UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
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قصر الحصن
Introduction

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has assumed a prominent status at both regional and international levels thanks to the efforts of Their Highnesses the Rulers of the Emirates, and their diligent work towards providing all means of progress, development and prosperity for the UAE population.

This booklet includes key information about the UAE, in terms of the history of the nation starting from the British occupation up to the establishment of the Federation and the efforts of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan “may God bless his soul” in building the foundation of the new state. H.H. Sheikh Zayed immediately started building the infrastructure of the state, with the help of his brothers, members of the Federal Supreme Council of the UAE, who helped enhance the solid ties of the Federation and the ‘Consultation’ (Shura) system, and mobilised national enthusiasm to encourage participation in the national responsibilities.

The booklet starts with some general and geographical information about the country and its political system. It describes the constitutional institutions in terms of their structure, specialisation, hierarchy, foreign policy and economy. The book demonstrates the UAE Vision regarding the objectives of future government, as a base from which to develop and improve in all arenas of life. It also talks about other issues such as human rights, and so on.

Moreover, the booklet includes a glimpse into the role of Emirati women, and how they are remarkably affected and motivated intellectually and socially by the efforts of the ‘General Women’s Union’, and ‘The Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood’, as well as encouraged and supported to participate in all aspects of political and socio-economic life. The book highlights the persistent efforts to transform the UAE into an innovative nation, to enhance economic development, protect the environment, secure renewable energy and develop science and technology. The book also describes some touristic activities and sites of interest for curious visitors.
## General Information

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Political System:</strong></th>
<th>It is a federal constitutional state, consisting of seven Emirates (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al-Quwain, Ras Al-Khaimah, and Fujairah)</th>
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<td><strong>National Day:</strong></td>
<td>2nd December 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Founding Father:</strong></td>
<td>The Late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan “may God rest his soul in peace”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>President:</strong></td>
<td>H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan (Ruler of Abu Dhabi)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vice President and Prime Minister:</strong></td>
<td>H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum (Ruler of Dubai)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Rulers of other Emirates:** | **Sharjah:** H.H. Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Muhammad Al Qasimi  
**Ajman:** Sheikh Humaid bin Rashid Al Nuaimi  
**Umm Al-Quwain:** H.H. Sheikh Saud bin Rashid Al Mualla  
**Ras Al-Khaimah:** H.H. Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi  
**Fujairah:** H.H. Sheikh Hamad bin Mohammed Al Sharqi |
<p>| <strong>Area:</strong>              | 83,600 Square Kilometres, Abu Dhabi accounts for 86.77% of the territory                                                          |
| <strong>Location:</strong>          | To the north is the Arabian Gulf, to the East are the Gulf of Oman and the Sultanate of Oman, to the South are the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Oman, and to West are Qatar and KSA |
| <strong>Geographical Coordinates:</strong> | Latitude 22-26.5° North, Longitude 51-56.5° East.                                                                                   |
| <strong>Climate:</strong>           | The UAE enjoys a dry desert climate which gets cooler in the eastern mountains (Winter is warm and sunny; Summer is humid and hot) |
| <strong>Terrain:</strong>           | Desert covers 74% of the UAE area, even though it enjoys diverse landscapes, including high red sand dunes in Liwa to Al-Ain. The latter is an oasis populated by palm trees. Near Al-Ain, there are the sharply steep Al Hajar mountains. In the UAE, there are also huge fertile coastal plains. The Al Hajar Mountains account for 2.6% of total area of the UAE. The UAE’s territorial waters also include more than 200 islands which are varied in terms of size, origin and importance. |</p>
<table>
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<th><strong>Natural Resources:</strong></th>
<th>Oil and Gas - 90% of which exists in Abu Dhabi</th>
</tr>
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<td><strong>The Capital:</strong></td>
<td>Abu Dhabi</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Biggest City in Terms of Population Density:</strong></td>
<td>Dubai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Currency:</strong></td>
<td>1 UAE Dirham = 100 Fils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exchange Rate:</strong></td>
<td>1 USD = 3.67 Dirhams AED (AED is officially pegged to the USD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weekend:</strong></td>
<td>Friday and Saturday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Official Language:</strong></td>
<td>Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other used Languages:</strong></td>
<td>English, Persian, Hindi, Urdu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religion:</strong></td>
<td>Islam (Practicing rituals of other religious beliefs is allowed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Time:</strong></td>
<td>GMT + 4 hours (Summer time GMT + 3 hours)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International dialing code:</strong></td>
<td>+971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State code on the Internet:</strong></td>
<td>.ae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Flag:</strong></td>
<td>Equal horizontal rectangular lines - green color on top, white color in the middle, black on the bottom. Vertical red rectangular line on the left side (pole side) 🇦🇪</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When the British announced, in early 1968, their intention to terminate their agreement with the trucial Emirates by 1971, rulers of the Emirates held a meeting to study the future and face the upcoming challenges. They agreed to establish a Federal State. With persistent efforts from the Late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan “may God bless his soul” the founding leader of the federation, and the Late Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Ruler of Dubai “may God bless his soul” the rulers of the Emirates agreed to establish a union among their territories. A Supreme Council (consisting of those rulers) was formed to be the supreme authority in the newborn state.

