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The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the special rapporteur on the field of cultural rights and would like to refer to the note verbal dated April 12, 2024 regarding contributions to the thematic report on "the right to participate in sports ". In that regard, the Permanente Mission has the honor to attach herewith contribution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the afore-mentioned report.

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the special rapporteur on the field of cultural rights the assurance of its highest consideration.



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## General:

### **1. What are the benefits and potential shortcomings of the exercise of sport and play in developing one's identity? In developing groups' identities and cultural diversity? To which extent are these benefits and potential shortcomings reflected in the policies and programmes of your country?**

In Saudi Arabia, sports serve as crucial elements in shaping individual and collective identities. It also offers diverse values to society, including enhancing child development by improving school aptitude, concentration, and fostering key skills like teamwork. They also promote community cohesion through civic engagement, neighborhood involvement, and volunteering. Participation in sports not only promotes physical health but also fosters important skills such as teamwork, discipline, and resilience, which are essential for personal growth. Through sports, Saudis can showcase their talents, fostering a sense of pride and belonging within their communities.

Historically, there have been limitations on women's participation in sports, but recent reforms have aimed to increase their access and promote gender equality. Sports have the potential to bring people from diverse backgrounds together, promoting a sense of national unity in a country with a rich cultural heritage.

In Saudi Arabia, where there is a rich tapestry of cultural heritage and traditions, sports serve as a common ground for people to celebrate their shared identity as Saudis. However, it's essential to ensure that sports policies and programs are inclusive and accessible to all segments of society, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.





Through continued investment in sports, Saudi Arabia can further harness the power of sports to strengthen individual and collective identities. By addressing existing challenges and ensuring that sports opportunities are accessible to all Saudis, the Kingdom will continue to promote physical health, social cohesion, and national unity through sports and play.

### **Governance:**

- 2. What measures exist in national legislation or elsewhere to ensure that human rights obligations, particularly those relating to the human rights / cultural rights of athletes and sports players, referees, judges as well as spectators, apply to sports governing bodies, organizers of private sporting events or sports companies? How could these frameworks be strengthened?**

Saudi Arabia devotes considerable resources to ensuring the wellbeing of its citizens and ensuring the fulfillment of their human rights, including encouraging promoting sporting and cultural activities among its citizens and visitors.

According to the Kingdom's Vision 2030, culture is "indispensable to our quality of life" and indicates that both the quality and quantity of cultural activities must be increased. Further, sports are also one of the key tools of the vision's strategic goals in creating a vibrant society and improving the quality of life for citizens and residents alike which has significantly resulted in an increase in the number of people participating in sport and physical activity in the Kingdom by 62.3% in 2023.

Sports also play a crucial role in promoting cultural diversity by bringing people from different backgrounds together to compete, collaborate, and





appreciate each other's skills and talents. A variety of cultures, traditions, and perspectives can be learned and respected through the medium of sports, thereby fostering community understanding and unity. Following the above, Saudi laws and legislation are in line with its international obligation, and according to Saudi Arabia's Basic Law of Governance, Article 29 stipulates that the state must consider science, literature, and culture, encourage scientific research, preserve Islamic and Arab heritage, and contribute to the Arab, Islamic, and human civilizations as a result of its commitment to human rights in all aspects.

In light of the above, Saudi Arabia is committed to its international obligation having ratified CERD, CEDAW, CRC, CAT & CRPD. As the Article 31 (1) of Rights of the child convention stipulate that States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

In addition, Article 13 (c) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ensure that the right of family to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life. Nevertheless, Article (5) (e) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination guarantees that States Parties undertake to prohibit and to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and to guarantee the right of everyone, without distinction as to race, colour, or national or ethnic origin, to equality before the law, notably in the enjoyment of Economic, social and cultural rights. Even so, Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities discusses the Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport as States Parties need to recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life.





To conclude, Saudi Arabia and its Ministry of Sports are continuously striving to ensure that all laws relating to human rights / cultural rights of all individuals, including athletes and sports players, referees, judges, and spectators, are adhered to and in accordance with international conventions.

**3. What institutions or mechanisms exist for persons whose right to participate in sports have been violated to make a claim and obtain an effective remedy?**

Sotek unified Service platform offered by the Ministry of Sports allows persons with complaints to claim effective remedies while also tracking the status of their complaint.

The Human Rights Commission, as a regulatory body of a complete independence, promotes and protects every person's human rights, and receives complaints relating to human rights, takes legal action thereon, and undertakes monitoring and awareness-raising measures in this regard. Human Rights Commission further ensures that the relevant government entities implement laws and regulations related to human rights and detects any breaches, and takes the necessary regulatory measures therefor.

