

Response To Letter From Special Rapporteur On The Sale And Sexual Exploitation Of Children, Including Child Prostitution, Child Pornography And Other Child Sexual Abuse Material

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the definition of a global community at this time of the 4th industrial revolution. There are 200 nationalities living in the UAE with a large demographic of young adults and children. The society in the UAE is tolerant and open, and embraces efforts to empower youth and children, by all stakeholders from government, private sector and civil society. This led to the development of numerous national programmes gearing towards this population in different sectors, including community development, health, education and child protection.

We are pleased to answer this questionnaire as a participation in a global effort to end violence against children and exploitation. We consider this an opportunity to reflect and prioritize our efforts and engage the international community with our experience and practices. As a young country, approaching its 48th year, the below answers are reflective of the ongoing progress gearings towards being one of the safest countries in the world, in line with the UAE Vision 2021.

We would also like to clarify that the sale of children is not a phenomena or problem within the UAE. The UAE National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, which releases an official yearly report, supports this statement. We implement strict laws against human trafficking, evident in the Combatting Human Trafficking Law, the Child Rights Law and the Penal Code.

The challenge of sexual exploitation and abuse, especially online sexual exploitation and abuse, is a crime that not only the UAE is facing and dealing with, but one of a global magnitude and requires equivalent efforts to combat it and end it. Therefore, the focus of this report will answer the questions in the context of the sexual exploitation of children in all its forms.

There is zero tolerance of abuse of children in the UAE, especially sexual abuse of children, and public opinion upholds this principle to that effect. The UAE proudly played a part of the development (and implementation) of WePROTECT Global Alliance (WPGA) Model National Response and as a permanent member of the WPGA Board of Management.

i. Context, awareness, attitudes underpinning the sale and sexual exploitation of children:

Challenges, trends, emerging threats defining scope and extent of scale:

To set the context, the UAE has wide usage of the Internet subscribers, reaching over 24 million in 2018 with some individuals having more than one device. Many of those users are

children, under 18 years of age. Therefore, most of the threats regarding sexual exploitation of children are online threats.

Progress in shifting language and narrative:

The UAE has taken a comprehensive approach to addressing the problem. Key country leaders and other sectors of the public and private have come together to fight the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and help change the narrative related to this crime. This is evident in the recent years as governments have been invited to address and learn to tackle the issue at the WePROTECT 2015 Abu Dhabi Summit, where the deputy Prime Minister of the country also addressed it, hence raising public awareness further. The issue was readdressed in November 2018 during the hosting of the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities: Child Dignity in the Digital World and top faith leaders and grassroots leaders came together with other keynote players from government, international organizations, and industry, to learn about the issue of sexual abuse and decrease the taboos attached to addressing it. The UAE is constantly engaging with the international community regarding raising awareness on these issues and raising sensitization nationally and globally.

Representatives from the law enforcement community, judiciary and other relevant entities surrounding child protection use the term child abuse material in English and Arabic, and not child pornography.

Good practices in raising awareness:

Taken from the Model National Response, the UAE uses a comprehensive approach, by having different entities talk about OCSE in direct and indirect ways. For example, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, the Ministry of Interior (MoI), the MoI Child Protection Centre, the National Program for Happiness and Wellbeing, Sharjah Child Safety Department, and the Criminal Investigation Departments have created several pieces of content for awareness including videos, presentations, workshops and animations, in English and Arabic.

Additionally, the UAE is an active member of the following international organizations:

The Virtual Global Taskforce to Combat Online Exploitation Of Children (VGT)

This is an international operational working group that coordinates policies on the subject as well as conducts international operations. Members include: the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); Royal Canadian Mounted Police; the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (UK); the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Interior, the INTERPOL; the EUROPOL, the Australian Federal Police (AFP), New

Zealand Police, the Korean National Police Agency (KNPA), the Dutch National Police (DNP), the Cybercrime Coordination Unit Switzerland (CYCO) and the National Police of Colombia, and Philippine National Police. There are also 19 other members from civil society and the private sector. The UAE MoI served as Chair and Secretariat from 2015-2018.