The Supreme Council consists of Their Highnesses the Rulers of the Emirates, who elected the Late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan “may God bless his soul” the ruler of Abu Dhabi, for the position of President of the state for a term of five years. He was re-elected for the same position in the following years until his death, may god rest his soul in peace, on 2nd of November 2004. As for the position of Vice President, the Supreme Council chose the Late Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the then ruler of Dubai.

The United Arab Emirates is a federal state established on the 2nd of December 1971, and its citizens hold one nationality. The federation has a flag, a logo, and a national anthem. The newborn state had a provisional constitution in the foundation stage; it stated that the interests of the federation are the sublime objective. The constitution also prescribed the UAE's political and constitutional system, and the authorities associated with federal agencies. In 1996, the Federal Supreme Council approved the amendment of the constitution to become permanent. Accordingly, Abu Dhabi became the capital of the federal state.

The United Arab Emirates has been an international entity since its establishment. It joined the Arab League on 2nd December 1971, and the United Nations on 9th December 1971, in addition to joining the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in 1972. It participated in the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981.
The Founder
The Late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan
“May God Rest His Soul in Peace”

The Late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan “may God rest his soul” was born at Al-Hosn Palace, Abu Dhabi, in 1918 AD. He received his early education at “Katateeb”, like all the children of his generation. Most often, his main schooling was done through the daily gatherings at the court of his father, when the latter was the ruler of Abu Dhabi during the period 1922-1926 AD. In 1946, Sheikh Zayed was appointed ruler of Al Ain, where he worked diligently to solve the problems of the agricultural sector and farmers. He ordered water wells to be drilled, and Afaj (water canals) to be dug, and land to be reclaimed. The result was the significant expansion of arable lands. Moreover, His Highness focused on building schools, and the first school was inaugurated in 1959 AD. In particular, he succeeded in opening schools for girls. He also constructed the first hospital offering free medical treatment services for citizens and residents. The roads network was expanded as well, and Al-Ain city moved rapidly forward in the fields of development and progress.

In August 1966, responding to popular pressure and demand, Sheikh Zayed assumed the position of the Abu Dhabi Ruler. He moved in two parallel lines; where he intensified his efforts to achieve the renaissance of Abu Dhabi, and at the same time worked to establish the federation and to unify the disparate emirates into a union. Upon Britain’s announcement of its intention to imminently withdraw from the region in 1968, Sheikh Zayed started consultations with Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the then Ruler of Dubai, to establish a bilateral union between Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The British announcement offered a critical motive for both Sheikhs to declare their union quickly. They agreed to establish a union containing the two emirates. They met in February 1968. The notion of the union developed and the two men called the remaining Emirates to join them. Consultations continued among rulers until they declared to the whole world the launch of a new stage of unity.

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan was elected immediately the president of the Federation upon the establishment of the new state, and Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum as his Vice-President. The echo of this accomplishment was welcomed throughout local and international circles.
The Late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan
“May God Rest His Soul in Peace”
UAE President
H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan

His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan is the second President of the United Arab Emirates. H.H. was born in 1948 AD at Al Muwaiji Fort in Al-Ain city. He received his basic education there. He spent the early years of his life in learning the art of politics and diplomacy at the court of his father, Sheikh Zayed, where he learned from him the intricacies of the art of government.

H.H. Sheikh Khalifa entered the domain of politics at a relatively early age. In September 1966, Sheikh Zayed chose his eldest son to be the Representative of the Ruler of Abu Dhabi Emirate in the eastern region. He also appointed him as Chief of the Courts of Justice in Al-Ain city.

In 1968 AD, following the British withdrawal from the Gulf region, H.H. Sheikh Khalifa was appointed Deputy Ruler, and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Council for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. In February 1969, H.H. Sheikh Khalifa was appointed Head of the Defence Department. His father granted him the rank of Lieutenant General in the Defence Force of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. He was also appointed Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, and undertook the task of Deputy Ruler in the absence of his father. H.H. Sheikh Khalifa succeeded to transform the Defence Force of Abu Dhabi into a multi-mission force including infantry, air and naval units equipped with the latest weaponry. The foundation of Zayed II Military College in Al-Ain was accomplished under his personal supervision. Historical events confirm the significant role he played in the negotiations to establish the federation. The circumstances involved in the birth of the Federation honed his prominence in the course of political and economic development of the capital, Abu Dhabi, particularly after it had become the capital of the young nation.

In 1971 AD H.H. Sheikh Khalifa was appointed the head of the first local Ministerial Cabinet, Head of the Finance Department, and Head of Defence Affairs. In the same year, the first National Consultative Council was established. It contained fifty members, and was steered successfully by His Highness.

