital space and urges states to refrain from imposing restrictions on the free flow of information.

The Compact also makes calls to technology companies, developers, and social media platforms, urging them to respect international human rights standards and principles throughout the life cycle of their technologies. They are further encouraged to uphold human rights online, take responsibility for any violations, and provide access to remedy in alignment with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Nevertheless, the annex failed to include clear guarantees or mechanisms to address the challenges posed by the digital age, ensuring protection against digital human rights violations. This is particularly critical with the growing use of artificial intelligence and its profound effects, which the UN Secretary-General described as transformative to the world. While AI holds the promise of accelerating progress



toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, it also necessitates the development of effective solutions to counter misinformation and the security threats it entails. The Secretary-General emphasized that "we need global coordination to build safe, inclusive, and accessible artificial intelligence for all.

## Human Rights: A Path for Solutions

In a February message titled "Human Rights: A Path for Solutions," High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk highlighted artificial intelligence as a unique opportunity within the broader context of rapid digital advancement. The High Commissioner underscored the technology's potential to enhance human rights and accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. He emphasized the crucial need to embed human rights principles at the core of technology development, use, and advancement as a fundamental step to address emerging human rights challenges in the digital age. Therefore, it is imperative to establish robust regulations ensuring due diligence for human rights in the digital realm, promoting transparency, and guaranteeing that human ingenuity continues to serve humanity.

## UNESCO Ethics

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has established an Ethics Matrix for Artificial Intelligence, outlining ten core digital ethical values to guide Member States and relevant stakeholders in formulating comprehensive legal and regulatory frameworks for artificial intelligence. This initiative seeks to address the potential impacts of AI on the protection, promotion, and respect of human rights across all stages of AI systems, development, and application. UNESCO has emphasized that the rapid emergence of intelligent technologies raises critical concerns across various domains, including decision-making processes, employment, labor conditions, social interactions, the exercise of fundamental freedoms, healthcare, education, and the use and purpose of information. Issues surrounding privacy, particularly the protection of personal data, have also emerged, alongside broader risks to security and public order. Taken together, these challenges underscore the urgency of addressing potential human rights violations in the digital era.

## Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

The core principles outlined in the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence emphasize the respect, protection, and promotion of human rights, fundamental freedoms, and human dignity as enshrined in international law, irrespective of race, color, religion, gender, or age. Governments, international organizations, and civil society entities are urged to support and raise awareness about human rights, criminalize any practices that constitute violations, and harness modern technologies as tools for advocating and defending these rights.



**Increasing international calls for the development of "smart" technology that can serve humanity and accelerate the achievement of sustainable development goals.**





**Artificial intelligence in the UAE strengthens the protection of human rights and safeguards against digital violations.**

Moreover, the principles highlight the importance of using artificial intelligence to protect and preserve the environment by facilitating the exchange of positive experiences and expertise in environmental conservation. Efforts must also focus on promoting technologies aimed at enhancing environmental care, collaborating on legal frameworks to prevent pollution, and fostering a culture of diversity and acceptance. This ensures inclusive participation in society regardless of race, gender, or cultural background, contributing to a diversity of ideas, knowledge, and experiences that benefit humanity as a whole.

By leveraging artificial intelligence, the goal is to build peaceful and just societies that strengthen social cohesion, without practices that could undermine this harmony. Moreover, these principles seek to cultivate a broad sense of belonging, encouraging individuals to identify with a collective national and global purpose, rather than engaging in pursuits that create conflicts between various groups within society.

**Continuous Development of Educational Systems**

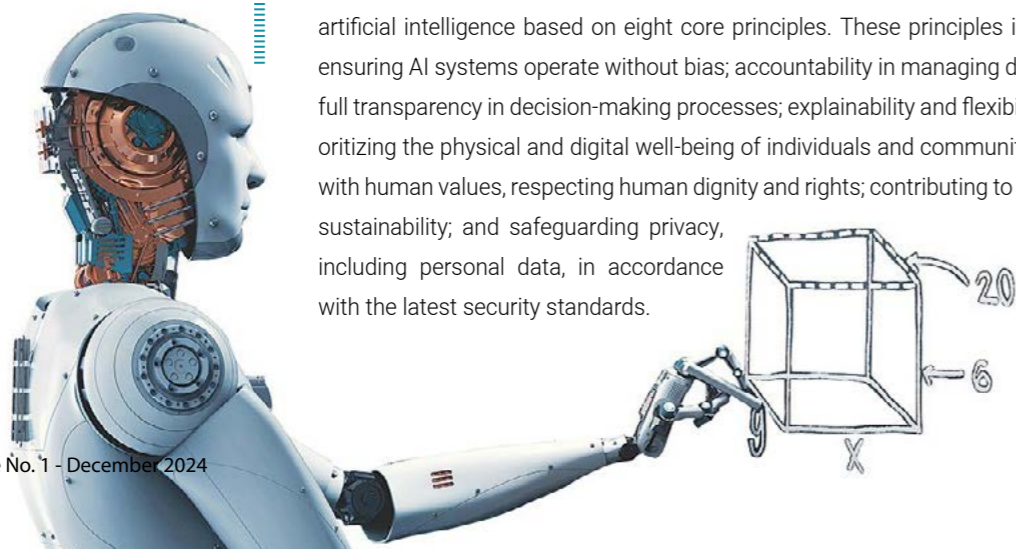
UNESCO has emphasized the urgent need to advance educational systems worldwide, as the increasing digitization of societies necessitates the development of new pedagogical and educational practices. This includes fostering critical thinking skills among younger generations to enable them to evaluate information critically before accepting its validity.

The international organization also stresses the importance of raising society awareness about artificial intelligence through accessible and inclusive education, engaging civil society organizations to promote digital literacy and media and information literacy. These efforts aim to equip individuals with the necessary digital competencies to navigate the complexities of the digital age effectively.

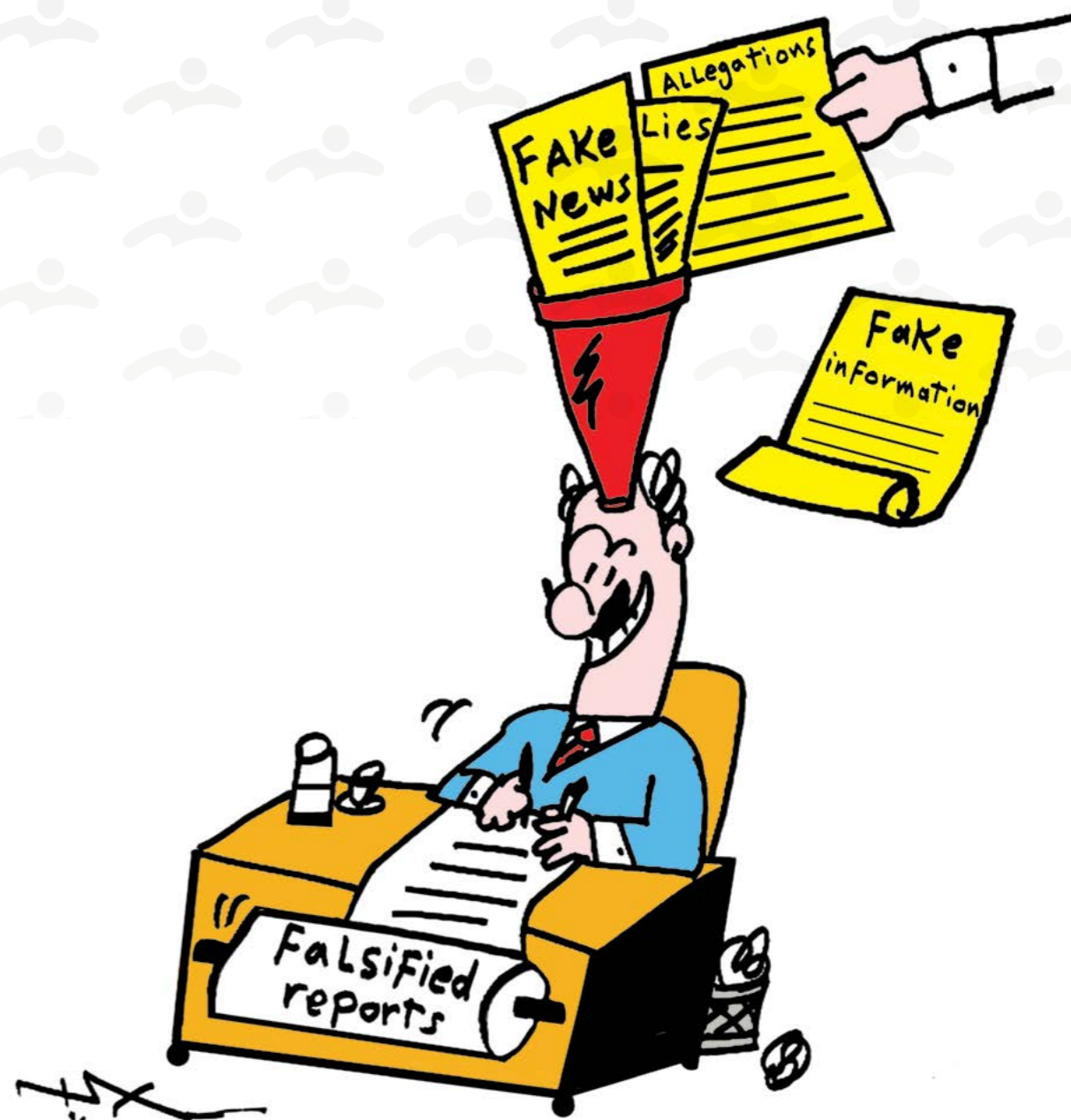
**UAE Digital Leadership**

As a nation committed to future foresight and maintaining a leading position globally across all sectors, the United Arab Emirates launched the UAE Artificial Intelligence Strategy in 2017. This groundbreaking roadmap, the first of its kind globally, incorporated comprehensive ethics for navigating the digital age, aligned with the UAE Centennial 2071 objectives. The strategy aims to integrate developmental programs and projects, enhance government performance, accelerate progress, and foster innovative work environments.

In alignment with its commitment to safeguarding human rights, the UAE has proactively adapted to technological advancements under clear ethical guidelines. The establishment of the Ministry of Artificial Intelligence reflects this dedication. In September, the Ministry issued a Public Policy Document outlining ethical standards for artificial intelligence based on eight core principles. These principles include justice, ensuring AI systems operate without bias; accountability in managing digital systems; full transparency in decision-making processes; explainability and flexibility; safety, prioritizing the physical and digital well-being of individuals and communities; alignment with human values, respecting human dignity and rights; contributing to environmental sustainability; and safeguarding privacy, including personal data, in accordance with the latest security standards.



# CARICATURE



The caricature raises a pertinent issue in today's information age: the influence of fake news and misinformation on the production of media content. The illustration depicts an individual smiling while writing a report, being fed false information and misleading news through a funnel directed at their head. This imagery highlights the potential for unreliable sources to negatively impact the media content creation process. The caricature underscores the crucial importance of verifying sources and relying on credible information to prevent the spread of misinformation, which can have severe consequences for individuals and society.