WePROTECT Global Alliance to End Child Sexual Exploitation Online (WPGA)

The WePROTECT Global Alliance is an international movement dedicated to national and global action to end the sexual exploitation of children online. WePROTECT Global Alliance to End Child Sexual Exploitation Online combines two major initiatives: the Global Alliance, led by the U.S. Department of Justice and the EU Commission and WePROTECT, which was convened by the UK. This new, merged initiative has unprecedented reach, with 90 countries already members of WePROTECT Global Alliance, along with major international organisations, 20 of the biggest names in the global technology industry, and 17 leading civil society organisations. The Board comprises of several seats, ranging from civil society and industry and includes five permanent seats: the UK, UAE, EU, the US and the WPGA Founder.

Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities

The Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities (IAFSC) was established to empower faith leaders to work for the safety and security of our communities, tackling issues such as child sexual abuse, extremism and radicalization, human trafficking, etc. The IAFSC aim to facilitate the building of bridges between faiths, NGOs and experts in various domains. The IAFSC are conscious to the importance of empowering faith leaders, both at the institutional and grass-root levels, with knowledge and to mobilize them to play an active role in community safety.

Last year, the IAFSC reached over 270 faith leaders in pre-event workshops from across 30 countries, representing 7 major faiths on the subject of child sexual exploitation. This led up to the first interfaith forum on Child Dignity in the Digital World in Abu Dhabi, which was attended by 450+ attendees from more than 50 countries.

The End Violence Against Children Fund

Specifically, the Fund provides financial support to programs and activities that further the Partnership's goal of accelerating action in three priority areas. There are only 26 pathfinding countries to date and the United Arab Emirates announced they will become a pathfinding country during Sweden's Solutions Summit in February 2018. The priority areas support the UN Sustainable Development Goals 16 and 8, in direct relevance to this mandate.

Challenges and Emerging Threats

In the context of OCSE, challenges include the balance between the children's right to freedom and right to privacy during their screen time in their use of social media platforms

and online games. As mentioned above, due to the young demographics of the country, a national programme was designed to help address the wellbeing of children online has emerged in order to address these emerging threats.

International statistics and studies show there is an increase in children being subjected to grooming and sexual exploitation through social media platforms and online games via gaming devices, computers and smartphones and tablets.

ii. Risk factors/Root causes sale and sexual exploitation of children:

Tools available to address causes beyond training and awareness?

The UAE believes in taking a more comprehensive and partnership approach to working together as Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA) cannot accomplish tackling sexual abuse alone.

The following entities work together from several angles in the UAE in order to tackle and address the problem:

- Ministry of Interior/CPC/Police Forces
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Community Development
- the National Program for Happiness and Wellbeing,
- Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood
- Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
- AQDAR
- UNICEF
- Law firms
- ICDL-Arabia
- Sharjah Child Safety Department
- Etisalat
- Du
- Family Development Foundation

The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority and ISP's in the UAE also engage in preventative measures. They provide proxies and blocking access to websites hosting illegal content. This is in line the federal laws in order to protect children.

Cyber-safety summer camps were initiatives created by both public and private sectors.

In terms of child participation, a Creative Lab workshop was conducted with the attendance and participation of about 20 children and other government and private sector entities to discuss risks and challenges online. Children's input from the lab was used to build initiatives to tackle the challenges in the digital world.

What are the root causes and origins?

We are in the digital era, and children are not exempt from engaging in this era, whether it is for educational or entertainment purposes, children are inevitably spending more time online. Children who are not under constant supervision, are more inclined to be subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse by international individuals with a sexual interest in children.

For both social media platforms and online gaming, those with a sexual interest in children located outside of the UAE have easy access to children through several communication modes, such as audio and chat. Some games don't even allow for the ability to block audio or chat. Hence, this allows for grooming to occur when false or true promises are made to the child and cases have led to building of trust and a reputation that the groomer is trustworthy and he/she delivers on promises, such as promises of delivering gaming accessories. Another challenge is that social media platforms and games allow an individual to register an account without verifying their identity. The more children are left unsupervised, the more they may easily give in to threats of blackmail and harm.

What are the remaining challenges?

The remaining challenges are a work in progress:

- The speed at which children learn about the internet surpasses that which their parents and other adults are learning
- Due to the online aspect of the crime, there may not be visible physical signs of abuse and hence this may lead people to not understand how grave the crime is and how permanent the damage can be when Child Abuse Material (CAM) is available online, and how easy it is to become a victim of sexual abuse, both online and offline.