A short while after the establishment of the federation, the First Federal Cabinet was inaugurated in 1971, and H.H. Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed was appointed Deputy Prime Minister in that cabinet in 1973. He continued in that position until 1977. On the 7th of May 1976, he was appointed Deputy Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, following the resolution issued by the Federal Supreme Council to merge the armed forces of the various Emirates under one command and one flag.

In July 1976, the Abu Dhabi Authority for Financial Investments was transformed into Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), and H.H. Sheikh Khalifa was appointed Head of ADIA. He was also in charge of the Finance Portfolio in the Executive Council of Abu Dhabi at the time.

The period during which H.H. Sheikh Khalifa “may God protect him” was Crown Prince kept pace with the development which focused essentially on improving the skills of members of society, taking into consideration the importance of investment in human resources.

In 1977, The Executive Council, under the leadership of H.H. Sheikh Khalifa, devised the first
H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan
President of the UAE
three-year development plan for Abu Dhabi. Under his administration, he also inaugurated the launch of the ‘Khalifa Committee’, responsible for distributing land and residential real estate to citizens of Abu Dhabi. The support of the executive Council was not limited then to Abu Dhabi only; rather it was extended to support the agricultural sector in the Northern Emirates.

H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed has paid great interest to education, where he ordered in 1986, in his capacity as Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, the first innovative computer workshop in Abu Dhabi schools. His Highness put great faith in the idea that technology contributes immensely to the development of the skills of students in schools and institutes. In 1988, he personally spearheaded the establishment of the Higher College of Technology.

The period in which H.H. Sheikh Khalifa assumed these positions was not uncharacterised by political disturbances and security challenges. That time witnessed a number of events which made it necessary for the country to carefully watch its steps towards the future. One of these events was the establishment of the GCC, and the eldest son H.H. Sheikh Khalifa played a significant role in this regard.

History will note that H.H. Sheikh Khalifa was one of the architects of the Peninsula Shield Force. The statement declaring its establishment was issued in 1983. The Crown Prince managed during that period to deal wisely and successfully with a large number of political and security challenges facing the Middle East region. The first was the Gulf War, when H.H. was delegated by his father Sheikh Zayed in the negotiations adopted by the UAE to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. He personally handled the issue of the Kuwaiti refugees. He was also delegated to negotiate with world leaders at the time, to support the deployment of multinational troops in the battlefield.

Similarly, in the Kosovo crisis, H.H. Sheikh Khalifa supervised the deployment of 1500 UAE soldiers to participate in peacekeeping forces in 1999. At the time the support H.H. provided was not restricted to peacekeeping, but included humanitarian assistance as well, as he financed the reconstruction of infrastructure in Kosovo.

On the 2nd of November 2004, the world was shocked by the news of Sheikh Zayed’s death “may God rest his soul” and H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed became the Ruler of Abu Dhabi. On the second day, the Federal Supreme Council, under the Chairmanship of Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, elected him President of the United Arab Emirates.

Since that day, the President of the state started the journey of development in all fields of life, through plans based essentially on the development of the human element, as the human being is the only element capable of leading development and progress. His Highness believes that developing and enhancing the leadership skills of the younger generation is the main objective for any successful government. That belief puts education, culture, health care and family at the top of H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan’s priorities.
Members of the Federal Supreme Council at the opening of the FNC
UAE Vice President
H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum was born on the 15th July 1949. He graduated from the Mons Officer Cadet School in the UK. After returning from the UK in the late 1960s, his father Sheikh Rashid issued a decree appointing Sheikh Mohammed as Chief of Police and Public Security in Dubai. In 1971, H.H. Sheikh Rashid issued another decree authorising H.H. Sheikh Mohammad to form the “Dubai Defence Force”, which merged in 1975 into the UAE Armed Forces. In 1971, H.H. became Minister of Defence in the Government of the Federal State. He was the youngest minister in the world to assume such a critical position.

H.H. closely followed the UAE’s formation. On the 4th of January 2006, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum assumed power in the Emirate of Dubai, after the passing of his brother Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum. Since he assumed his responsibilities as Vice President of the UAE, Prime Minister of the Federal Cabinet and Ruler of Dubai, the pace of achievement has been accelerated, and local and regional initiatives have been multiplied. He continued the march of Dubai’s transformation into a commercial and touristic hub of prominent international status. During his reign, Dubai has occupied a distinguished position on the map of the Global Digital Economy, after H.H. established Dubai Internet City, followed by Dubai Silicon Oasis, Dubai Media City, and many other projects which contributed to the diversification of Dubai’s income sources. The biggest step was materialised in the transformation of Dubai’s economy to a digital one, with the launch of the Smart Government project. This project was designed to offer government services via digital venues to fulfil the needs of citizens and residents.

On the humanitarian side, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid had remarkable interest in providing disaster relief and assistance to poor and sick people. He launched the Mohammed Bin Rashid Charity and Humanitarian Establishment, which conducted many initiatives to empower needy societies. In 2007, he launched an initiative under the name of “Dubai Cares” to offer basic education services to all children all over the world. In 2008, the Noor Dubai Initiative was launched to treat blindness and eye disease.