The message extends beyond criticism of international media

to encompass international reports and indices. It highlights the detrimental impact of misinformation on the credibility of reports issued by international organizations and global institutions. When unreliable sources or distorted analyses are used, the resulting misinformation can lead to misleading reports that influence decision-making at the international level. This underscores the importance of thorough verification, meticulous documentation, and mechanisms to ensure that both governmental and non-governmental international reports are based on accurate facts and data. Such measures are crucial, considering that these reports often serve as references for shaping global policies and interventions.



## The Human Rights Council, AI and Negotiation of Resolutions.

**The Human Rights Council (HRC) is a pivotal body within the United Nations system, responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights globally. Its 47 member states, elected by the UN General Assembly, reflect a diverse and representative cross-section of the international community, ensuring that a broad range of perspectives are considered in its work.**



Ambassador Dr.  
**George Papadatos**  
Head of Delegation and  
Permanent Observer of  
the European Public Law  
Organization "EPLO"

An international organization with an observer status at the United Nations in Geneva, New York and Nairobi

The significance of the HRC lies in its ability to address human rights issues through its mechanisms. Beyond the UN system, the Human Rights Council serves as a moral authority and a global forum for addressing pressing human rights concerns. Its tangible outcomes are its resolutions and investigations which have brought about greater international awareness, the establishment of fact-finding missions, and the creation of commissions of inquiry into human rights abuses. Its decisions are not legally binding, but the Council's influence extends to shaping international norms, mobilizing global advocacy, and pressuring governments to uphold their human rights obligations, making it an indispensable institution for the promotion of human dignity and justice worldwide.

The subject of AI and its implications for stakeholders participating in HRC sessions is vast and cannot be fully covered in a single article, however, I will do my best to highlight its most critical aspects to many delegations, in particular smaller ones, involved in various aspects of the work of the Human Rights Council (HRC).

But can AI be providing a more level Plainfield for smaller missions?

The process of negotiating resolutions typically begins with the drafting of a resolution by the main sponsor, followed by a series of informal consultations where diplomats discuss and propose amendments to the text. It requires skillful negotiation to address concerns, build consensus, and avoid contentious language that might lead to polarization or a vote against the resolution.

Smaller missions often face limitations in processing vast amounts of data from past negotiations, reports, treaties, and resolutions. They cannot quickly extract key points, trends, or common issues that could help negotiators identify important precedents without sifting through complex documents manually. They also have limited access to historical records and legal precedents, which larger missions can readily use to strengthen their arguments and proposals. In addition to the challenge of limited access to accurate and up-to-date information.

AI has the potential to level the field by analyzing inputs from a wide range of non-state actors—such as NGOs, think tanks, and civil society organizations—ensuring their perspectives are included in negotiations. This can lead to more inclusive and broadly supported resolutions. Moreover, AI can process large



volumes of information, quickly extracting critical insights from previous negotiations and agreements. This allows negotiators to identify trends and key issues without having to manually sift through mountains of data, which is especially valuable for smaller delegations.

In addition, AI can serve as a "co-pilot," helping negotiators avoid falling into traps set by cleverly worded resolutions. It can check for consistency, flag contradictions, and ensure that draft resolutions align with international agreements and past commitments, reducing the likelihood of misinterpretation. During the consultation phase, AI can track changes to documents, making it easier to identify when and why specific language was added or removed.

AI remains prone to errors and cannot replace the judgment of experienced diplomats. As a supporting tool, though, AI holds great promise in enhancing the preparation and conduct of diplomatic negotiations.

Nevertheless, diplomats must ensure that they maintain their expertise and not fall into the trap of over-reliance on AI-generated analytics. AI can offer invaluable insights and provide reliable, digestible information to support decision-making. But diplomats should not become dependent on it, nor attribute undue accuracy and significance to AI outputs.

Ambassador Dr. George Papadatos serves as the Head of Delegation and Permanent Observer of the European Public Law Organization to the United Nations in Geneva, a position he has held since 2015. Throughout his distinguished diplomatic career, he has made significant contributions to international organizations, including the World Intellectual Property Organization and the International Organization for Migration.

Prior to his current role, Dr. Papadatos held several prominent positions of international significance. He previously served as the Regional Coordinator for Western Europe at the International Labour Organization and as a senior advisor to Greece's representation at the United Nations. Dr. Papadatos earned his doctoral degree in Economics from Virginia Technological University, distinguishing himself through academic excellence and professional achievement. His distinguished diplomatic trajectory includes notable leadership roles, most prominently serving as Vice President of the Economic and Social Council and Vice President of the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society.



# The UAE and Freedom of Expression:

## الدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة والتعبير عن الرأي

### الامارات العربية المتحدة والتعبير عن الرأي

The United Arab Emirates has consistently demonstrated a commitment to fostering an environment conducive to freedom of opinion and expression, in line with its obligations under international human rights law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Article 19 of the ICCPR affirms that the right to freedom of expression entails special duties and responsibilities, and may be subject to specific restrictions provided by law. Such restrictions are permitted only when necessary to protect national security, public order, public health, or morals, or the rights and reputations of others. In alignment with this principle, the UAE has developed a comprehensive legal framework to uphold and facilitate the responsible exercise of freedom of expression. This framework serves to balance individual rights with collective responsibilities, ensuring that freedom of expression remains a cornerstone of a progressive, inclusive, and prosperous society.

#### Freedom of Expression and Social Responsibility

The United Arab Emirates recognizes freedom of expression as an essential component of social responsibility. The State actively promotes the expression of opinions that contribute to sustainable development, public discourse, and national unity. This right serves as a crucial mechanism for fostering meaningful participation in decision-making processes and shaping the nation's future. Nevertheless, the exercise of this freedom is intrinsically linked to the obligation to respect established legal and ethical norms. This balanced approach aims to safeguard individuals and society from potential harm arising from the misuse of freedom of expression, such as the dissemination of false information or the incitement of social unrest.

#### Freedom of Expression and Cultural Development

The principle of freedom of expression serves as a fundamental catalyst for cultural advancement within the United Arab Emirates. The nation's cultural framework is distinguished by its substantial heterogeneity, with the articulation of perspectives considered a critical component of constructive societal engagement. Institutional entities dedicated to cultural and community development proactively facilitate substantive discourse on multifaceted issues, thereby enhancing intercultural comprehension and reinforcing national cohesion.

#### Challenges and Future Prospects

Nations worldwide face significant challenges due to the rapid evolution of the digital landscape, necessitating the development of policies and legislation to address emerging issues, such as the proliferation of misinformation. In the future, it will be imperative to foster a culture of dialogue and respect for intellectual diversity while formulating policies that safeguard freedom of expression, maintain national security, and ensure stability. Advanced technologies and

It is essential to adhere to the principles of transparency and accountability to ensure a balance between freedom of opinion and expression and social responsibility



### The legal framework for freedom of opinion and expression

The United Arab Emirates reaffirms its unwavering commitment to freedom of opinion and expression, as enshrined in its Constitution, which guarantees this fundamental right to all individuals, subject to applicable laws. Article 30 of the UAE Constitution explicitly provides that "freedom of opinion and its expression, whether by speech, writing, or any other means of expression, shall be guaranteed within the limits of the law." This constitutional framework reflects the State's diligent efforts to balance the protection of individual rights with the preservation of public order, in alignment with Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The UAE has enacted a series of legislative measures to operationalize this balanced approach, including: Federal Decree-Law No. 34 of 2023 Concerning Combating Discrimination, Hate Speech, and Extremism. This law is a cornerstone of the UAE's regulatory framework on freedom of expression. It prohibits all forms of discrimination and hate speech based on religion, belief, sect, race, color, ethnic origin, gender, or any other status, and criminalizes incitement to hatred through any means of expression. Federal Decree-Law No. 34 of 2021 Concerning Combating Rumors and Cybercrimes. In response to the dynamic evolution of social media and digital platforms, this law regulates online expression by criminalizing

the dissemination of rumors or false information. It underscores the UAE's commitment to fostering a safe digital environment and promoting the responsible use of technology to safeguard societal stability and individual rights. Federal Decree-Law No. 55 of 2023 Concerning the Regulation of Media. This comprehensive law governs the media sector, emphasizing its role in supporting national identity and promoting freedom of expression within the bounds of the law. It ensures a balance between media freedom and public interest while protecting individual and societal rights. Federal Law No. 3 of 2016 Concerning the Rights of the Child ("Wadeema"). This law includes provisions to protect children from verbal abuse and harmful content, particularly speech that may negatively impact their psychological and social well-being. It exemplifies the UAE's commitment to safeguarding responsible freedom of expression, especially for vulnerable groups. Federal Decree-Law No. 45 of 2021 Concerning the Protection of Personal Data. This law intersects with freedom of expression by safeguarding individuals' digital privacy. It ensures the protection of personal data and prohibits its misuse, fostering a secure environment where individuals can freely express their opinions without compromising personal rights.

artificial intelligence will play a pivotal role in creating safer and more democratic platforms for the exchange of ideas and information. Adherence to the principles of transparency and accountability will be essential to achieve a balanced approach between freedom of expression and social responsibility.

#### Conclusion

Freedom of opinion and expression in the United Arab Emirates constitutes a fundamental pillar of the State's strategy to promote human rights and advance sustainable development. The UAE ensures a conducive environment for the free expression of opinions while underscoring the necessity of exercising this freedom responsibly and in compliance with applicable laws and national values. By maintaining this balance, the UAE reaffirms its dedication to fostering a society that encourages active participation in shaping its future, while preserving national stability and unity.



In an Exclusive Interview with “The Emirates  
Human Rights Magazine”  
**UN Special Rapporteur:  
Armed Conflicts Threaten the  
Human Right to Adequate Housing**

The right to adequate housing is not merely about having a roof over one’s head; it is the right to live in safety and dignity in a decent home. Yet, not everyone is able to enjoy this right. Over a billion people live in substandard housing and informal settlements. Each year, millions are displaced from their homes due to development projects, conflicts, natural disasters, or climate crises. Many face forced evictions. Increasingly, housing has been treated as an investment opportunity rather than a social good and a fundamental human right.



Prof.  
**Balakrishnan Rajagopal,**  
assumed his function as  
Special Rapporteur on the  
right to adequate housing

on 1 May 2020. He is Professor of Law and Development at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). A lawyer by training, he is an expert on many areas of human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, the UN system, and the human rights challenges posed by development activities.

The UN created this mandate to promote the full realization of adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living; identify practical solutions, best practices, challenges, obstacles and protection gaps in relation to the right to adequate housing; and identify gender-specific vulnerabilities in relation to the right to adequate housing and land.

As part of highlighting the scope of this mandate and the responsibilities of the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, The Emirates Human Rights Magazine conducted an interview with Professor Balakrishnan Rajagopal. The Rapporteur began his remarks by praising the launch of the magazine, describing it as a pioneering initiative that addresses the need to promote and strengthen the culture of human rights. He emphasized that the magazine contributes to entrenching noble human values and principles within society.

### Adequate Housing Is More Than Just Four Walls

Q: In 2020, you were appointed as the “Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing” by the UN Human Rights Council. Can you define the nature of your mandate, the scope of your responsibilities, and your international obligations related to this role?