- due to the highly technological nature of the devices we use, where there is hidden data in content, such as location identifying features in photos, and there is a lack of familiarity with how much is shared online
- Due to the high speed of which the problem is growing, LEA, industry and other stakeholders are challenged in keeping up with solutions to the new problems emerging
- Due to the UAE having multiple nationalities and a multi-cultural setting, some of the population may not make efforts to learn about the law due to their plans to stay a short amount of time
- Due to the diversity of the population, many may come from legal systems that do not grant anonymous rights when making a report, hence the presumption that the UAE does not either (Under the Child Rights Law, Article 44, the reporter has a right to remain anonymous)

iii. Children’s vulnerability in context of cross border, technology, innovation:

Evidence on children’s vulnerability and risk – including context of socioeconomic status, technology:

Evidence shows that children who spend more time online are susceptible to vulnerability and risk. As for socioeconomic status, there is no evidence to show some children seem to be particularly at risk more than others.

What groups of children are especially vulnerable- ages? Gender? disability? social groups?

Influenced by the Supreme Council Motherhood & Childhood Strategy 2017-2021, the UAE does not differentiate its programmes based on gender as we understand that both males and females can become victims of sexual abuse.

In this era of digitalization, there is a growing trend to place a high emphasis on digital learning and communication. Education and entertainment are both digitalized, hence, the increased use of laptops, tablets and smart devices to access educational portals, entertainment, and this further exposes children to the risks and dangers of the Internet.

Due to this, children from ranging from ages 7-14 years old, both male and female, are most vulnerable and are being subjected to online child sexual exploitation and abuse due to the increase use of technology in all interactions of daily life, including online games and interactions on social media platforms.

In addition, there is an increase of admiration of international gaming celebrities on social media platforms and they encourage and induce children to buy and download games along with other accessories related to the game. This creates a platform for international individuals with a sexual interest in children to exploit and extort children for the purposes of sexual abuse and exploitation, by using clothes, weapons, skins and other accessories available for games to groom children.

These trends have encouraged the development of strategic international partnerships, such as with the Virtual Global Taskforce and the WePROTECT Global Alliance due to the borderless nature of the crime which calls for international collaboration.

iv. Progress in international, regional, national legislation:

Since the establishment of the United Arab Emirates in 1971, all laws developed in relation to crime have identified children as a priority victim group. Even though crimes against children have been since addressed in multiple national laws, the government still felt that there should be a dedicated specific law to guarantee children's rights. In fact, the Federal Penal Code criminalising violence against children, including sexual abuse, was enacted in 1987, before the UN Child Rights Convention.

In recent years, the main progress includes the 2016 enactment of the national comprehensive child rights law, with its framework and bylaws released in 2018 and ratifying the additional protocol of the UNCRC as demonstrated below. The Child Rights law (Wadeema Law) is a unique law that many other countries do not have.

In addition, the internet crimes against children laws are included in the 2012 Combatting Cybercrimes laws with severe penalties. Telecommunication authorities and internet service providers must also report Child Abuse Material (CAM) as per the law.

The UAE constantly revises its legislations in order to maintain the best international standards in developments, safety and risks to technologies that impact society and risks to children.

Below are the list of relevant legislations and articles, exemplifying the zero tolerance of sexual abuse against children:

International Laws:

United Nations Conventions

- Rights of Persons with Disabilities Ratified 2010
- Against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Ratified 2007
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination –Accessioned 1974
- Rights of the Child – Accessioned 1997
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography- Accessioned 2016

ILO Conventions:

- Worst forms of Child Labour- Ratified 2001
- Minimum Age for Employment- Ratified 1998

UAE Federal Laws

- No. 11 (1972) Concerning Mandatory Education- provide that education is compulsory at primary stages and free of charge at all stages for citizens in the UAE
- No.9 (1976) - Juvenile Delinquents & Homeless- laws governing children who have committed crimes
- No. 3 (1987) Penal Code - legislation outlining all criminal acts and their penalties
- No. 51 (2006) on Combatting Human Trafficking Crimes- laws governing all crimes related to Trafficking in Persons
- No. 5 (2012) on Combating Cybercrimes- legislation governing all criminal acts related to information technology and the Internet with heavy fines
- Law No. 3 (2016) on Wadeema Law (Child Rights Law)
- Decree No. 02 of 2018 Combatting Cybercrimes Law
- Federal Decree Law No. 24 of 2018 of Penal Code
- Decree No. 53 (2018) on the Bylaws of Wadeema Law (Child Rights Law)

Relevant Articles from Wadeema Law:

Article 29

The telecommunications companies and internet service providers shall notify the competent authorities or the concerned entities of any child pornography materials being circulated through the social media sites and on the Internet and shall provide necessary information and data on the persons, entities or sites that circulate such material or intend to mislead the children.