Since H.H. assumed the position of UAE Prime Minister, unique achievements were made on both local and regional arenas. H.H. demonstrated the features of UAE government strategy, which adopted among its objectives Sustainable Development in all regions of the country. That strategy also included investing the federal resources in a more effective way and ensuring the best efforts in terms of following-up, monitoring, accountability and transparency to improve the work of various agencies and departments.
H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum
UAE Vice-President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai
United Arab Emirates
Political System of the UAE

The government system in the UAE is federal, while the constitution of the country defines its main objectives, as follows:

- Preserve the independence, sovereignty, security and stability of the federal nation, as well as for all of the member Emirates.
- Protect the rights and liberties of the population of the federation, and ensure cooperation among the member Emirates to serve the public interests of the country.
- Secure the best standard of living for all citizens.
- Each member Emirate should respect the independence and sovereignty of other Emirates regarding their internal affairs, in compliance with the constitution of the UAE.

Federal Authorities in the UAE

The UAE Constitution clarifies the federation’s main objectives, social and economic pillars, liberties, rights and general duties, federal authorities, systems for issuing federal legislations and the corresponding specialised departments, financial affairs of the federation, specific provisions for the Armed Forces and Security Forces, and the legislative, executive and international terms of reference between the federation and its member Emirates. According to the constitution, the Federal Authorities consist of the following:

- **Federal Supreme Council:** This council is the highest constitutional authority in the country on legislative, executive and decision-making levels. It has the authority to, devise public policies, ratify federal legislations, ratify international agreements, and supreme monitoring to oversee the federation’s interests in general. The council consists of the seven rulers of the federation’s member emirates, or their representatives (deputies) in their emirates. Each member has one vote in the Council’s decisions.

- **UAE President and Vice-President:** The federal supreme council elects from among its members the President and Vice President of the federation. The Vice President carries out all the tasks of the President in case of the President’s absence for any reason. Article (52) of the Constitution defines the term of the President and Vice President as Five Gregorian years. They can both be re-elected for the same positions.

- **Federal Council of Ministers:** This council is considered the executive authority in the UAE, and under the supervision of the UAE President and the Federal Supreme Council, is in charge of conducting all internal and external affairs related to the federation in compliance with the constitution. In February 2016, H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE President, approved the structure of the new cabinet number (12) of the federal government, which included the entry of eight new ministers, of whom five are women, with an average age of 38 years. The age of the youngest lady minister was 22 years-old. The new government also witnessed adding five new ministries – these were the Ministries of Tolerance, Future, Youth, Happiness, and Climate Change. The Education sector was supported by adding two new ministers besides the current one. A Supreme Council for Education was formed to follow the performance of Education ministry. Also The Emirates Youth Council was formed, as well as the UAE Council of Scientists.

- **Federal National Council:** The FNC is considered the fourth federal authority in terms of order in the hierarchy of the five federal authorities prescribed in the constitution. It was established in 1972, and its first session was held on the 12th February 1972. Each member of this council represents all the population of the UAE, not only the Emirate which they represent in the Council.
The Federal National Council consists of 40 members, distributed amongst the Emirates as follows: 8 seats for each of the Abu Dhabi and Dubai Emirates; 6 seats for each of the Sharjah and Ras Al-Khaimah Emirates; 4 seats for each of the Ajman, Fujairah and Umm Al-Quwwain Emirates.

The parliamentary practices in the UAE have witnessed two critical integrated stages: The stage of foundation of the FNC which started in parallel with establishing the glorious union, and this stage extended up to 2004. Since then, FNC was an effective participant in building the institutions of the union, and it was a driver for the process of development in all areas of our national life.

The 34th National Day came in 2005, to form the inception of a new stage in the march of the FNC. As H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE President “God protect him” launched the Empowerment Stage. This stage has empowered the FNC to practice effectively its constitutional mandate, witnessed elections to choose half of the FNC’s members during the years 2006, 2011, 2015 (while the other half were appointed), witnessed the women of the UAE become voters and members of the FNC, and witnessed the first woman to assume the position of Parliament Speaker in the Arab World. This stage also witnessed the constitutional amendment number (1) in 2009 which included extending the term of the FNC membership to four years, the annual regular session to a period of no less than seven months, and giving authority to the FNC to amend its own by-laws.

The FNC exercises legislative and monitoring mandates, where it practices its legislative mandate by receiving constitutional amendments, draft laws and state budget law, and the final account from the government. It has the right to discuss, reject or approve the draft laws without amendment, or amend them by deletion or addition, before submitting them to the cabinet, which submits them in turn to the President of the Federation and the Federal Supreme Council for ratification. Article (91) of the constitution states that the government shall inform the FNC of international treaties and agreements concluded with other nations and various international organisations, and that the UAE President specifies the international treaties and agreements which should be discussed by the FNC before being ratified by the president.