Firstly, I am grateful for the opportunity to be hosted by you, allowing me to highlight an important aspect of human rights that may not often receive significant media attention. I also appreciate the chance to contribute to the recognition of this right within the framework of the mandate entrusted to me by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and numerous binding international treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the 1960s. It is a basic human right that all people are entitled to, alongside other rights such as the right to food, water, and sanitation. The right to housing is categorized under what are known as economic, social, and cultural rights. Therefore, the first point I want to make is that the right to adequate housing is a firmly established part of international law and has been accepted by all countries, or if not accepted, is on the path to acceptance in one form or another. While countries that recognize housing as a human right have differing views on the extent to which they wish to be legally bound by the recognition of the right to adequate housing at the global level, all countries are in a similar situation. For example, some countries have fully subscribed to economic, social, and cultural rights but do not enforce them.

The other point I want to make about housing is this: when we talk about the right to adequate housing, we don’t simply mean four walls and a roof. We mean, in fact, a home; a home that people are connected to, that they live in, and that they have memories associated with. They value this home far more than simply as an asset. The right to housing is not merely about ownership. I want to be very clear about this. Therefore, it is a very important element when defining the right to adequate housing; we mean access to the adequate housing we need to live, to dwell, and to remember what connects us to each other and to society.

### The right to development and adequate housing

There is a common belief that the right to adequate housing is an integral part of the right to development. Despite the nuances between the two, this belief persists. Many wonder about the nature of their relationship, how to describe the connection between them, and their significance, especially given the growing interest in the right to development?

This is a very important question. Of course, development has been recognized in many different ways since the adoption of the Declara-

### Environment and Climate

**The right to adequate housing is intrinsically connected to environmental and climate-related issues. In your view, does the pursuit of climate justice contribute to the fulfillment of the right to adequate housing? In this context, should our efforts prioritize the promotion of climate and environmental justice, or the right to development? I would appreciate hearing your perspective on this matter.**

You are indeed correct. The issues of climate change and sustainability are fundamentally interconnected with the right to adequate housing and are essential components of it. Two years ago, I presented a report to the United Nations General Assembly addressing climate change and its impact on the right to adequate housing. In this report, I underscored that the threats posed by climate change—such as rising sea levels, desertification, and the increasing frequency of floods—will result in a growing number of people losing their homes. The immediate consequence of these environmental threats is that homes become uninhabitable, forcing individuals and families to flee and relocate. As a result, millions of people worldwide are already facing grave challenges due to the effects of climate change. I have consistently highlighted this issue in various forums. However, it is equally important to recognize that the current methods of constructing the built environment—including housing, transportation networks, and industrial infrastructure—are contributing to the destruction of ecosystems and the unsustainable emission of harmful pollutants, further exacerbating these challenges.

The question now is: Are we doing enough to change this negative reality? Unfortunately, the answer is “no.” Unsustainable practices continue to contribute to the escalation of climate change, which is why we must rethink our approach to development. I have called on countries to explore smarter energy solutions, especially since there is a direct link between energy and adequate housing. This call led to the European Union’s decision to appoint a Commissioner for “Housing and Energy,” which is a very positive development.



## The Pact for the Future

**Last September, the United Nations convened the Summit of the Future and adopted the Pact for the Future, which focused on new technologies and artificial intelligence. Do you believe that the Summit and the Pact will contribute to enhancing the enjoyment of the right to adequate housing?**

There is currently widespread use of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly in the housing market in many advanced economies. Therefore, when the Summit of the Future calls for the regulation of AI, it is a welcome and necessary step, especially given the urgent need for such regulation. However, this regulation must be implemented quickly. The pace of technological development far outpaces the speed at which global decisions and regulations are made. As a result, by the time regulatory frameworks for technology are finalized, AI developers have often already launched new technologies into the market. This forces us to address the negative impacts and consequences of these technologies after they have already been introduced.

In general, it is crucial to recognize a fundamental truth: human rights, including the right to adequate housing, are directly affected by modern technologies, including AI. Therefore, it is imperative to take concrete steps following the Summit of the Future to establish a globally accepted regulatory framework that is fully aligned with the principles of human rights protection.

tion on the Right to Development by the United Nations General Assembly in 1986. However, even today, the right to development has not yet become part of international law, as we do not yet have a legally binding treaty on the right to development that forms its specific legal framework.

Nonetheless, it is essential to emphasize that the right to development is of paramount importance for both states and human societies. As you know, human rights are not isolated or individual rights, but rather comprehensive and interrelated. For instance, the right to adequate housing cannot be separated from other rights such as the right to clean water, food, and other basic rights, all of which are, in one way or another, components of the right to development.

Viewing rights through the lens of the right to development requires a holistic approach that takes into account the full range of rights. It also calls for efforts to fulfill and enable the enjoyment of these rights for everyone, with a focus on human well-being and the ultimate goal of achieving sustainable development.

It is also important to recognize that human needs continue to grow in line with development and societal progress. This makes the right to development a dynamic process that encompasses the right to adequate housing as part of its broader framework.

### Cities Have Become Targets of War

Q: In your view, how do wars, instability, and insecurity affect the enjoyment of the right to adequate housing?

Wars and armed conflicts have always had a profound impact on human rights, including the right to adequate housing. As you know, the world has become increasingly urbanized over the past century. At the beginning of the 20th century, only a few cities existed, and they were located in the wealthiest and most advanced countries, typically Western industrialized nations. However, urbanization has rapidly accelerated worldwide. This is also linked to war. When World War I broke out 100 years ago, as you know, armies met and fought outside of cities, so there was a clear separation between where civilians lived and where the armed forces went to fight each other. However, this approach to war is no longer the norm. Today, cities have become military targets, and as a result, wars now take place in urban areas, leading

**The issue of climate change and sustainability is closely linked to the right to adequate housing.**



**The right to development is not part of international law, as there is no legally binding treaty dedicated to it.**

to the destruction of homes and essential infrastructure. This reality underscores the need for the international community to work together to prevent wars from breaking out in the first place. If wars do erupt, there must be a strong and effective response to contain and prevent escalation. Unfortunately, the global community has proven unable to prevent wars or bring them to a swift end once they start, and this remains one of the greatest challenges we face today.

How do you assess the level of cooperation provided by states? Furthermore, how would you characterize the role of human rights bodies and mechanisms, particularly the Human Rights Council, in advancing the promotion and protection of human rights on a global scale?

In accordance with my mandate, I maintain regular communication with Member States. I engage in ongoing informal discussions with numerous countries, particularly concerning complaints submitted by individuals globally. When I receive complaints regarding violations of the right to adequate housing, I address these concerns with the relevant States through the communications procedure. This process involves sending confidential letters to States, which remain confidential for 60 days before being made publicly available on the UN website, along with any responses provided by the States. This procedure constitutes one of the key formal mechanisms to which all States have committed. As the UN Special Rapporteur, I am entrusted with the authority to formally request that States explain and account for any allegations or claims brought to my attention. States are obligated to clarify the situation within their respective countries. This represents one formal method of engagement. The second formal mechanism through which I engage with States is via interactive dialogues and the preparation of reports for the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council. During these sessions, I present my reports, and States have the opportunity to engage in dialogues with me, as well as provide input for the reports' preparation. This process facilitates significant interaction. The final avenue of engagement is informal, wherein I intervene in specific cases, such as those involving important petitions, and collaborate with States and regional organizations to develop strategies to address the right to adequate housing.

Your second question is also very important, as it pertains to human rights bodies and mechanisms, particularly the Human Rights Council. Undoubtedly, human rights bodies and mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council, have contributed significantly to improving the human rights situation worldwide. The difference is evident when compared to the situation 30 years ago, when human rights mechanisms, including special procedures, were just beginning to take shape. Before the establishment of the Human Rights Council, we had the UN Commission on Human Rights. Despite its significant contributions, it faced numerous criticisms for its inability to operate in a manner commensurate with the realities of the 21st century. Therefore, the Commission was replaced by the Council in 2006. Of particular importance is the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism, which was established with the inception of the Human Rights Council. Moreover, human rights mechanisms have expanded, and we now have more than 40 mandate holders. UN agencies supporting human rights work have also grown, along with field offices in many countries around the world to provide assistance to both states and civil society. The system has become larger and more robust, which is arguably a positive development.

### Unofficial visits

**Do you have any plans for upcoming visits to the Middle East and North Africa region? Are there any specific programs or initiatives in the pipeline for this area?**

While we are currently in discussions with several countries in the region to explore the possibility of arranging visits — since this type of visit depends on requests and coordination — I have already undertaken visits for other purposes. For instance, I was in Cairo last October to attend the World Urban Forum.

I also conduct unofficial visits, which can be extremely beneficial in understanding the progress of construction and development in various countries. These visits may aim to assess the feasibility of taking targeted actions in certain areas. One such example is my visit to Northern Ireland this year, which proved to be highly beneficial for both the government and civil society.

### 2025 Visits

**Can you tell us about your plan for conducting field visits to countries as part of your mandate in 2025?**

I plan to visit Uzbekistan next year, 2025, and we also have an agreement to visit Guatemala. Following that, there will be visits to several other countries. I hope to have the opportunity to visit at least two more countries, if not three, before the end of my mandate in 2026.

This is especially significant because, after my appointment in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented countries from accepting visits from Special Rapporteurs. We remain hopeful that we will have the opportunity to resume and complete these visits in the future.



Preempting global calls for workplace accommodations

# UAE Enacts Comprehensive Law Safeguarding Mental Health Rights



As the World Health Organization (WHO) underscored the necessity of prioritizing mental health care for employees during this year's World Mental Health Day, themed "Mental Health in the Workplace," it emphasized the urgent need for measures to prevent mental health disorders. This focus is particularly critical given that 60% of the global population is engaged in work, making them susceptible to mental health challenges. In alignment with this global call, the UAE demonstrated a proactive approach by enacting the Law No. 10 of 2023 on Mental Health in November 2023, which came into effect in May 2024. This legislation offers robust and comprehensive protection for the rights of individuals with mental health conditions, ensuring their welfare in the workplace and their right to receive treatment. Furthermore, it guarantees their continued access to education and cultural activities, thereby enabling them to lead a normal life without infringing on their fundamental human rights. Thus, while the World Health Organization in 2024 calls for the provision of mental health care in the workplace, the UAE had already taken a proactive step, incorporating this into a federal law issued nearly a year prior.

## Protecting the rights of people with mental illness

The law devotes an entire chapter, comprising Articles 9 to 15, to comprehensively address the rights of individuals with mental health conditions. Article 9, in particular, outlines eighteen specific clauses guaranteeing the civil rights of these individuals, including the right to retain their legal rights without limitations, except in cases where such limitations are necessary to protect the individual or others, or as mandated by a judicial ruling. This provision ensures that individuals with mental health conditions are afforded the same rights and responsibilities as any other citizen, safeguarding their rights from any form of infringement.

## Job Security Guarantee

Article (5) of the law stipulates: "No restrictions shall be imposed on an individual's work or employment due to a mental health condition, nor shall employment be terminated except pursuant to a report issued by a specialized medical committee and in accordance with the applicable laws of the state."