Article 37

The following acts shall be prohibited:

- 1- To use or exploit a child in the filming, recording or production of pornographic materials.
- 2- To produce, publish, distribute or facilitate access of children to pornographic materials in any way.
- 3- To possess child pornography materials regardless of the intent to distribute the same.
- 4- To download, upload or send child pornography materials through the Internet or any other communications or IT means.
- 5- The custodian's contribution to the child's participation in the production or filming of child pornography or any other sexual acts, or his permission or assistance offered to the child in such acts.
- 6- To exploit the child sexually by exposing or preparing him/her for prostitution or debauchery, whether with or without pay, directly or indirectly.

Penalties

Wadeema: Article 64

Whoever violates the provisions of ...Article 29 hereof shall be punished

by imprisonment for a period not less than six months and/or a fine not less than AED 100,000 and not exceeding AED (1,000,000). If telecommunication authorities don't report child sexual abuse material online, they are also liable to pay between 100,000-1,000,000AED.

Article 65

Whoever violates the provisions of Clauses 1, 2, 5 and 6 of Article 37 hereof shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not less than ten years. The creation, distribution, filming of sexual exploitation of children and the exploitation, contribution of child participation is punishable by minimum 10 years imprisonment.

Article 66

Whoever violates the provisions of Article 26 or Clauses 3 and 4 of Article

37 hereof shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not less than one year and a fine between AED 100,000 and AED 400,000. Having, downloading, sending, uploading child abuse material through the internet is punishable by minimum 1-year imprisonment and a fine between AED 100,000 and AED 400,000.

Combatting Cyber Crimes Law

Below is a summary of the relevant laws:

Article 17- A penalty of imprisonment and/or 250,000-500,000AED fine shall be imposed for anyone running a Child Abuse Material (CAM) website and saving the material of children or if such content is designed to seduce children, the principal shall be punished by 1 year imprisonment 50,000-150,000AED fine.

Article18 -A penalty of imprisonment minimum 6 months, and a fine 150,000-1,000,000 AED:

Shall be imposed on whoever has deliberately acquired child abuse material.

Article 19-A penalty of imprisonment and a 250,000-1,000,000AED fine shall be imposed on whoever entices, aids or abets another person, to engage in prostitution or lewdness.

In addition, a minimum of 5 years imprisonment and a fine maxi 1,000,000AED shall be imposed if the victim is a child.

What are the frameworks to address challenges or take account of challenges of accountability and challenging impunity?

Other advancements in the national laws to address challenges introduce the special role given to individuals whose sole duty will be to preserve the rights of children. As stated in Article 1 of the Child Rights Law, the Child Protection Specialist will be the person licensed and appointed by the government to preserve and protect the rights of the children. The role is further described in Wadeema Law and its bylaws:

Article 40

The child protection specialist shall take oath before exercising his duties, and shall be specialised in the following:

1- Preventive intervention in all the cases where the child's health or physical, psychological, moral or mental integrity is threatened or endangered.

2- Therapeutic intervention in all the cases of abuse, exploitation, neglect and all the cases set forth in Article 33 hereof.

Article 41

The child protection specialist shall have the following powers upon performing his duties:

1- Collecting evidence about the facts covered by the reporting and attending investigation and trial sessions if necessary.

2- Entering alone or accompanied by whomever he deems convenient to any place where the child is present, with the permission of the place's owner and the necessity to show a card proving his title.

3- Taking appropriate preventive measures concerning the child as determined by the Implementing Regulation of this Law.

4- Having recourse to social research in order to estimate the reality of the child's situation.

Child Interview Rooms: Interviews will be monitored and recorded in order to minimize the revictimization of the child and to also protect the child interviewer.

Child Friendly Interview Rooms will provide a comforting environment from child victims of crime, with international best standards in the design of the room, taking into account furniture, walls, colours and recording equipment.

There will be a monitoring room attached with a two-way mirror and microphone for further instructions to be given to Child Protection officer conducting the interview.