The FNC exercises its monitoring mandate through specific instruments. These include proposing general issues related to federal affairs for discussion. It may make recommendations on them and submit them to the government for consideration. Each FNC member may ask the Prime Minister and other ministers about issues within their domain, including enquiry about some issue unknown to the FNC member, or the occurrence of a certain event about which he had been informed. The FNC may also make recommendations, expressing its desires and wishes about any issues related to public activities in the country, whether in political, economic or social domains. The FNC may also issue statements expressing its opinion regarding some national, local, Arab and international issues. It also examines complaints submitted by individuals against federal government departments and agencies.

The FNC plays a political role reflected in various aspects of parliamentary diplomacy, through its Parliamentary Division. This Division represents the FNC in the Arab, regional and international parliamentary unions. The FNC is a member of Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union since 1975; and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU),
since 1977; Parliamentary Union of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Member States, since 1999; and Arab Provisional Parliament, since 2005, which became permanent as the Arab Parliament in 2012. It also enjoys membership of the Asian Parliamentary Association. It is also a regular participant in the periodic Gulf Meetings, conferences of Arab-African Dialogue, and Arab-European Dialogue.

- **Federal Judiciary:** UAE Federal Judicial System enjoys independence. The UAE constitution prescribes that all people are equal before the law. It guarantees human rights, and prohibits all treatment that degrades dignity. The federal judicial system started functioning in 1973, following the issuance of the Federal Law number (10) for 1973 regarding the establishment of the Federal Supreme Court. The judicial system also includes federal First Instance Courts, and Federal Courts of Appeal.
The UAE’s Foreign Policy

The UAE has assumed a prominent status among the nations of the world, playing an active role at the regional and international levels. It gains the respect of the international community due to the steady approach of its foreign policy, and its many initiatives in the field of humanitarian diplomacy.

His Highness UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan “may God protect him” assured that: “The prominent status and great respect enjoyed by the UAE on the foreign stage are products of the solid principles of our foreign policies. The approach and guidelines of that policy were devised by the leader, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan “may God rest his soul”. This policy is based on the commitment of the UAE to its Gulf, Arab and Islamic affiliation and its keenness to enhance and expand its friendship with nations of the world. It maintains good relations with neighbouring countries by respecting their sovereignty and territorial integrity, and non-interference in their internal affairs. It insists on the principle of solving disputes through peaceful means, and is committed to the UN Charter, and relevant international laws and conventions.

The UAE’s relationship with various nations is not limited to normal relations, but rather goes beyond that to include international cooperation and humanitarian initiatives which have contributed to the stability in many regions and societies of the world. This was reflected positively on the UAE’s status on the international level, as it became the first Arab country whose citizens enjoyed the waiver of getting prior permission (visa) to enter “Schengen” Area. That was achieved through a resolution signed by the UAE and the European Union in Brussels. The UAE citizens (holding diplomatic, special, VIP, and normal passports) can travel to any of the 34 European countries and can stay there for six months out of a year, provided that the length of stay shall not exceed 90 days for one visit.

The numbers of countries which have diplomatic relations with the UAE reached 189, while the number of UAE diplomatic missions abroad increased to 82 embassies and 18 consulates, besides four permanent diplomatic missions. Meanwhile, the number of foreign embassies to the UAE reached 110 embassies, 73 consulates and 15 representative offices of regional and international organisations.

The UAE has spared no effort to demonstrate its willingness to support and enhance joint Arab and Gulf action and develop the cooperative bilateral relations with the Arab League, and other associations, especially the GCC.

The UAE Occupied Islands: The UAE continues its pursuits to restore its sovereignty over its three islands (Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa) occupied by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The UAE always assures in all international forums the necessity to find a fair settlement for this issue, via direct serious negotiations, international arbitration, or referring the dispute to the International Court of Justice for settlement. This tendency is based on the foreign policy of good neighbourly relations, peaceful coexistence and non-interfering in the internal affairs of other nations.

Humanitarian Aid and Donations: The UAE is considered among the leading countries in terms of humanitarian donations. Its leadership believes that humanitarian work is an ethical responsibility. This work manifests cooperation among people. The total number of countries that benefitted from the projects and programs offered by the UAE’s donating agencies, from the foundation of the UAE in 1971 up to 2015, has reached 178 countries.

Statistical data showed that the value of developmental, humanitarian and charity assistance offered by the UAE during the last 44 years amounted to 173 billion Dirhams. Statements by the Development Assistance Committee of the ‘Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’ (OECD), showed in its initial data of the countries providing developmental aid in 2015, that the UAE was ranked...
among the top 10 donating countries in terms of providing official developmental aid, compared to its gross domestic product, GDP. The volume of the official developmental aid provided by the UAE in 2015 reached to 16.12 billion Dirhams or 1.09% of the UAE’s GDP, and more than 52% of this total aid was made through donations. For this reason, the UAE ranked second after Sweden and above Norway, Luxemburg and Denmark, which are the top donors of developmental aid compared to their GDP.