This provision establishes robust legal safeguards against dismissal or any arbitrary actions by employers toward individuals with mental health conditions. Termination of employment is permissible solely upon the issuance of a report from a specialized medical committee, which is tasked with evaluating the individual's condition, the nature of their mental health disorder, and its impact on their capacity to fulfill their professional responsibilities. Furthermore, this article emphasizes the importance of institutional efforts to raise awareness on effectively supporting employees with mental health conditions, thereby fostering their continued contributions to the workplace.

## Privacy, Confidentiality, and Protection from Exploitation

The remaining provisions of the article protect individual privacy, ensure the confidentiality of personal information, and prohibit degrading treatment, including physical, financial, and sexual exploitation. The article establishes comprehensive rights for individuals within mental health facilities, specifically including the right to file complaints against any personnel or entity without compromising the

quality of care or experiencing retaliatory actions. These provisions are designed to safeguard the individual's fundamental human rights, maintain professional standards of care, and preserve the dignity of patients receiving mental health services.

## Preservation of Individual's Customary Life Course

In Article 17, the law expressly addresses the provision of support to facilitate educational opportunities, learning processes, and the pursuit of recreational and cultural activities in coordination with relevant authorities. The law recognizes that a mental health condition does not signify the termination of one's customary life course, but rather ensures the continuation of normal life trajectory until recovery.

## National Policies

Federal Law No. 10 of 2023 implements the Federal Government's 2017 mental health policies. It establishes a framework to elevate mental health services, ensure patient rights, provide necessary healthcare, and create a balanced, sustainable healthcare ecosystem that promotes public well-being through effective, multi-tiered care.

The national policies comprehensively addressed mental health strategies by updating national policies across sectors, aligning with international best practices and human rights agreements, systematically planning and budgeting, reorganizing service coverage, and implementing a methodical approach to transitioning care away from psychiatric institutions when necessary.

The national policies developed multi-sectoral plans targeting mental health promotion, prevention of psychological disorders, and reduction of discrimination and human rights violations. These initiatives were integrated into national legislation to enhance public health.

The UAE has been a pioneering nation in establishing mental health as an integral human rights issue; proactively aligning with the recent declaration by the United Nations Secretary-General that mental health is not a privilege but a fundamental human right, integral to comprehensive health coverage.

The national policies comprehensively addressed mental health strategies by updating national policies across sector



## International Protection of the Human Rights for Mental Health

**Mental Health is a fundamental aspect of health and quality of life. From birth to old age, mental health plays an integral role in the pursuit of happiness and of lifelong fulfillment of the individual, of the family and of society.**



Dr. **Astrid Stuckelberger**

According to WHO : "Mental health is an integral and essential component of health. Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community". Safeguarding mental health is a priority. It includes not only preventing mental health conditions but moreso ensuring the right to access to the highest quality of care with an integrative culturally adapted approach to physical, mental, social care.

### **Mental health is a basic human right.**

Having a mental health condition should never be a reason to deprive a person of their basic human rights, nor to be discriminated and excluded from decisions about their own health or to lose one's essential rights such as the right to shelter, to food, to education, to employment opportunities, and to protection against all forms of neglect and abuse. Therefore, the protection of mental health rights is inseparably linked to the broader international human rights legal instruments and mechanisms to implement it..

Respecting human rights also means safeguarding individuals' freedom to express themselves and their needs, make choices about their lives, and participate fully in society. When these rights are upheld, individuals are more likely to experience a sense of security and empowerment, which are an important component in recovering mental health and preventing relapses. On the opposite, violations of human rights can worsen the affection,

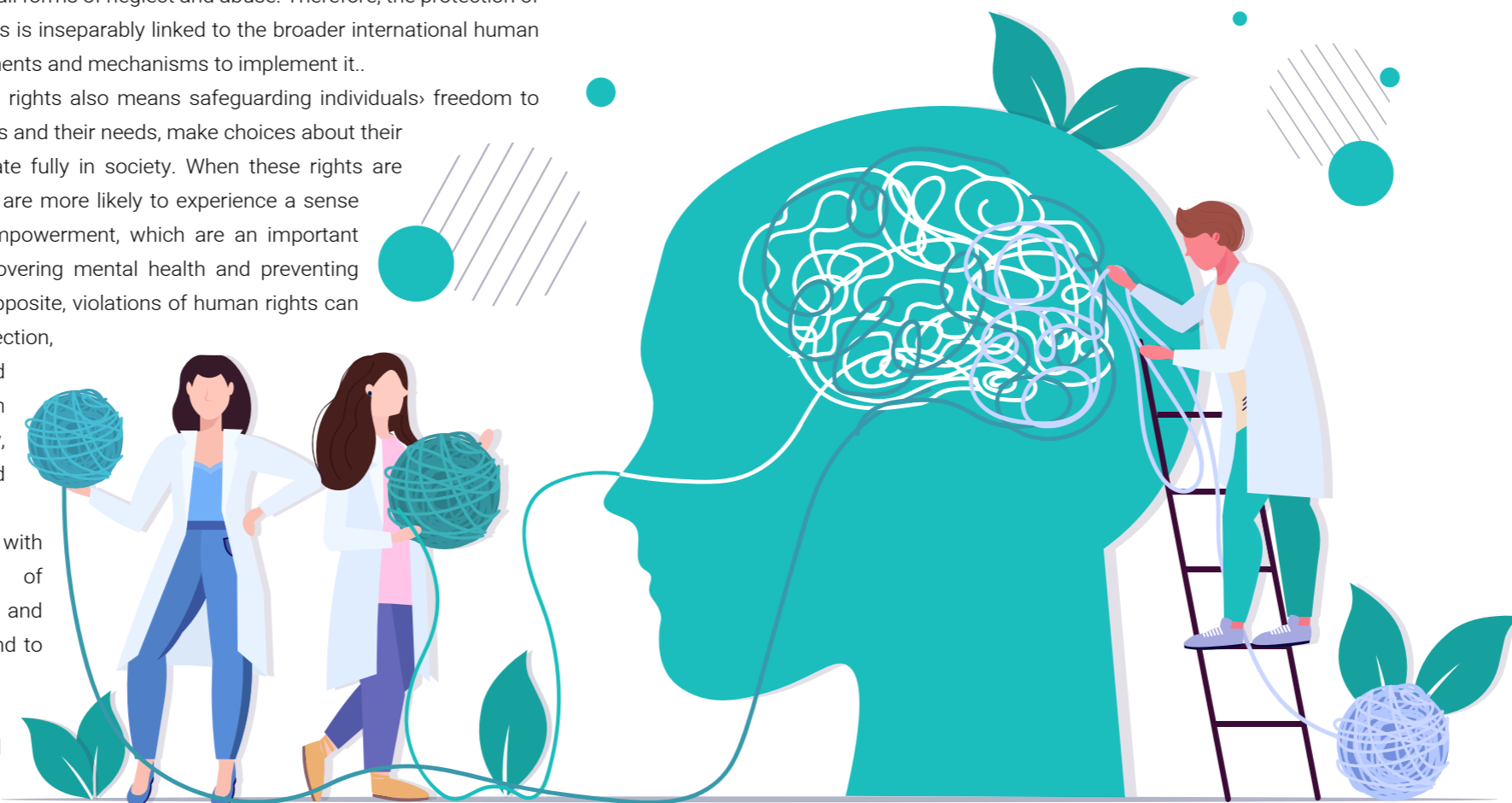
leading to increased psychological harm such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder with potential risks of impulsive violence and harm to oneself and to society.

Consequently, promoting and

protecting the human rights in all aspects of mental health is a priority and should be part of the healthcare management and health policies at the international level. There is an urgent need to support independent civil society defenders promoting and protecting the human rights of persons and groups mentally affected by the worst life situations victims such as: i) individual life crisis at all ages, especially the most vulnerable that cannot defend themselves such as babies and children, ii) social or family disruption and violence, iii) environmental natural or manmade disasters and crisis, and iv) humanitarian victims of attacks on innocent civilians, social terror or wars.

Everyone, wherever in the world, has a deserving and inherent right to the highest attainable standard of mental health and protection from any violation of their human rights. Protecting the human rights for mental health throughout life is a priority not only for human development throughout life, but for the peace in families, communities and in society as a whole.

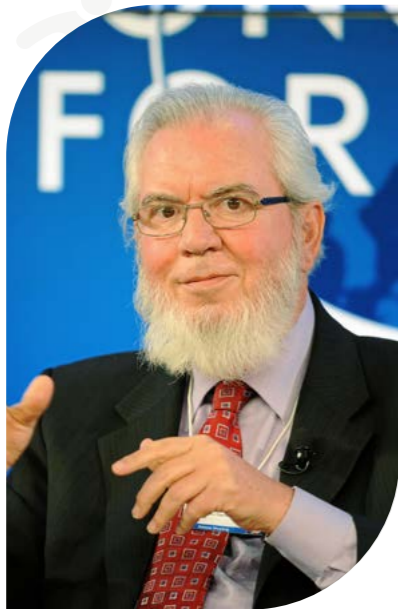
Dr. Astrid Stockelberger, MD, is a distinguished global health scientist, lecturer, and author affiliated with the University of Geneva Medical School and the Swiss University of Applied Sciences, renowned for her expertise in global health and aging. She provides strategic consultation to governments, the European Union, and international agencies, collaborating extensively with the World Health Organization, World Bank, and UN agencies on critical domains including mental health dynamics, evidence-based health policy, international health regulations, and ethical frameworks. As a prolific academic, she has published over 10 books, approximately 170 scientific articles, and numerous policy papers, positioning herself as a leading voice in global health strategy by bridging rigorous scientific research with practical policy implementation and frequently sharing scientific insights through media platforms.





## Decent work and social justice

**The International Labor Organization (ILO) (celebrated its 100th anniversary some years ago by highlighting the commitment of its tripartite constituency to Social Justice and Decent Work, based on the implementation of ILO's conventions, recommendations and supervisory machinery decisions. Also built on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948**



### Juan Somavia

International Labour Organization (ILO) Former Director-General



In this reflective piece, former ILO Director-General Juan Somavia champions the concept of “Decent Work” as a global public good essential for fostering social justice and sustainable development. He emphasizes the interconnection between quality work, societal well-being, and economic growth, underscoring the importance of implementation at national and regional levels.

Somavia eloquently underscores the intrinsic link between Decent Work and the fundamental pillars of social justice, human dignity, and sustainable development. He

articulates Decent Work not merely as an economic construct, but as a comprehensive approach to human dignity and societal progress. Furthermore, he emphasizes that work represents the principal pathway out of poverty. Central to the concept of Decent Work is the recognition that labor is not merely a commodity; a worker is far more than a production cost. The quality of work, Somavia posits, is inextricably tied to the quality of life and the social fabric of our societies.

