



Saudi Arabia inputs for the Working Group's report on COVID-19 lessons learnt and moving forward to the 50th session of the Human Rights Council

1) What were the most significant challenges and obstacles for your Government during the pandemic and the recovery period related to ensuring responsible business conduct?

What kind of support or/and guidance would your Government welcome to prepare better for business-related human rights abuses linked to other, future crises?

Many measures that have contributed to combating the Corona epidemic have been taken through two parallel tracks: limiting the spread of this epidemic, providing high-quality health care to those infected with it, and addressing its effects. It is noted that the measures taken by the Kingdom are based on Human Rights-based approach, which is reflected in the basing of these measures on the principle of equality and non-discrimination, and the effective implementation of the principle of complementarity, interdependence and indivisibility of human rights stipulated in the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, through the protection and fulfillment of other rights affected by the pandemic. Like the right to work. The following is a review of the measures taken by the Kingdom to address the effects of the Corona epidemic in the context of work right and workers' rights, the most prominent of which are:

- Exempting foreign workers whose residencies expired from its date until June 30, 2020 from the financial fees, by extending the period of their residencies for three months without charge.
- Launching of a program amounting to (50) billion SAR by the Saudi Central Bank and the program includes support and financing of SMEs, in support of the private sector to play its role in promoting economic growth to support government efforts to combat the Corona virus Covid-19.
- Allocating government support by the h by Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development to sector facilities in the amount of (17.3) billion SAR in order to enable them to grow, and to contribute to supporting economic growth and maintaining employment within the framework of supporting efforts to mitigate the effects of precautionary measures to combat this epidemic.
- The kingdom payed 60% of the private sector employee's salaries, in order to preserve jobs.



- In order to ensure the conduct of private sector institutions, the Oversight and Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) has worked to investigate any business related to financial or administrative corruption related to business, which prevents the implementation of the measures taken in order to confront the economic effects of the Corona Virus pandemic.
- The Ministry of Commerce's is monitoring the commitment of commercial institutions and outlets throughout the Kingdom, by carrying out inspection tours, where the number during December 2021 reached (96) thousand visits.

2) What are the most important lessons learned from the crisis and how can these lessons help in addressing business-related human rights abuses linked to other future crises?

Emphasis the activation of the supervisory role to ensure that the businesses conduct is consistent with the domestic law and the international human rights standard.

3) Please outline any positive initiatives (highlighting those that have been most effective), including policies, legislation and plans through which your government has contributed to:

a. Creating and strengthening an enabling environment for businesses to respect human rights in their operations during challenging times and when emerging from a crisis;

B. Mitigating negative human rights impacts evident during the pandemic and likely to present during future crises;

c. Ensure effective access to remedy for business- related human rights abuses caused during times of crisis.

Urgent initiatives have been adopted to support the private sector, especially small and medium enterprises, and economic activities that are most affected by the consequences of this pandemic. These initiatives amount to more than (70) billion SAR, which is represented in exemptions and postponement of some government dues to provide liquidity to the private sector so that it can use it in managing its economic activities, in addition to the support program announced by the Saudi Central Bank for banks, financial institutions, and small and medium enterprises in the amount of (50) billion SAR during the first phase of the pandemic. These initiatives aim to mitigate any financial and economic impact that the private sector may experience. These initiatives have provided the following:



1. Extending the grace period and rescheduling loans to the neediest facilities, with amounts amounting to more than (6) billion SAR.
2. the value of direct and indirect loans to finance working capital are (1) billion SAR.
3. Employment support by allocating sums of (4) billion SAR aimed at supporting more than (300,000) beneficiaries to work in the private sector by providing employment and training support programs.
4. Increasing the direct lending portfolio for micro and small enterprises to reach (2) billion SAR, benefiting (6,000) entrepreneurs.
5. Allocating (2) billion SAR to finance indirect lending programs through financial institutions.
7. Postponing the payment of some government and municipal service fees due on private sector institutions, for three months, and setting the necessary criteria to extend the postponement period for the most affected activities as needed.
8. With regard to ensuring access to remedies, the Kingdom's systems have guaranteed the right to a remedy for all citizens and residents, foremost of which is recourse to the judiciary for citizens and residents on an equal basis, as Article (47) of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates that "the right to litigation is equally guaranteed to citizens and residents." The judicial systems, decisions, and instructions issued by the judicial authorities included provisions that facilitate resort to the judiciary and enhance the principle of equality before it, in addition to the role of the Human Rights Commission - an independent monitoring entity - in promoting and protecting human rights for all without discrimination, and receiving complaints related to human rights violations by business. It takes legal measures regarding them and addresses practices that may constitute a violation of their rights through monitoring, awareness-raising and other measures. The Human Rights Commission also works to ensure that the relevant governmental authorities implement the laws and regulations related to human rights, detect abuses, and take the necessary legal measures in their regard. It also monitors government entities to implement the relevant international human rights treaties ratified by the Kingdom, and to ensure that those entities take the necessary measures to implement them.

4) What are those opportunities that would allow your Government to build back better by ensuring stronger and more decisive measures to protect human rights in the context of business activities?



The Ministry of Commerce has worked on many initiatives that would rebuild in the context of business, including the following:

1. The initiative to establish an e-commerce development program, which aims to facilitate business exercise, by coordinating the efforts of all relevant parties influencing the development of the e-commerce industry, and developing solutions to eliminate obstacles to progress for all parties to the e-commerce process, including shoppers, shops, and legitimate government entities.
2. The initiative to raise consumer and merchant satisfaction and awareness, which aims to ensure the interaction of citizens and the business community with government communication channels (interaction), by strengthening communication with the business community and the media and raising awareness of influencers to enhance confidence in the services provided by the Ministry of Commerce, and raising consumer and merchant awareness of regulations, rights and obligations.
3. The initiative to develop and raise the quality of stores in the retail sector, which aims to raise and develop the quality of retail stores in its various sub-sectors and to work on defining specifications and standards that guarantee the quality of stores and products offered in them to ensure the safety of the supply and consumer protection to provide better services to the customer.

5) What efforts were made by your Government to engage in constructive and meaningful dialogue with various stakeholders, including civil society actors, to address business-related human rights abuses during the pandemic, including to protect workers and to build a resilient society and economy based on inclusive recovery able to prevent human rights abuses in future crisis situations?

The Kingdom has considered the civil society institutions as an essential partner for government entities in promoting and protecting human rights. This effective partnership has resulted in taking measures that have contributed to continuing the progress made in this field, in addition to its advisory and awareness-raising role. A number of civil associations and institutions have contributed to provide many initiatives and awareness programs related to confronting the Covid-19 pandemic, including the contribution of community institutions to the implementation of the Community Fund initiative, which aims to mitigate the effects of the Corona pandemic, in addition to its contribution to preparing its strategy that works to cover all regions of the Kingdom, which will have an impact on mitigating the effects on the various groups of society.