As soon as Operation Decisive Storm ended, Operation Restoring Hope started, with the aim to complete liberating Yemen and reconstruct what the Houthis and the forces of the deposed president Ali Abdullah Saleh have destroyed. This new operation emphasises the objective of the Arab Alliance in Yemen, which is to put an end to the illegitimate coup, and restore stability. The UAE made great efforts to eliminate all aspects of war in the areas liberated, and rehabilitate them and bring them to life again. The UAE was ranked worldwide as the biggest donor of assistance during the humanitarian crisis witnessed by Yemen in 2015.

Data issued by the UAE’s Ministry of International Cooperation and Development revealed that the total value of humanitarian aid offered by the UAE to Yemen during the period April 2015 to July 2016 amounted to about 4.34 billion Dirhams, equal to 1.2 billion USD. The number of Yemens benefitting from the food aid offered by the UAE covered about 1,100,000 of the country’s population.

The types of UAE foreign assistance to Yemen varied from developmental to humanitarian and charitable aids in various domains. The UAE charity institutions contributed generously to this task. These include the UAE Red Crescent Society, Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation, Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Humanitarian and Charity Establishment as well as Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation the Sultan bin Khalifa Al Nahyan Humanitarian and Science Foundation, UAE Water Aid, Rahma, and the Sharjah Charity House, among other UAE humanitarian societies and institutions.

**Security and Stability:** Since the early days of the UAE Federation, security and stability have become essential pillars in the UAE’s vision. Every person living on UAE soil today is feeling safe. Nobody suffers from threats, terror, or plunder of his properties on the UAE’s land. That made the country an oasis for coexistence, where people from more than 220 nationalities live on its generous land. It has become a favourable tourist destination for many visitors from all over the world. It has also become a destination for work/business and living, as a venue for realising dreams for many young people from around the globe.

**Counter Terrorism:** The UAE is keen to promote peace and security all over the world. It emphasises the rights of people everywhere to enjoy sovereignty, independence and sustainable development. It also supports and enhances the principles of international laws and legitimacy, world peace, and countering terrorism and extremism. Due to the blessing of God, and the persistent efforts of the UAE, security and stability have become a tangible reality, which enables the country to achieve great accomplishments in all fields of life. Furthermore, the UAE condemns all terrorist operations under any title or slogan. It has demanded that the international society launch all possible initiatives to preserve the rights of people to live peacefully, and to eradicate terrorist activities. In this context, the UAE Parliamentary Division, during its participation in the activities of the 10th Conference of Parliamentary Union of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Member States, held in Istanbul in January 2015, achieved significant success. It submitted a proposal to prepare a draft of charter for the Islamic parliamentary work in countering terrorism and extremism. The conference approved the UAE’s proposal, and decided to commission the executive committee of the Union to write the proposal and submit it to the coming conference scheduled to be held in 2016.
Economy

The UAE has adopted a defined approach to boost and improve the competitiveness of the country and its establishments; and to improve the means for augmenting sustainable development and prosperity in the future. During the last five years, the UAE also achieved significant accomplishments related to its comprehensive revival, which contributed to entrench its status on regional and international levels. The UAE became a model to follow on all tracks of development works. The accuracy of this approach enhances the international evaluations, most prominent of which is the Human Development Report issued by the UN Development Program, which ranked the UAE currently among the category of countries enjoying very high human development. This classification sums up all the UAE’s developments and achievements in this regard. The UAE maintains its top rank in the Arab World for the third consecutive year, according to the 2016 report issued by The World Bank, in terms of ease of doing business, where it comes before all countries of the region included in the report.

The UAE economy has experienced remarkable flourishing, causing the country to be ranked top in some economic indices, such as per capita income. The country was ranked first in the world in the ‘Confidence’ index. The UAE also ranked the first regionally, for the third consecutive year, in the index of Global Competitiveness and ranked 12th at the world level according to the Annual Report of Global Competitiveness 2015. It ranked 1st in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and 12th worldwide in the 2014 report of Global Trade Empowerment, and the first at the Arab world level in the global report of Information Technology.

**EXPO 2020:** Dubai is scheduled to host the international exhibition EXPO 2020. It is a renowned international event expected to attract 25 million visits during the period in which the exhibition is held; from inauguration day on the 20th October 2020 to its closing date on the 10th of April 2021. The UAE is expected to reap unprecedented economic gains when hosting EXPO 2020, which is expected to create 277,000 job opportunities of which 50,000 will be permanent jobs.

As each EXPO exhibition carries a major theme of interest to humanity, Dubai EXPO 2020 will convey the main theme of “Connecting Minds, Creating the Future”. This means that attaining sustainable solutions for international problems requires understanding and cooperation among different minds and cultures.
UAE Vision 2021 was launched by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, at the closing session of a Cabinet meeting in 2010. The Vision aims to make the UAE among the best countries in the world by the advent of its Golden Jubilee. Pillars of the Vision have been divided into six national axes, representing the main sectors that will be the focus of the government action in the coming years. They are as follows:

**Coherent Community with a Preserved Identity:** by promoting an inclusive environment that integrates all segments of society while preserving the UAE’s unique culture, heritage and traditions and reinforcing social and family cohesion.