The historical legacy of the ILO and the framework provided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development strongly reinforce the validity of Somavia’s assertions. The integration of Goal 8 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which prioritizes Decent Work and Economic Growth, further underscores the op-ed’s pertinence and global resonance. From the perspective of the former ILO Director-General, the future people envision is rooted in both national and global economies that create sustainable opportunities for Decent Work. Former ILO Director-General captures the essence of Decent Work through the lived aspirations of individuals and families, highlighting its multidimensional impact. It encompasses not only access to jobs and career prospects but also the quality of working conditions, the balance between professional and family life, and the ability to ensure children’s education or liberate them from child labor. Decent Work, as articulated by Somavia, is equally about achieving gender equality, enhancing competitiveness in evolving markets through technological skills, securing equitable shares of generated wealth, and fostering an environment free of discrimination, where every individual has a voice within their community.

Somavia emphasizes that the ILO’s historical normative framework, coupled with its technical support role, social dialogue mechanisms, and tripartite structure, has demonstrated remarkable resilience and relevance in navigating the major challenges of the past century. He highlights the establishment of the Global Coalition for Social Justice, which places Decent Work at its core, as a testament to the ILO’s enduring ability to foster collective action and collaboration.

This enduring relevance is further reinforced by the widespread recognition of Decent Work as a global public good. This recognition has been solidified at the highest political level through Goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda, which integrates Decent Work and Economic Growth. This goal underscores Decent Work not merely as a labor issue but as a critical benchmark for evaluating the quality of economic growth itself.

Juan Somavia contends that these elements, when combined with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the UN Charter, form the foundation of the UN’s broader Social Mandate, or what could be termed the UN Social Development System. Despite the inherent complexities, he asserts that this system is not perceived to be in crisis. Rather, its processes continue to function effectively through engagement with national and regional stakeholders, as well as partnerships with civil society.

By highlighting gaps in implementation and advocating for strengthened regional cooperation and active civil society engagement, he outlines a strategic pathway to overcome persistent challenges, fostering a collective sense of responsibility. He un-

derscores the importance of the United Nations assuming its share of accountability in addressing these issues.

Somavia identifies the critical challenge as the effective implementation of policies at the national level. While the United Nations and national governments excel in diagnosing problems and setting ambitious objectives, they frequently falter in translating these goals into actionable and sustainable policies.

To address this shortfall, former ILO Director-General emphasizes the necessity of adopting a nationally focused approach. He acknowledges that the challenges stem from diverse institutional dynamics, national realities, external pressures, and conditionalities, all of which vary significantly across countries and regions. He advocates for each nation and region to conduct their own comprehensive analyses to identify obstacles and craft context-specific solutions, while recognizing the broader need for enhanced international cooperation.

Beyond the necessary cooperation to advance common goals and their implementation, these individual national situations are not issues for the Social Summit. But it would be interesting for the Regional Commissions to look at these questions from the specificity of each regional perspective, for use after the Summit. Basically, to answer the question “where are the obstacles in our region to implementing what we are approving”. It would also be testing a methodology that could be used in future global decision making.

Somavia commends the ability of governments, through the United Nations framework, to jointly analyze pressing issues and collectively envision a future that transcends current limitations. He highlights the unique capacity of the United Nations, its Secretariat, and Member States to anticipate and address future challenges, fostering awareness and action across a range of critical areas. The Summit of the Future, he notes, exemplifies this forward-looking approach on multiple fronts.

He also emphasizes the value of the space created by the United Nations for civil society to contribute to global processes. While acknowledging that civil society’s influence remains insufficient, he underscores its critical role in monitoring national implementation. Civil society and nongovernmental organizations, both domestically and internationally, are indispensable in bridging policy frameworks with the diverse visions and interests of social actors.

Ultimately, Somavia asserts that open dialogue among nations, encompassing a wide range of perspectives, is essential to achieving the convergence necessary for effective governance. Such dialogue ensures a robust foundation for decision-making and legitimacy. This commitment to social dialogue and tripartism has been a cornerstone of the ILO since its founding in 1919, underpinning its historical continuity and shaping the normative basis of most labor laws globally.

Juan Somavia’s op-ed serves as a compelling advocacy for Decent Work as a foundational pillar of social justice and sustainable development. The piece effectively raises awareness of the critical role of Decent Work in shaping equitable societies and addresses systemic challenges that hinder its realization. However, its impact could be further enhanced by incorporating concrete examples and actionable solutions to bridge the gap between vision and implementation.

Former ILO Director-General calls on readers to envision a shared future, emphasizing that the common interests uniting national societies and the global community far outweigh the divisions between them. He underscores the imperative of developing the necessary instruments, mechanisms, and, most importantly, the collective conviction to transform this shared vision into a tangible reality. This challenge, he argues, is both urgent and achievable if approached with determination and solidarity.

In 2006, International Labour Organization (ILO) Director-General Juan Somavia issued a global call to action during an international conference in Vienna, urging nations and non-governmental organizations to initiate a worldwide campaign promoting decent work. Somavia unveiled the campaign’s official slogan, “Decent Work for a Decent Life,” and declared it a cornerstone of the ILO’s future objectives. The Director-General stressed the importance of establishing a global initiative to ensure the universal availability of decent work under suitable conditions, with the ultimate aim of poverty reduction.

The ILO chief maintained that continued poverty and substandard working conditions would impede nations’ development aspirations, asserting that authentic development commences with workplace improvements. He emphasized that these conditions must conform to human rights standards. Somavia characterized this as a critically important undertaking that requires global participation to transform decent work into a tangible reality within every nation.

Former International Labour Organization (ILO) Director-General Juan Somavia remains a prominent figure on the international stage, even after stepping down from his role in late 2012. Prior to his tenure at the ILO, he served as the Ambassador of Chile to the United Nations in New York for nine years, from 1990 to 1999.

Throughout his career, Somavia has been a prolific writer and lecturer, addressing a wide range of issues including trade, security, social and economic matters, labor, and human rights. His significant contributions to these fields have been recognized with numerous awards.



# “Al Ain Oasis”: Masterpiece Reflecting Aesthetic Dimensions of Nature through “Sustainable Heritage” Exception testimony to prehistoric cultures evolution



The UAE, under the guidance of its wise leadership, acknowledges the paramount importance of preserving, protecting, and documenting archaeological, natural, and heritage sites as an essential component of our national cultural legacy. Driven by this steadfast commitment, the UAE has diligently worked to inscribe its most significant sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List, recognizing these locations as living cultural memories that encapsulate the profound interaction and convergence of diverse civilizations.

The United Arab Emirates has assumed a pioneering role in global heritage preservation, demonstrating its commitment by ratifying and acceding to the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, as established by the General Conference in 1972. This decisive action reflects the UAE’s profound conviction that such international cultural initiatives are instrumental in fostering values of tolerance, mutual understanding, and peaceful coexistence among nations worldwide.

### Al Ain Oasis

The cultural sites in Al Ain stand as an exceptional testament to the evolutionary trajectory of cultures that flourished in the desert region from prehistoric times, spanning from the Neolithic period to the Iron Age. These archaeological sites illuminate the profound human presence and sustainable developmental activities within the United Arab Emirates, meticulously documenting the transformative societal transitions from nomadic hunting lifestyles to settled agricultural communities in the oasis.

### Aflaj Irrigation and Fertile Soil: Crafting the Aesthetic Dimensions of the Oasis

The “Al Ain Oasis” relies on a sophisticated water management system that ingeniously leverages traditional well water and the ancient aflaj irrigation technique. This time-honored method efficiently channels groundwater from distant rocky mountain regions—sometimes spanning multiple kilometers—to local farmers through meticulously engineered surface and subterranean water channels.

The “Al Ain Oasis” utilizes two principal aflaj irrigation systems—the Aini and the Dawudi—which uniquely divide water resources into two distinct branches extending from the southeastern region towards the Hajar Mountains near Jebel Hafeet. Upon reaching the oasis, water is distributed through an intricate network of channels, with strategic water routing accomplished by selectively blocking specific channels to direct water to designated agricultural zones.

Despite the predominantly sandy and gravelly terrain characteristic of significant portions of Al Ain, the Al Ain Oasis distinguishes itself through a substantial silt layer originating from Jebel Hafeet mountain. To further enhance the ecological narrative and visitor experience, the oasis features advanced environmental facilities and dedicated ecological centers strategically positioned at its western entrance. These state-of-the-art installations not only provide comprehensive educational insights into the region’s unique environmental dynamics but also position the Al Ain Oasis as a distinguished cultural and agricultural destination.

The Al Ain Oasis represents a living embodiment of Emirati heritage, distinguished by its prestigious inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2011 and officially opened to the public in 2016. This exceptional site offers visitors an unparalleled opportunity to explore its rich cultural and environmental landscape, embodying the United Arab Emirates’ commitment to preserving and showcasing its natural and historical treasures.

Spanning an impressive expanse, the oasis features a meticulously curated environment that encompasses an extraordinary 147,000 palm trees, creating a verdant, shaded ecosystem that tells the story of sustainable agricultural practices. Visitors can traverse carefully designed pathways that wind through this living museum, experiencing a diverse botanical collection featuring approximately 100 distinct plant species and a network of productive agricultural holdings.

The “Al Ain Oasis” is situated in the heart of Al Ain city, spanning extensive cultivated territories utilizing traditional irrigation systems. The oasis depends on traditional aflaj irrigation methods, featuring winding pathways underneath the shade of date palm trees and other fruit trees. It stands as a living testament to the agricultural traditions that have prevailed in the region for thousands of years. Alongside the iconic date palm groves, the oasis cultivates fodder crops and fruit trees, including mangoes, oranges, bananas, figs, and sidr (locally known as jujube), with historical stone walls demarcating the agricultural plots from one another.

### Eastern Fort

The Eastern Fort, also famously known as the “Sultan’s Castle,” is strategically positioned on the eastern edge of the Al Ain Oasis, historically situated within the heart of the old village, traditionally referred to as “Harat Al Hisn” (Fort Neighborhood). This historic landmark represents a pivotal architectural and cultural testament to the governance of the Al Nahyan family in Al Ain during the late 19th century. Established approximately in 1910 by the late Sheikh Sultan bin Zayed, the fort served as his personal residence prior to his ascension to the leadership of Abu Dhabi between 1922 and 1926.





## Film Festivals with a Human Rights Lens: Promoting Awareness Through the Big Screen

### Verzió Festival in Budapest; Documentary and Human Rights Films

In November, the historic city of Budapest came alive as it hosted the 21st edition of the Verzió Documentary Film Festival. This prestigious cultural gathering drew documentary filmmakers from across the globe, uniting them in celebration of the art of storytelling. Nearly 70 films graced the festival, each delving into a diverse range of human-centered themes—from the complexities of international conflicts and the pursuit of social justice to pressing environmental challenges and the rights of minority communities. Over the course of the event, the festival evolved into a dynamic space for meaningful dialogue and advocacy, where powerful narratives brought human rights issues to the forefront.

As part of its diverse programs, the festival featured sections such as “Focused Vision” and “Open Spaces,” offering viewers the opportunity to explore global issues from new and unconventional perspectives. The “Memory and History” section highlighted human rights in the context of historical events, while the “Social Justice” section focused on the human struggle in impoverished communities to secure their fundamental rights.