Recorded interviews can be admitted in court as evidence.

v. New and innovative strategies to effectively prevent and protect:

how adequate are the multi-stakeholder response to this complex phenomenon (states/National Human Rights Institutions/ domestic and int'l policy makers), CSO's, private sector)

The strategy in the UAE is comprehensive and follows the WePROTECT Global Alliance Model National Response in its enablers and capabilities. Several entities work together to deliver support during investigation, prosecution and after-care, end to end services and victim support. We recognize that it must be a nationwide and international effort, from federal government entities to local Emirate level, and international organizations and civil society organizations all joining forces with the same goal, to raise public awareness in order

to keep our children safe and prevent further harm and to continue to develop innovative ways of protecting them and preventing further harm..

As illustrated below, the multi-stakeholder response comprises of:

- Mol Child Protection Centre
- Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood
- Ministry of Justice
- Police Social Support Centres Departments
- Police Human Rights Department
- Community Police
- Ministry of Education Child Protection Units
- Ministry of Health Child Protection Units
- Ministry of Community Development- Child Protection Centre
- the National Program for Happiness and Wellbeing,
- Sports and Social Clubs CP Units
- Dubai Foundation for Women and Children (DFWAC) was established in 2007 to offer immediate protection and support services for women and children in the UAE against domestic violence, child abuse and human trafficking.
- EWAA- Abu Dhabi
- Shelter from victims of human trafficking
- Sharjah Social Services
- Under the Sharjah Government, Social Support Centre Department addresses cases of child abuse, homelessness and other social issues.
- AMAN Shelter for Women and Children (Ras Al Khaimah)
- Dubai Community Development Authority, Child Protection Centre
- Sharjah Child Safety Department
- Family Development Foundation
- AQDAR
- UNICEF
- Law Firms
- ICDL-Arabia
- Etisalat
- Du
- Family Development Foundation

There are also two non-government organizations, Emirates Child Protection Association and Emirates Safer Internet Society.

Child Protection Awareness

Since 2014, the Mol CPC in partnership with school authorities and other ministries nationwide have trained over 2000 school staff which include nurses, teachers, counsellors and heads of school in child protection awareness, UAE laws and methods of reporting.

Other initiatives included campaigns to raise awareness on sexual abuse and harassment, targeting 3150 students ages, 6-12 years old in over 24 schools.

Awareness Sessions are continuously being given to the following target groups:

- Children (age groups 5-9, 10-13, 14+)
- Professionals (principals, teachers, counsellors, nurses, sports club staff)
- Parents and Caregivers
- Faith leaders

Topics include but are not limited to the following:

- Oversharing
- Cyber-bullying
- Cyber grooming
- Screen time
- Digital ethics and values
- Digital footprint
- Social networking
- Online sexual abuse and exploitation
 - child abuse material
 - computer generated material
 - sexting
 - grooming
 - live distant child abuse
 - sextortion
- Sexual abuse
- Relevant laws
- Reporting

All sessions are addressed in an age and audience appropriate language of online risks to children are explained using real local and international case studies. Sessions include age-appropriate videos explaining the risks and case studies.

How adequate are the current systems and strategies to protect children effectively?

The current systems have dramatically evolved since the creation of the federal regulatory child protection body, namely the Ministry of Interior Child Protection Centre and even more so since the implementation of the WePROTECT Global Alliance Model National Response. The UAE recognizes that there is still a lot of work to be done and many areas for improvement, however, it is constantly improving, despite the challenges and lack of collaboration posed by technology and industry.

Two Strategies have been put in place to protect children:

Motherhood & Childhood Strategy 2017-2021 containing 5 strategic goals and the Strategy to Support the Rights and Development of Children with Disability 2017-2021 with 3 strategic goals. Under the leadership of the Supreme Council of Motherhood and Childhood, board members from several sectors are responsible for the implementation of these strategies. Again, there is evidence of a comprehensive approach towards child protection.

The UAE also has a draft national policy for the Prevention, and Handling of Allegations, of Child Abuse and Neglect:

It sets out the minimum guidelines for:

1. responses by all stakeholders who are in contact with children and young people to allegations of neglect or abuse
2. Includes online risks and threats
3. takes into consideration Intake, Investigation, Intervention and Protection.
4. explores options for family support initiatives to keep children safe and help them reach their potential.
5. explores Partnerships between several entities as an essential component

Sufficient complaints mechanisms for victims:

For the number of inhabitants, 9,442,000, the below channels for complaints, reporting and advice cover adequately when compared to the population of other countries and services they offer. The country has several helplines, hotlines and complaint mechanisms for victims of crime.