**Safe Community and Fair Treatment:** by creating a sense of security for all individuals in society, and achieving leading positions in providing police and security services, and preparedness in cases of emergency, in addition to maintaining road safety to protect lives, and enhancing the fairness of judges and continuing to guarantee the rights of individuals and businesses through an active and efficient judiciary system.

**Competitive Knowledge Economy:** the UAE will continue its efforts to switch to a knowledge-based economy, by promoting innovation, research and development, and strengthening the regulatory framework for key sectors, as well as encouraging high value-added sectors in order to improve the country’s business environment and increase its attractiveness to foreign investment.

**High-Level Education System:** the National Agenda aims to equip all schools, universities and students with smart systems and devices as a basis for all teaching methods, projects and research. The national agenda also wishes to place our students among the best in the world in knowledge tests and reading, maths and science skills.

**World-Class Healthcare:** the Government will work in collaboration with all health authorities in the country to accredit all public and private hospitals according to clear national and international quality standards of medical services and staff in order to strengthen preventive aspects and reduce the level of chronic disease.

**Sustainable Environment and Integrated Infrastructure:** by improving the quality of air, preserving water resources, increasing dependence on clean energy, as well as focusing on the quality of airports, ports, roads, electricity and telecommunications infrastructure, in order for the UAE to be a leading country when it comes to providers of smart services.
In the UAE, the future is not merely a word, it is an approach that requires far reaching foresight, hard work and intensive investment in human, political, economic, social and cultural structures to ensure prosperity for both country and citizen. H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE President “may God protect him” approved the major structural changes to the 12th federal cabinet, as announced by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai in consultation with H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al , Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, so that it can be the government of the future. One ministry was renamed to the ‘Ministry of Cabinet Affairs and Future’, an expression of the country’s vision that focuses on foreseeing the future in order to shape it.

The government of the future has less ministries, but more ministers, to deal with dynamic and changing national agendas and strategic issues. It adopts the strategic goal of ensuring the happiness of UAE citizens, by creating a ministry for happiness and a ministry for tolerance, and merging some other ministries. H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, defined the goals of the new government as follows:

**Happiness:** Based on the conviction of the UAE government that the role of governments is to ensure the happiness of their citizens, a minister was given this portfolio in order to adapt every decision, law, idea and plan so that they contribute to ensuring happiness of all citizens and residents. The UAE ranked first in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and 28th globally, on the World Happiness Index 2015, which is higher than many long established countries. The UAE leadership is keen on putting citizens at the heart of their policies and plans, and works towards ensuring their happiness, welfare and stability through a continuing list of initiatives, plans and strategies. This includes the National Happiness and Positivity Program, which will cover the country’s citizens, residents and visitors and will include a set of initiatives, programs and services for government employees that aim at creating the most happy government working environment in the world. Within the framework of this program, the Cabinet approved a number of initiatives and projects, including the adoption of the national charter for happiness and positivity as a commitment towards creating a happier environment for the UAE society. Government entities will work towards achieving the objectives of this charter in the best way possible.

**Tolerance:** Tolerance is an inherent value among UAE citizens, as the country hosts people from more than 202 nations, and they all live in harmony without discrimination on any basis. This fact was reflected by the creation of a Ministry for Tolerance in the current government and enacting a law to counter discrimination and hatred. This law criminalises all forms of defamation of religions and sanctities as well as hatred and excommunication discourse. Further, it prohibits and criminalises all forms of discrimination on the basis of religion, creed, sect, denomination, origin, race or colour, and sets strict punishments for these.

**Human Rights:** The UAE is characterised by valuing justice and respecting and protecting human rights through laws and regulations that guarantee equality and justice among all. The UAE constitution guarantees freedoms and rights for all citizens, prohibits torture and arbitrary arrest and detention, and respects civil liberties, including freedom of expression and the press, peaceful assembly, the establishments of associations, and the exercise of religious beliefs. The government is firmly committed to the promotion and consolidation of the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in
a constructive way and works hard to improve its internal performance in order to bring about positive change on a global scale. In addition to this, the UAE does all in its capacity to develop and modernise its laws and practices. This trend was clearly reflected in the establishment by the Federal National Council in 2014 of a permanent committee for human rights in order to enhance the respect and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the constitutional and legal principles of human rights and international conventions to which the UAE is a party.

Women: Since the establishment of the UAE, the rights of UAE woman have been the primary concern of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan “may God bless his soul”, who believed in the capabilities of women and the importance of their role as partners of men in nation-building, and provided them with support from the very beginning. H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE “may God protect him” is leading the empowerment of women so that they occupy the highest positions in all fields. The UAE has enacted a number of legislations and laws that provide legal protection for women.