#### The International Charter for Human Rights Films: Towards a Unified Vision

Human Rights Cinema Festivals emerged as a powerful artistic movement in the early 1990s, driven by a growing number of festivals dedicated to fostering human rights awareness through the medium of film. The first specialized festival took place in 1994, and by then, 41 festivals had been established across Europe, setting the stage for the global proliferation of such events. In 2004, the festival organizers convened in Prague, Switzerland, to create the Charter for Human Rights Films. This document serves as an ethical and professional framework designed to promote human rights through filmmaking. The Charter outlines essential guidelines for filmmakers, ensuring that their works adhere to the fundamental values of human rights while also raising public consciousness around key humanitarian issues. Among its core principles are:

**Respect for Human Dignity:** Focusing on portraying individuals and communities in a way that respects their human dignity, without distortion or devaluation.

**Diversity and Inclusion:** Fair representation of all social groups, including minorities, women, and people with disabilities.

**Ethical Filming:** Ensuring that scenes are shot in a manner that respects the rights of participants, especially in cases involving children or vulnerable groups.

**Commitment to Facts:** Striving for accuracy in representing facts when addressing human rights issues to avoid misinformation or the spread of stereotypes.

**Privacy Protection:** Respecting the privacy of individuals who are filmed, particularly in sensitive cases or when depicting victims of rights violations.

**Raising Awareness:** Using films as a tool to increase public awareness of human rights issues and promote solutions.

**Cultural and Religious Neutrality:** Avoiding the violation of cultural or religious values in a disrespectful manner, while fostering mutual understanding among cultures.

**Compliance with International and Domestic Laws:** Adhering to national and international legal standards concerning human rights and freedom of expression.

The Charter has played a significant role in creating a strong foundation for this industry, enabling it to influence public awareness and enhance the role of cinema as a tool for change.

#### Emergence in the Arab World: Pioneering Experiences

Human Rights Film Festivals have expanded beyond Europe and have gained significant ground in the Arab world, where prominent events have flourished. Notable examples include the Karama Festival in Lebanon, a similarly named festival in Amman, Jordan, the International Human Rights Film Festival in Tunisia, the Human Rights Film Festival in Morocco, and another annual festival held in Baghdad, Iraq. In 2015, the Arab Network for Human Rights Films was established in Jordan, bringing together nine Arab countries in a collective effort to support human rights cinema and foster collaboration between filmmakers and festival organizers. The network operates under a charter that aligns with international human rights standards, aiming to stimulate discussion and raise awareness while remaining independent from political or commercial influences.

#### OHCHR Role

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has emphasized the importance of human rights films in raising awareness and promoting a culture of human rights. To achieve this, the Office participates in organizing the International Festival and Forum on Human Rights Films (FIFDH), which has been held annually in Geneva since 2005. This forum is part of the United Nations' global human rights education program, aimed at enhancing knowledge and engagement with human rights issues worldwide.

#### Cinema as a tool to changing communities

Human Rights Film Festivals have emerged as essential platforms for raising awareness about human rights issues, presenting poignant stories that illuminate the challenges faced by communities. As these festivals continue to receive support, cinema demonstrates its capacity to serve as a transformative tool for social change, fostering cross-cultural dialogue, and promoting global values of justice and equality.





## Mother of the Nation: A Leader and Pioneer of Women's Empowerment in the UAE

Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, known as the “Mother of the Nation”, is a foundational figure in advancing women’s status in the UAE and one of the most influential women in the history of the Arab region. Her journey is marked by a series of pioneering achievements that have cemented women’s rights, empowered them to lead, and facilitated their rise to prominent leadership positions.

Her path to empowering Emirati women began with the establishment of the General Women’s Union (GWU), a move that reflects the vision of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founding father of the UAE. This vision was rooted in the belief that women should play a fundamental role in shaping the nation’s future. Under the unwavering guidance and supervision of Her Highness, Emirati women have made significant strides. Today, women hold nearly 25% of ministerial positions in the Cabinet and 50% of the seats in the Federal National Council (FNC), making them key partners in the UAE’s development and comprehensive progress.

### A Journey of Continuous Progress

Her Highness Sheikha Fatima’s path to women’s empowerment began with a series of initiatives, most notably the establishment of the General Women’s Union (GWU) in 1975, which became the UAE’s national mechanism for women’s empowerment and leadership. That same year, she launched a national literacy and education strategy to address illiteracy among women, which became a pivotal step in advancing women’s education in the UAE.

Over time, the General Women’s Union developed and launched the Second National Strategy for Women’s Empowerment 2015-2021.

Her vision extended beyond education. In 1978, she established the General Women’s Union Library to promote knowledge-sharing and intellectual development. In 2002, she launched the National Strategic Plan for Women’s Advancement, which provided a comprehensive approach to achieving holistic empowerment for Emirati women.

In 2020, Her Highness Sheikha Fatima directed the creation of the first specialized academy for Emirati crafts, an initiative aimed at preserving and promoting traditional crafts to ensure their transmission to future generations.

Her support for legislative reform was also crucial. In 2008, she contributed to the amendment of the maternity leave law, marking a significant milestone in the UAE’s journey toward gender equality in the workplace.



### Cyber Pulse Initiative

In line with the accelerating technological advancements, Her Highness directed the launch of the “Cyber Pulse” initiative for women and families, in collaboration with the General Women’s Union, the Cybersecurity Council, and its strategic partners. This initiative aims to strengthen the presence of Emirati women in the field of cybersecurity and equip them to contribute to raising digital awareness within society.

Her Highness Sheikha Fatima has also shown great interest in supporting refugee families through her patronage of the “Ataya Humanitarian Initiative,” both locally and internationally. This initiative focuses on enhancing aspects of social responsibility towards disadvantaged refugee families.

### Political Representation of Women

Regarding the political empowerment of women, Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak has played a pivotal role in enhancing women’s participation in political life. In this context, she launched the “Fatima bint Mubarak 50/50 Campaign for Women’s Political Empowerment,” which culminated on March 5, 2019, with the issuance of a decree by the late Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE. The decree, No. 1 of 2019, mandated the increase of women’s representation in the Federal National Council to 50%.

In 2020, the United Nations announced the renaming of the Women, Peace, and Security Program to the “Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Initiative for Women’s Empowerment in Peace and Security.”

### National Policy

The UAE Cabinet launched the National Policy for Women’s Empowerment 2023-2031 on the occasion of Emirati Women’s Day 2023, under the theme “We Collaborate for Tomorrow.” This policy reflects Her Highness’s vision to achieve fair and inclusive participation of women, enabling them to have an impact across all fields and enhancing the quality of life in society. It also serves as a general and reference framework for decision-makers in federal and local government institutions, the private sector, and civil society. The policy aims to strengthen efforts to empower and promote women’s leadership in the UAE.

### Training workshop to enhance the capabilities of Emirati women in the field of cybersecurity



### Global Initiatives

Her Highness’s efforts were not limited to the domestic sphere; she also launched numerous international initiatives to support women worldwide. Under the directives of the “Mother of the Nation”, the Emirates Red Crescent and the Sheikha Fatima Fund for Refugee Women, in collaboration with Etihad Airways, launched the “Bridge of Hope” initiative. This initiative aims to train midwives in several countries, including Mauritania, Kenya, and Mali, with the goal of reducing maternal and infant mortality rates in communities facing critical healthcare challenges.

Ahead of the UAE’s hosting of COP28, Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint



# CARICATURE

Mubarak launched the "Climate Change and Gender Equality" initiative, aimed at empowering women as active and influential participants in global climate action frameworks.

Additionally, Her Highness launched the Fatima bint Mubarak Initiative for Empowering Rural Women in Africa in Agriculture, a project designed to support rural women in the agricultural sector and promote sustainable livelihoods in African communities.

Under Her Highness's guidance, the Emirates Red Crescent (ERC) provided urgent Ramadan aid to Sudan and launched a campaign to combat eye diseases in Morocco. Furthermore, the Sheikhha Fatima bint Mubarak Center for Women's Education and Training was established in Zanzibar, Tanzania, with the aim of providing education and training opportunities for women in the region.

In support of health infrastructure, the Emirates Red Crescent signed a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Health in Comoros to establish dialysis centers and maternal and child healthcare facilities. Additionally, the Mother of the Nation Mother and Child Hospital was inaugurated on Moheli Island, representing a major step forward in healthcare provision for mothers and children in the region.

As part of the "Mother of the Nation's Development Projects", a range of developmental initiatives were implemented in Ethiopia, reflecting Her Highness's dedication to global humanitarian support.

On February 9, 2023, Her Highness directed the allocation of AED 50 million to support the "Bridges of Goodness" campaign, an initiative of the Emirates Red Crescent aimed at supporting humanitarian relief and rescue operations for those affected by the earthquakes in Syria and Turkey. In addition, Her Highness ordered medical treatment for the injured survivors of the disaster in UAE hospitals.

This humanitarian legacy follows Her Highness's earlier commitment to global humanitarian relief, such as the health initiative to treat and rehabilitate those injured in the Beirut Port explosion in Lebanon.

In a landmark humanitarian gesture, Her Highness facilitated the opening of the Ladyge Hospital in Seychelles, built at a cost of over AED 25 million, serving approximately 3,000 local residents annually. This effort is part of a broader series of international initiatives to support women and disaster-affected communities.

## Child Welfare

Driven by Her Highness Sheikhha Fatima bint Mubarak's profound commitment to childhood issues, the General Women's Union has been organizing the Childhood Festival, a three-day annual event held since 1991. Her Highness's dedication to child welfare was further demonstrated by the launch of the "Jannati" Nursery in 2000, providing a safe and nurturing environment for the children of female employees.

Recognizing the importance of ensuring family and psychological stability for children in the UAE, Her Highness established the "Child Custody Visitation Center" in 2001 in collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department. This center aims to guarantee a healthy upbringing for children in custody arrangements.

On an international level, reflecting the UAE's commitment to children's rights, the General Women's Union hosted the UNICEF Gulf Area Office at its headquarters from 2007 to 2023. This collaboration focused on advancing child rights, supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and contributing to the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.





## Union Association for Human Rights; A Year-Long Journey: Impact and Influence

The Union Association for Human Rights, during its operations spanning less than twelve months, has continually highlighted the developmental path of civil society in the United Arab Emirates. The organization's extensive initiatives have mirrored both the state's groundbreaking endeavors and the considered support for human rights from its leadership.

Over

# 50

50 diverse contributions to Human Rights Council sessions, including written and oral statements, international conferences, and human rights exhibitions

Following the announcement decision issued by the Ministry of Community Development in January of this year and the licensing granted by the Department of Community Development in Abu Dhabi, the General Assembly was held in February 2024. During this meeting, the association's Board of Directors was elected, with Dr. Fatima Khalifa Al Kaabi appointed as Chairperson. Expert Maryam Al Ahmadi was elected as Vice President, and Mr. Imran Al Khouri as Secretary-General, to oversee the management of the association's affairs and work towards achieving its strategic goals. Mr. Salam Mohamed was also appointed to supervise financial matters, ensuring transparency and integrity. Additionally, Ms. Israa Mohammed, a person of determination, was selected as a board member, contributing to the collective efforts and helping drive the association's future initiatives.