Complaints can be directed to the Ministry of Interior Child Protection Centre at the federal level through the website or email or for complaints directly to the Ministry of Interior, the contact number is 60052555. They may also submit complaints through other federal Ministries, such as Community Development and the Ministry of Justice.

Helplines:

The UAE has two helplines registered with Child Helpline International:

- 800111 Dubai Foundation for Women and Children
- 800700 Social Services Department of Sharjah

Other national helplines include:

- 800623- Ministry of Community Development
- 800988 Dubai Community Development Authority-Child Protection Centre
- SMS 5999 for People with Special Needs

Hotlines for reporting crime include:

- 116111- National Child Abuse Hotline, 24/7
- Hemayati- Comprehensive crimes against children reporting application English and Arabic
- 8004888 Dubai Police Hotline
- 800151 Sharjah Police Hotline
- 8002626 National Safety Hotline
- 999 National Emergencies
- Online Reporting Form via Official MoI Child Protection Centre Website

What are current global and domestic human rights and protection challenges?

There is a struggle to find a global balance between industry's financial gains, protecting children's rights and an individual's rights to privacy. Domestically and globally, we are aiming to raise awareness among children in order to equip them with knowledge on their safety in general, their online safety on social media platforms, safety in online games and reducing their screen time while respecting their privacy and freedom.

vi. Data and Monitoring-

There are several tools and monitoring systems, including collection, analysis and publication of routine data, in response to exploitation of children. These include the following:

- Criminal Records Database
- Social Support Centres Database
- Child Protection Centre Database

Other databases in the country that serve an additional purpose in case management of child abuse cases:

- National Identification Database
- Sector Specific Databases (health, education, community development)

The UAE also works with INTERPOL and their International Child Sexual Exploitation Database through our National Central Bureau on cases involving sexual exploitation of children.

Under the direction of UAE leadership, the UAE complies with requests of analysis and publication of data from international organizations.

Supporting the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation of children:

In the context of monitoring systems, this occurs through the Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA) and the Internet service providers (ISP's). In line with UAE federal laws, TRA prohibits Internet content that promotes, or facilitates publishing or exchanging child abuse material.

Anytime a Child Abuse Material (CAM) report is made, it is blocked and reported to international entities for Notice and Takedown. Preventative measures are also taken by providing proxies and blocking access to websites hosting illegal content.

In addition, the Dubai Police has electronic patrols teams that monitor social networking sites.

vii. Institutional accountability

How far are the responsibility and accountability of each and all pertinent actors being enforced and upheld (including corporations in the tech, travel, tourism and other sectors):

The UAE Ministry of Interior reports to the Council of Ministers, which is the third authority in the structure of the five federal authorities. The Council carries out its executive role under the supervision of the President of the United Arab Emirates and the Supreme Council.

The General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers is also working on the recommendations of the Council of Ministers, which develop the functions of federal ministries, councils and joint committees of the Council of Ministers. This is the main link that regulates

communication between the Council of Ministers and the various ministries, institutions and bodies of the Federal Government.

Where there is a competent body belonging to the institution, this body conducts internal audit and upholds responsibility and accountability.

All child protection authorities are evaluated quarterly by the federal regulatory authority, that is the MoI Child Protection Centre. The MoI-CPC evaluates the authorities based on the standard operating procedures, the risk score mechanism and procedures approved by the competent authorities. Feedback, recommendations and alternative solutions are provided where necessary. Cases referred by the MoI-CPC are also followed up on to ensure sufficient action was taken and this was completed within a reasonable timeframe.

viii. Way forward:

How can impact of mandate be enhanced in the future?

What are gaps in awareness?

To further enhance the impact of the mandate, the UAE has identified the following opportunities for improvement:

Due to the large number of tourists and visitors to the country, (8.36 million international overnight visitors in Dubai in first 6 months of 2019, and 6.04 million international tourists combined visited Abu Dhabi and Dubai during the first three months of 2019), the UAE can make greater efforts in awareness for tourists. This will be done with the collaboration of tourism and travel authorities.

As a family-oriented culture, there needs to be more cohesion on the zero-tolerance policy of child abuse, which should include visitors to the country. The UAE is also known to attract families because it is a safe and secure country and has a low crime rate. The Emirate of Sharjah was also named a Child Friendly City by UNICEF and was recognized for its efforts in child protection. In order to uphold our principles and values, this zero-tolerance policy needs to be distributed among our visitors as well.