**4. What is the role and impact of sports governing bodies or associations on the rights of all persons to participate in sporting life? How can these structures be improved to strengthen participation, governance or accountability?**

The National Sport Strategy is structured around three key pillars: mass participation, talent development, and elite athletes, all guided by principles including diversity and inclusion. In Saudi Arabia, governing bodies are pivotal in formulating policies that impact access to sports for all. These bodies play a crucial role in fostering participation among diverse populations across the regions of Saudi Arabia. By prioritizing diversity and inclusion, governing





bodies can ensure that sports are accessible to everyone, thereby promoting broader participation and enriching the sporting landscape of the nation.

### **Participation in sporting life:**

- 5. What are main obstacles in ensuring participation of all in sports? You may wish to discuss general obstacles that affect all (such as corruption) or obstacles that are set for specific sections of the population, including any discrimination based on age, colour, sex and gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.**

The National Sport Strategy is structured around three key pillars: mass participation, talent development, and elite athletes, all guided by principles including diversity and inclusion. In recent years, Saudi Arabia has made notable strides in promoting inclusivity in sports, these were notable based on the rise in mass participation rates across all age groups and both genders across the different regions in Saudi. Despite these achievements, there is always room for improvement. To further advance inclusivity, Saudi Arabia continues to focus on expanding access to sports for women and individuals with disabilities, addressing cultural barriers, and promoting awareness of the benefits of diverse participation. Through continued reforms and investments, Saudi Arabia will realize its goal of ensuring that all individuals have equal opportunities to engage in sports and physical activities.

- 6. What measures has your government/organization taken to limit or to facilitate the participation of athletes as a result of recent or ongoing conflict?**

The Saudi Olympic & Paralympic Committee organization always follows the decisions of international sports organizations, as the IOC and IFs, regarding





athletes' participation and conflict areas. On the other hand, in many cases, support has been provided to athletes from other countries to facilitate their sport training and participation. Recently, the Saudi Olympic & Paralympic Committee agreed to make donations to the Olympic Refugee Foundation, aiming to support and expand its mission to enable athletes all over the affected areas of the world.

**7. Please discuss any efforts by the State to promote culturally diverse sporting programmes initiated by cultural communities?**

In Saudi Arabia, efforts to promote culturally diverse sporting programs have been gaining momentum. The Kingdom has been increasingly recognizing the importance of celebrating the nation's cultural diversity through sports. Initiatives such as cultural festivals and sporting events that showcase traditional sports and activities specific to various cultural communities have been organized. This can be noticed through dedicated sports federations, providing logistical support for athletes, and hosting tournaments and festivals. Examples of these cultural sports include Camel Racing, archery, equestrian and falconry.

These not only celebrate Saudi Arabia's rich cultural heritage but also provide opportunities for cultural exchange and understanding among different communities. By promoting culturally diverse sporting programs, Saudi Arabia aims to foster inclusivity and unity, highlighting the nation's commitment to embracing its diverse cultural identity.

**Indigenous peoples and sporting life:**

**8. Please discuss any positive or negative use of indigenous symbols, imagery and names in sport? Are these used with consent and respect?**





N/A

**9. Are traditional indigenous games and sports included in national and international sporting events? Are indigenous peoples included in planning, leadership or governance roles? Do they equally benefit from sporting events in which they participate ?**

N/A

**Mega Sporting Events:**

**10. Do you have any examples of positive and/or negative effect of large sporting events on cultural rights of local communities?**

The Ministry of Sports hosted STC Saudi Arabian Grand Prix 2021 and has left the following positive effect\*:

- **INFRASTRUCTURE'S LEGACY** - Created infrastructure with a long-lasting legacy on the city of Jeddah and its community.
- **COMMUNITY GROUPS ENGAGED** - Engaged with different groups including Persons with Disabilities, JCC neighbors, volunteers and the wider community.
- **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT** Engaged with youth through "F1 in schools" competition fostering a culture of innovation and creativity.
- **Sporting legacy** - Inspired the next generation through Saudi Young Stars karting competition and Vettel's initiative to involve more females in motorsports.
- **Female engagement** - Engaged women in the delivery of the event, playing a key role within the SMC organizing team and track marshals & volunteers' teams.





**\*All details can be found in the attached report**

**Commercialization of Sports:**

**11. Please share any examples where commercial interests, marketing, or the pursuit of profit in sport has led to decisions or actions which are contrary to cultural rights.**

In Saudi Arabia, there's been a strong initiative merging commercial interests with cultural enrichment in sports. In recent years, Saudi Arabia has made significant strides in promoting its cultural heritage through sporting events like the Saudi Cup, one of the richest horse races in the world. While the event boasts substantial commercial sponsorships and prize money, it also celebrates the deep-rooted tradition of horse racing.