In recent months, the association has highlighted a range of significant human rights issues, addressing national, regional, and international concerns through 17 written statements and 27 oral statements presented to the Human Rights Council at the United Nations. Moreover, the association issued various media statements that reflected its perspectives on both national and international decisions, while also contributing to international statements in collaboration with a number of non-governmental organizations holding consultative status with the UN.

The association also organized three international seminars on the sidelines of three UN sessions, with participation from the association's leadership, international experts, and heads of several international NGOs. Furthermore, it held four cultural human rights exhibitions, through which it showcased the UAE's commitment to human rights and its vision for the future, the outlines of which are already beginning to take shape.



The Union Association for Human Rights is committed to ensuring that its vision is driven by leadership and excellence in promoting the respect for human rights according to international standards. Its mission reflects its active and efficient contribution to the protection and respect of human rights, enhancing the impact of all relevant legislation, decisions, practices, and policies concerning human rights. The Association's values include "loyalty and belonging, commitment and responsibility, partnership and integration, independence, transparency, leadership, and excellence."

### The National Perspective

The Association has consistently strived to solidify its national position, aligning with its founding principles. It has achieved notable milestones, positioning itself as a leading human rights organization. Through numerous engagements with key institutions nationwide, the Association has actively promoted the integration of human rights values and principles into society.

The Association engaged in a series of meetings with key human rights leaders to discuss future collaborations and ensure the continued active role of civil society institutions in advancing human rights protection within the country. These discussions involved representatives from organizations specializing in combating human trafficking and leaders from the health and community protection sector. The aim was to strengthen joint efforts and coordination to achieve strategic objectives related to rights protection and the promotion of justice and humanity.

The Association has actively participated in a variety of awareness-raising and interactive workshops aimed at enhancing public understanding of human rights and social issues, and fostering dialogue with diverse segments of society. These workshops addressed a wide range of topics, including human rights, the empowerment of marginalized groups, social responsibility, inclusivity, and the risks of money laundering and terrorism financing. These efforts aim to strengthen the integrity of the financial sector and contribute to international security and peace. The Association remains committed to fostering collaboration and cooperation with various entities and communities to achieve sustainable positive impact.

### Press Releases

The Union Association for Human Rights issued several press statements highlighting the positive developments in human rights within the UAE. Among these, the Association commended the country's successful exit from the grey list, recognizing its continued implementation of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations. This achievement further strengthens the UAE's financial and banking reputation.







**Participation in international conferences and events, including the drafting and adoption of the Future Charter, to affirm the role and journey of the state's civil society institutions**

**Issuance of multiple media statements in collaboration with organizations holding ECOSOC consultative status, commending the UAE's leadership in human rights and its contributions to international events.**

The Association also commended the law regulating reform and rehabilitation centers, which transferred the management of correctional and reform facilities from the Abu Dhabi Police to the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department. Furthermore, the Association recognized the UAE's proactive response to emergency weather situations and the award of the "Global Humanitarian Personality" prize by the Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly to President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in recognition of his support for humanitarian and relief efforts.

The Union Association for Human Rights led an international coalition of 21 regional and global organizations in commending the presidential pardon for Bangladeshi nationals convicted of crimes. The coalition emphasized that this decision reflects the UAE's values of tolerance and coexistence.

The Association also participated in several international events, issuing press statements commending the UN General Assembly's adoption of measures to combat Islamophobia. Moreover, it recognized the UAE's leadership in global indices related to worker rights and its top ranking in the "tolerance toward foreigners" index. The Association reaffirmed the UAE's strong commitment to supporting children's rights.

The Association participated in local and international celebrations of national, regional, and global observances. Notably, it celebrated Emirati Women's Day, reaffirming national unity, loyalty, and allegiance to the leadership on Flag Day, and honored the sacrifices of UAE martyrs on Martyrs' Day. In celebration of National Day, the Association renewed its commitment to building a strong state founded on the principles of justice and human rights.

In observance of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Association took part in the international campaign against violence directed at women and girls, which lasted for 16 days ("Orange Days"), from November 25 to December 10. This campaign focused on protecting women and girls while raising both local and international awareness of violence directed against them.

### The Global Perspective

The Union Association for Human Rights has diligently worked to highlight and strengthen the UAE's human rights progress, emphasizing its exemplary leadership on the global stage. This was accomplished through the issuance of multiple written and oral statements during its participation in the 55th, 56th, and 57th sessions of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. Additionally, the Association organized numerous side events, international seminars, and human rights and cultural exhibitions in conjunction with these UN sessions.



### International Statements

The written and oral statements, which were published on the United Nations Human Rights website in Arabic, English, and French, addressed key aspects of human rights efforts in the UAE. Among the highlights was the recognition of the UAE President, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, as a leader and source of inspiration for global peace and coexistence values. The statements acknowledged His Highness's contributions and leadership in establishing the UAE's principles of human fraternity worldwide.

The statements also commended the UAE's National Policy for Women's Empowerment 2023-2031, initiated by H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Chairwoman of the General Women's Union (GWU), President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, and Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation (FDF). This policy has been instrumental in advancing the stature of Emirati women across all key sectors nationwide. Moreover, the statements expressed support for Her Highness's initiative to empower rural women in Africa in the agricultural sector. This initiative aims to empower over 20,000 rural women, supporting their livelihoods, promoting food security, advancing sustainable development, and fostering gender equality.

The statements commended the UAE's longstanding institutional commitment to safeguarding human rights, particularly its rejection of all forms of racial discrimination, in alignment with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The statements recognized the UAE's global standing and its unique experience in investing in artificial intelligence and leveraging advanced technology, which aligns with the United Nations' aspirations to support national human rights bodies and mechanisms. Furthermore, the statements highlighted the importance of the right to education and acknowledged the UAE's global initiatives to support international organizations and numerous governments in providing quality education for children, addressing the global education crisis.

The statements also underscored the UAE's significant humanitarian efforts in striving for peace and seeking an end to the ongoing conflict in Sudan. This includes the provision of over USD 3.5 billion in aid, with USD 230 million allocated since the conflict began. Furthermore, the statements acknowledged the UAE's pivotal role in successful peace mediation efforts, including facilitating seven prisoner exchange agreements between Russia and Ukraine, which offer considerable hope for a peaceful resolution to this global crisis.







### International Seminars

The Association organized three international seminars, including one titled “The Role of Human Rights Mechanisms in the Context of Armed Conflicts” during the UN Human Rights Council’s 55th session. This seminar examined the UAE’s humanitarian efforts in armed conflicts, emphasizing its leadership among donor countries in humanitarian aid relative to its national income, thereby contributing to the right to life and health. During the 56th session, another seminar titled “The Summit of the Future: Human Rights Challenges Ahead” was held. Participants acknowledged the UAE’s pioneering and inspirational efforts in addressing emerging challenges to human rights, particularly those arising from artificial intelligence, as well as environmental and climate-related issues. The UAE’s commitment to fulfilling its international obligations in these critical areas was commended by all attendees. The third seminar, titled “Human Rights Challenges in the Context of Artificial Intelligence,” was held during the 57th session. It showcased the UAE’s leading experience in harnessing artificial intelligence for the benefit of humanity and its development, emphasizing its commitment to achieving digital justice and strengthening its global standing, all while adhering to a human rights-based approach.

### Cultural Exhibitions

The Association organized four international human rights cultural exhibitions at the United Nations Human Rights Plaza. Notably, an exhibition titled “The UAE Model in Simulating and Anticipating Human Rights in the Future” was held on the sidelines of the 56th session for three days. This exhibition highlighted the importance of the upcoming Sum-



### The Association’s contributions to UN sessions statistics



mit of the Future in shaping the future of human rights and showcased the UAE’s significant contributions, achievements, and leadership role in the field of human rights. During the 57th session, three exhibitions were organized, addressing key themes such as “Peace, Tolerance, and Coexistence in the UAE,” “Climate Protection and Environmental Safety in the UAE,” and “Digital Smart Justice in the UAE.” These exhibitions, held over a period of 10 days, presented a total of 136 panels that illustrated the UAE’s journey, including 20 permanent displays emphasizing the country’s commitment to the protection and promotion of civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and solidarity rights. Additionally, the exhibitions highlighted the rights of priority groups, including women, girls, youth, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and workers, in line with the UAE’s efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

### International and Regional Events

The Union Association for Human Rights participated in the United Nations Civil Society Conference on the Summit of the Future held in Nairobi, Kenya. The Association contributed its perspective on the pact during the conference meetings, which included a wide range of international non-governmental organizations. The Association also continued its participation in the Summit of the Future held in New York, where the “Pact for the Future” was adopted during a session of the UN General Assembly. As preparations for the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, scheduled for mid-2025 in Spain, begin, the Association engaged in the 2024 Social Forum held in Geneva to present civil society organizations’ vision on key conference topics. Moreover, it participated in the interactive session for non-governmental organizations on the outcomes of the Summit of the Future, hosted at the United Nations Palais des Nations in Geneva. The Association also took part in the AidEx Exhibition for Humanitarian Aid and Relief, where it showcased the UAE’s leadership in humanitarian work. The UAE is one of the first countries to contribute to international aid, charitable efforts, and development projects at the local, regional, and global levels. The Association also highlighted the programs launched by the UAE to alleviate human suffering in conflict and war-torn regions. Furthermore, the Association participated in consultations regarding the second periodic national report on the Arab Charter on Human Rights, which was presented to the Committee of the Charter at the Arab League. It proposed several observations and recommendations to enhance the governance and comprehensiveness of the report in addressing the human rights situation, reinforcing its commitment to the Arab Charter. The Association also announced its intention to submit an independent shadow report to the Arab Charter on Human Rights Committee, reflecting its views and assessment on the state of human rights, in an effort to promote transparency and collaboration among all relevant stakeholders.



**UAHR** جمعية الاتحاد لحقوق الإنسان | Union Association for Human Rights

**The Association’s contributions in international events all year long**

- United Nations Civil Society Conference on the Future Summit** - Nairobi
- The Future Summit** - New York
- Interactive Session for NGOs on the Outcomes of the Future Summit from an NGO Perspective** - Geneva
- Social Forum (United Nations Human Rights Council)** - Geneva
- AidEx Humanitarian Aid and Relief Exhibition and Conference** - Geneva

### Continuing the Journey

The Union Association for Human Rights continues its pioneering journey, which began in its first year of establishment, as an integral part of the UAE civil society. This path is dedicated to upholding human dignity and fundamental freedoms, as enshrined in divine laws and international human rights treaties and conventions. The Association is also focused on implementing its strategic plan, expanding its programs, and achieving its future goals and aspirations. This reaffirms its commitment to its vision, mission, and core values.



# UAE:

## Global Benchmark for Empowerment and Inclusion of People of Determination

Equality among all segments of the society is a distinguished civilizational policy that characterizes the UAE ,comprehensively embedded within its legislative laws and regulatory frameworks .This commitment extends to granting full rights to persons with disabilities )People of Determination ,(a population for whom the state has successfully enhanced and elevated their roles across all dimensions of social ,professional ,and civic life.



