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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, Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, and would like to refer to the call of inputs regarding the thematic report, that will study “violence against women and girls in sport”. 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 violence against women and girls, the assurance of its highest consideration.



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**This document has been prepared in response to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls about the request for countries interventions and contributions to the preparation of its report on violence against women and girls in sport:**

- Saudi women and girls of today are more engaged in sport and have made numerous achievements in various sports including football, basketball, taekwondo, fencing, and many more. In fact, Saudi Vision 2030, launched in 2016, has had a significant impact on the development of women's sports in Saudi Arabia. This has resulted in a 150% increase in the number of women participating in sport and an increase in the number of women coaches and sports professionals. Nevertheless, Saudi women have also achieved success on the international stage, demonstrating their talent and dedication.
- As a result of the development of women's sports leagues and federations over the past few years, more than 330,000 registered female athletes, including 14,000 active tennis players, are present in the country today. There are thousands of women coaches (800% increase), mentors, referees, and sports doctors in the sport. There is a high level of participation in local, regional, and international sports by women, and many of them are successful.
- It is also worth mentioning that there is an overwhelming increase in the number of women participating in the games. Furthermore, participation in sports in general has increased by over 130% since 2015, not to mention the opening of 689 female gyms representing 33.7% of the total licensed gyms in the Kingdom. Not to mention having more than 104 board members of federations (30% representation)
- Based on this remarkable growth of the women's sports ecosystem, the Kingdom has worked diligently to create the appropriate legislative and judicial procedures to accommodate this increase, including for protecting women in sports.
- Based on the subject matter of the report, there is unfortunately a presence of violence against women and girls' cases across the globe in general, including in the field of sport. The violence or abuse can take any form such as exploitation; physical, psychological, or sexual mistreatment, or the threat thereof committed by an individual against anyone including women and girls.



- Consequently, in the case of a similar incident occurring within the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it is important to note that the Saudi government has prioritized women and introduced a number of significant reforms and several legislations have been enacted in recent years to promote women and defend their rights in all aspects of their lives, including sport. These include: (Law of Protection from Abuse decreed in 2013- Child Protection Law decreed in 2014- Anti-Harassment Law decreed in 2018- A dedicated center to receive domestic abuse reports - Establishment of the Family Affairs Council in 2016 with one of its committees allocated to manage women's affairs). It is also important to mention that as part of Saudi Arabia's effort to develop/ review/amend its legislative system, a sport's safety policy is currently being drafted as part of that effort.
- In addition to the above, each ministry or government entity including the Ministry of Sport is required to ensure justice for any individual, including women and girls, whose rights were violated, and to ensure that such a violation does not occur again. As the Council of Ministers has decided in its resolution No. (662), dated June 16, 2020 that all human rights-related missions be assigned to legal departments in government entities. It is part of such missions to detect abuses and violations constituting human rights violations, and to take the necessary measures to prevent such violations from occurring.
- Even so, it is not only government institutions that are concerned with protecting victims of human rights violations, including violence against girls and women, but also Saudi non-governmental organizations that are concerned with doing the same by receiving complaints or reports and taking appropriate legal action to protect victims. The Saudi Human Rights Commission, National Society for Human Rights, Saudi Ministry for Human Resources and Social Development Center for Receiving Violence Reports, as well as the Family Program's child support line (which dealt with 350 calls related to children from all parts of the Kingdom during 2022, are among these organizations).
- At a global level, violence against women and girls is attributed to gender inequality, discrimination, and harmful cultural and social norms that reinforce men's superiority over women, normalize violence toward women and allow perpetrators to act without consequences.
- Having ratified CERD, CEDAW and CRC Saudi Arabia prohibits discrimination against all including women and girls, as well as the Saudi Basic Law of



Governance, which contains an extensive set of principles and provisions aimed at promoting and protecting human rights and constitutes the legal framework for human rights protection. Therefore, any violation taking place in general or in the sport field due to discrimination or act of violence resulting from discrimination against anyone, including women and girls, on multiple fronts, is considered an aggravating circumstance and its perpetrators will be punished accordingly. The treatment of these violations is governed by the laws, regulations, and procedures of the country, and due process is observed whenever such violations occur. These laws are demonstrably evolving and changing with time to ensure the full empowerment and protection of women in sports.

- Additionally, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the U.S Department of State agreed in 2021 to collaborate further on protecting the human rights of women and girls and enabling their safe participation in sports. The two sides highlighted challenges and shared best practices on preventing, responding to, and holding perpetrators accountable for acts of gender-based violence.
- Sports, however, has the potential to increase gender equality by improving the well-being of girls and women as well as improving their confidence and leadership abilities. In Saudi Arabia as well as around the world, sports play an important role in advancing the status of women and girls. In addition to their achievements on the field or court, sports play an important role in promoting social change. It encourages women and girls to be more confident, independent, and empowered. Sports also create opportunities for women and girls to gain economic independence, gain recognition, and have their voices heard. This, in turn, helps to break down gender stereotypes and create more equitable societies
- As an example, Saudi Arabia pays its athletes equally (National Teams), and its women hold similar positions to those held by their male counterparts. This stands as a testament to how far the country has come in a relatively short period of time. Saudi Arabia is quickly becoming a beacon of progress and equality in the region. Hopefully this shift will have a positive and lasting impact not only in region but also set an example worldwide. This shift has the potential to shift the mindsets of people around the world and create a brighter future for all. In addition, it is a promising sign that the gender roles in Saudi Arabian society are changing, and that progress is being made.



- In conclusion, the Saudi government is committed to continuing to provide equal opportunities and access for Saudi women and girls across all areas of sports all while respecting all their human rights including protecting them from all forms of violence. It is important to note, however, that this approach aligns with the Saudi 2030 Vision which recognizes that a successful, modern nation must encourage and empower all members of society, including women.