In order to minimize re-victimization of a child, the UAE is exploring the possibility of creating a centralized space for extending services to child victims of abuse and neglect. The centre would provide children with the following services: interviewing, investigation, medical services, legal advice, victim care, counselling and other support.

The UAE is constantly implementing the abovementioned measures and will continue to implement the lessons learnt to improve the current processes. This is evident in the efforts towards hosting several international events geared towards protecting children from sexual exploitation and abuse, such as the WePROTECT Global Alliance Summit in 2015, the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities Dialogue on Child Dignity in the Digital World in

2018. The UAE actively participates in other domestic, regional and international events around this topic, most recently, the African Union Round Table Meeting in Senegal to tackle OCSE, where best practices are shared among all experts in the field. The UAE also participates in the yearly meetings of the INTERPOL Specialists Group on Crimes Against Children.

An increase in efforts in awareness for parents also needs to be addressed due to the rapid speed of children engaging with technology and parents staying behind.

In addition, creating laws that impose penalties on industry and social media platforms if they do not remove child abuse material within a given time frame shall be explored.

The Ministry of Interior and the Minister of State for Happiness and Well-being launched the 'Child Digital Safety' initiative, under the National Program for Happiness and Wellbeing, in March 2019, in a joint effort to raise awareness among children and school students about online threats and challenges, and promote a safe and constructive use of the internet.

Four sub-initiatives to enhance digital safety of children:

- Interactive Children's Camp, 5-18 year olds
- Digital Wellbeing Portal, which provides tools and information for parents
- training workshops
- a support platform

Child Digital Safety initiative:

- developing educational material on digital safety,
- facilitating children with global best practices in that domain, and
- providing advice to parents and teachers to enhance digital safety for their children at home and in the learning environment.
- Children participated through games, quizzes, interviews and providing their own input of digital safety

As for addressing risks on social media, through its membership in the VGT, since 2017, the UAE has been co-leading on a project for strategic engagement with industry, where communication and collaboration with social media platforms is currently underway.

In addition, to address online gaming and its risks, there are several proposed solutions the UAE would like to explore, through international partnerships, such as:

- development of awareness content to reduce sexual grooming and extortion within games and provide explanations how to protect children. (These should be made available in the games, on social media platforms and forums where gamers often communicate.)

- development of a physical brochure on safety within gaming to be issued when the games are sold, and a QR code or gift voucher for a game accessory can be included to encourage children read the brochure.

In conclusion, the horrific crime of sexual abuse and exploitation is one of a global scale and requires a global community to combat it successfully. There has been notable progress in awareness, training and in shifting the language related to the sexual abuse of children. The UAE is taking a comprehensive approach to tackle the emerging trends and the roots causes, especially those due to digitalization.

The UAE sees males and females as equals, especially in the realm of child rights and protection. This is evident in our national laws, policies, initiatives and strategies, which demonstrate a zero-tolerance attitude towards harming children. In addition, the above is illustrated in the age and audience appropriate awareness workshops provided. These workshops also explore the channels for complaints, reporting and advice which are made available to the public. In addition, the current data and monitoring mechanisms allow for prevention initiatives related to sexual exploitation of children.

Moreover, as one of the countries that has accessioned the UN CRC, the UAE will continue to look towards the mandate of the UN CRC as its minimum standards for all child rights and child protection matters.

Overall, the UAE wants to continue improving its efforts in the area of child protection. The UAE is dedicated to enhancing the rights and protection of all children on several levels, from leadership, to institutional and community. Taking into account that the UAE is a young country, part of our social fabric and culture as a society, there exists ambition to be a global leader and a global example on child rights.

APPENDIX

1. Combatting cybercrimes law 2012
2. Child rights law 2016
3. Child rights by-laws 2018
4. Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood Strategies (Arabic version is public)
5. Example of awareness workshops for students or professionals: Arabic and English
6. Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities-Abu Dhabi Declaration
7. Links to TRA awareness videos

8. Links to Child Digital Safety Initiative videos
9. Sharjah Child Safety Department -Awareness videos
10. Human Rights Human Trafficking Report 2017
11. HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Rashed Al Maktoum with child hero article and picture
12. Awareness material EN/AR
13. MOI CPC Awareness Campaigns 2019
14. AQDAR - United Arab Emirates' National Charter for the Digital World
15. Sharjah -UNICEF CHILD FRIENDLY CITY Article