**Esraa Ali Al-Amiri**

Board of Member of the Union Association for Human Rights  
(From the People of Determination)

The UAE government has implemented comprehensive measures aimed at continuously enhancing and protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities )People of Determination ,(ensuring their ability to lead fulfilling lives and contribute meaningfully to society with unwavering perseverance ,determination, and creativity.

The UAE has proactively granted People of Determination numerous opportunities for representation within civil society institutions ,systematically eliminating discriminatory barriers .Government and private sector entities collaborate synergistically to build and strengthen the capabilities of individuals with disabilities ,demonstrating a profound commitment to their comprehensive empowerment.

The nation's efforts represent a progressive model of social development, emphasizing dignity, potential, and the fundamental right of every individual to contribute to and benefit from societal progress, regardless of physical or cognitive differences.

In the UAE, persons with disabilities (People of Determination) benefit from a comprehensive system of education, healthcare, employment, and social services, distinguishing their experience from that of many other countries. The nation demonstrates an ongoing commitment to enhancing these services through targeted decisions and legislation.

Federal Law No. 29 of 2006 Concerning the Rights of Persons with Special Needs establishes a robust legal framework for safeguarding their rights, ensuring equality, and promoting equal opportunities within society. This law underscores the importance of full inclusion in all facets of life. Furthermore, Cabinet Decision No. 54 of 2020 concerning non-governmental organizations for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities provides regulatory guidelines for the establishment of such organizations, guaranteeing that their services adhere to the highest standards of quality and effectiveness.

Furthermore, the state's strategies emphasize the promotion of gender equality and the prohibition of discrimination, consistent with the principles and provisions enshrined in the Constitution. Persons with disabilities are guaranteed the



same rights as all other individuals, with disability not constituting grounds for the denial or deprivation of any rights.

The UAE has implemented a series of comprehensive initiatives to support and empower persons with disabilities. Key measures include the establishment of the National Center for Diagnosis and Assessment in 2021, the development of a comprehensive database on disability cases, and the issuance of the Persons with Disabilities Protection Policy in 2019. Additional initiatives include the launch of the National Policy for Empowering People of Determination, the creation of the National Platform for the Employment of Persons with Disabilities, and the introduction of the "UAE Accessibility Code" to facilitate accessibility for persons with disabilities. The state has also adopted an inclusive education policy in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and developed a policy



aimed at empowering persons with disabilities during emergencies, crises, and disasters.

Together, these initiatives, alongside the establishment of the Advisory Council for People of Determination—comprising representatives from federal and local government entities, community members, and People of Determination themselves—play a pivotal role in addressing challenges and ensuring the seamless integration of this vital segment of society.

The UAE, under the guidance of its leadership and key institutions, places significant emphasis on supporting and enhancing the well-being of persons with disabilities. These efforts aim to facilitate their progression from dependence to empowerment, ensuring their active and meaningful participation across all sectors of society.



Human rights culture is described as “the collective efforts to promote awareness of human rights, along with related ideas and initiatives aimed at generating, sharing, and exchanging knowledge.” This concept suggests that the level of understanding within a society regarding human rights issues can be categorized based on the degree of awareness. Societies with higher levels of education and intellectual development are better positioned to cultivate a culture that aligns more closely with an ideal understanding and observance of human rights principles. Through this section, we present a series of consecutive episodes offering comprehensive information aimed at enhancing awareness of human rights.

## The Evolution of the Concept of Human Rights: A Comprehensive Perspective

The concept of human rights has evolved significantly, reflecting an increasing recognition of its role in enhancing the well-being of individuals and communities. What once focused primarily on basic rights has now broadened to include civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. This progression highlights a growing understanding of the need for a holistic approach to safeguarding human dignity in all aspects of life.

### Human Rights Culture: A Foundation for Social Awareness

Human rights culture plays a crucial role in enhancing understanding of human rights, fostering a well-rounded awareness that enables individuals to recognize and defend their rights. This awareness strengthens the connection between individuals and their societal culture, allowing them to exercise their rights with responsibility and commitment.

As awareness of human rights has grown, numerous non-governmental organizations have been established at national, regional, and international levels. These organizations work to promote a culture of human rights through independent programs that empower communities to integrate these rights into their daily lives.



### The Universal Declaration of Human Right: The Foundation Stone

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a foundational and highly significant document in the history of human rights. Drafted by a diverse group of experts from various legal and cultural backgrounds worldwide, it was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on December 10, 1948. The Declaration stands as a common framework that reflects the shared human principles and values of all peoples and nations.

### The Significance of the Declaration

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the first document to outline the fundamental rights that should be universally respected, establishing itself as a key reference in shaping national and regional legal and constitutional frameworks. It has been translated into over 500 languages, making it the most translated document in the world. The Declaration has also served as a source of inspiration for the development of international human rights instruments, including the two International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, and Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

### The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Key Articles

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights consists of 30 articles outlining the fundamental rights agreed upon by the global community as essential for all nations to ensure within their respective societies. Some of the key provisions in the Declaration include:

1. The right to life, liberty, and personal security.
2. Prohibition of slavery: No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; the slave trade in all its forms is prohibited.
3. Freedom from torture: No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.
4. Recognition of legal personality: Every human being has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.
5. Equality before the law: All individuals are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination.
6. Protection from arbitrary arrest: No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile.
7. The right to a fair trial: Everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal in the determination of their rights and obligations and any criminal charge against them.
8. The right to social security: Everyone has the right to social security and to the realization of the free development of their personality.
9. The right to work: Every person has the right to work, to freely choose their employment, to fair and favorable conditions of work, and to protection against unemployment.
10. The right to an adequate standard of living: Every person has the right to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services.
11. The right to education: Everyone has the right to education, and elementary education shall be mandatory.
12. The right to participate in cultural life: Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts, and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.



### The Declaration's Impact Worldwide

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not a legally binding document in itself, yet it holds significant moral and ethical authority. It forms the foundation for many binding international agreements and treaties, contributing to the advancement of human dignity and the protection of fundamental rights. It has become a cornerstone and global reference in the formulation and development of both national and international laws. Moreover, it has supported global efforts to achieve justice and equality across various societies, making it one of humanity's most important achievements in the ongoing defense of human rights.



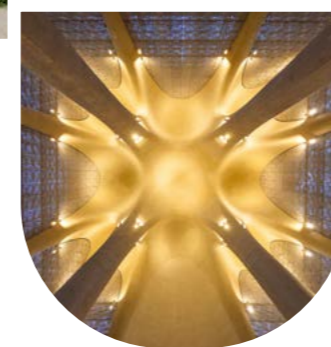
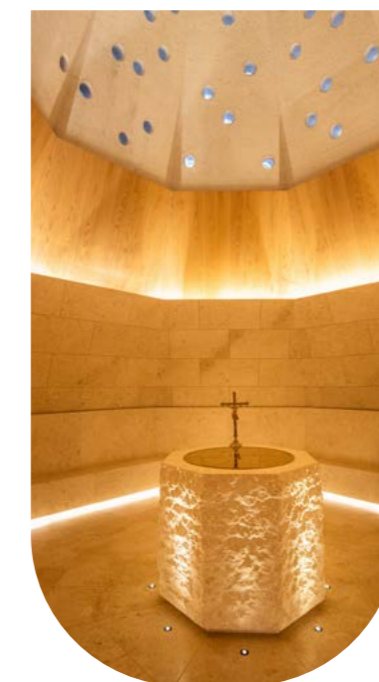
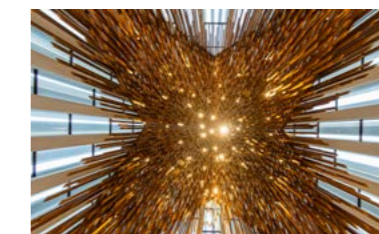
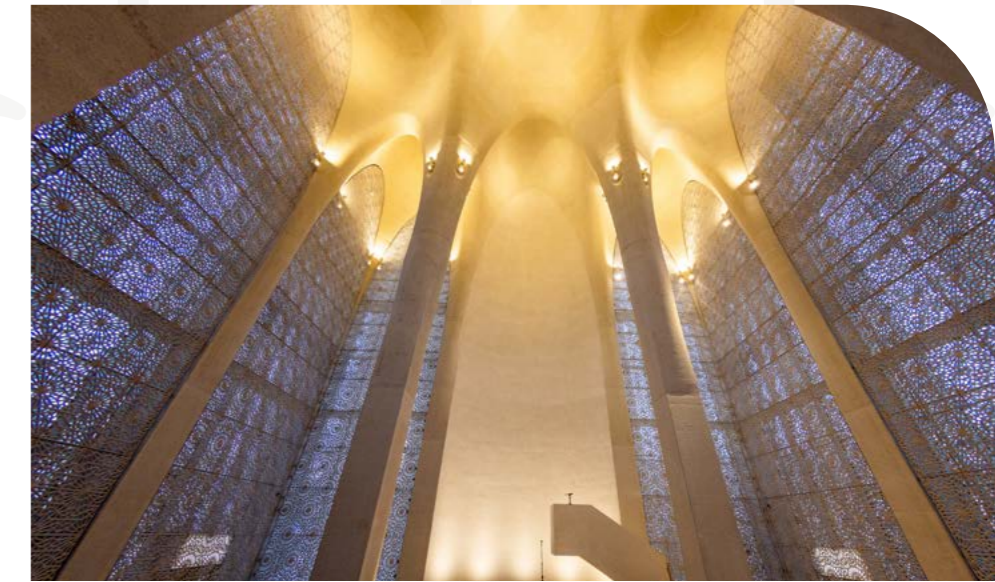


### Photography: Omar Abdul Rahman Al Ansary

A renowned photographer and certified trainer, he has participated in numerous local and international photography exhibitions and competitions. With over a decade of experience, he has garnered more than ten prestigious awards, including the prestigious Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum International Photography Award (HIPA) and the Sheikh Mansour bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Golden Jubilee Award. Notably, he was selected among the top 40 photographers in the UAE on the occasion of the 40th National Day

# Abrahamic Family House: A Global Icon of Understanding, Coexistence and Peace

The Abrahamic Family House stands as a unique model that embodies the values of mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence among followers of diverse faiths and people of goodwill.



This architectural marvel, which houses a mosque, a church, a synagogue, and an educational center, embodies the shared values that unite Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

The House serves as an inspiring platform to foster a culture of dialogue, understanding, and acceptance among people of goodwill. This project draws its vision from the Human Fraternity Declaration, signed by His Holiness Pope Francis, Pope of the Catholic Church, and His Eminence Dr. Ahmed el-Tayyeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, in 2019. The Abrahamic Family House stands as a powerful platform for inspiring understanding and acceptance among individuals of goodwill, deriving its vision from the momentous signing of the Human Fraternity Document by His Holiness Pope Francis, Head of the Catholic Church, and His Eminence the Grand Imam, Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, Sheikh of Al-Azhar, in 2019.

Conceived as a sanctuary of worship, learning, and dialogue, the Abrahamic Family House offers its doors open to all, reflecting the unwavering faith and commitment of the United Arab Emirates to promoting the values of tolerance and human coexistence.



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