The launch by H.H. Sheikha Fatima Bint Mubarak, President of the General Women’s Union (GWU), Supreme President of the Family Development Foundation (FDF), The Supreme President of the Council for Motherhood & Childhood (Mother of the Nation), of the National Strategy for Empowerment of Emirati Women in the UAE 2015-2021 was a pivotal step related to the UAE’s excellence, both in terms of improving the status of women and in other areas. It reflects the will and determination to overcome obstacles and difficulties. The most distinguishing characteristic of this strategy is that it sets strategic priorities and specific milestones that can be measured and monitored on the ground.

The best proof of the success of the UAE’s policy on women is the facts as shown by the numbers; four women currently hold positions in the judiciary and eight women hold ministerial positions, including three at the top of the ministries of youth, tolerance and happiness. Furthermore, women participate in the elections and become members of the Federal National Council; there are nine female members in the Council, representing 23% of the total membership, and the UAE is the first Arab country to elect a woman to head a parliamentary institution.

Women in the UAE represent more than 66% of public sector jobs, including 3% of senior executive positions related to decision-making and 15% of specialised academic jobs. Women’s contribution to economic activity and the labour market rose steadily since the establishment of the Businesswomen Council in the UAE, bringing the number of women registered with the chambers of commerce and industry to around 22,000 businesswomen, who work in the domestic and global market. Statistics indicate that the percentage of female doctors reached 62% of the total Emirati doctors.

Youth: The UAE gives great importance to the youth sector, as demonstrated by the appointment of a Minister of State for Youth and the establishment of the Emirates Youth Council, which includes a group of young men and women, to act as advisors to the government on youth issues and to create every opportunity for young people to express their ideas and aspirations and to promote their participation and contribution in all fields.
Protection of the environment: The UAE has a diversified environment and rich flora and fauna, both on the land and in the sea. It has paid great attention to various fields of environmental protection and associated scientific research and continued its efforts to protect natural resources through legislation, education and engagement in conservation efforts in cooperation with many organisations and relevant institutions, as well as through intensive scientific research carried out by public and private sector institutions.

Environmental protection has remained a government priority, thanks to the great attention given by the UAE founder, late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan “may God bless his soul”. This has also been manifested through the continuous protection programs and research as well as through legislation and awareness efforts. The goals of sustainable use and protection of natural resources remain the focus of current and future efforts.

Renewable energy: The UAE assigns paramount importance to renewable energy and looks forward to renewable energy generation through alternative sustainable sources. “Masdar City” has been designed using modern techniques and technologies that reduce the need to use energy and help preserve the environment. It hosts the headquarters of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IAEA).
Science and Technology/Mission to Mars – HOPE/Khalifa Sat/Innovation/Nuclear Programme

Science and Technology: The UAE pays much attention to developing and strengthening its achievements in the field of science and technology. Under the title “United in Knowledge”, the UAE Vision 2021 states that innovation, research, science and technology will form the pillars of a knowledge-based, highly productive and competitive economy, driven by entrepreneurs in a business-friendly environment where public and private sectors form effective partnerships.

The UAE officially entered the global race to explore outer space through the announcement by H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE “may God protect him” of the establishment of the UAE Space Agency and the start of work on the project for sending the first Arab and Islamic spaceship to Mars, led by an Emirati team, in a scientific expedition to reach the Red Planet in the next seven years, specifically in 2021.

Hope Spacecraft: H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, gave the name “Hope” to the UAE spacecraft which is scheduled to reach Mars in 2021, to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the United Arab Emirates. The spacecraft will take nine months to complete the 60 million-kilometre journey, and will make the UAE one of only nine countries with space programs exploring the Red Planet.

Khalifa SAT (the first Arab-made satellite): H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, launched the operational phases of the construction of the satellite Khalifa SAT, which is the first satellite to be 100% developed and manufactured in the UAE by national competencies, making it truly the first Arab-built satellite. This will mark a new era in which the Arab region enters the field of space manufacturing and joins the competition in space sciences.

Innovation: Pursuant to the directives of H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE President, the Council of Ministers at its meeting in November 2014, approved a Declaration, which considers 2015 as the Year of Innovation in UAE. The UAE President stressed the significance of this declaration to the UAE, stating that, “announcing 2015 as the Year of Innovation comes to support federal government efforts, attract national skills, increase distinguished research, as well as boost efforts to build a national cadre who are able to lead our future in this field towards more progress, prosperity and innovation.”

In November 2015, H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan “may God protect him” the UAE President approved the ‘Emirates Science, Technology and Innovation Higher Policy’, which will focus on 100 initiatives, with major investments in education, health, energy, transport, space and water, amounting in total to more than AED 300 billion. This policy led to a number of events and initiatives that have contributed to creating a passion for innovation in the UAE, including, but not limited to the Mohammed Bin Rashid Centre for Government Innovation, which aims to stimulate and enrich the culture of innovation, and the UAE Innovation Week initiative.

The UAE was ranked second among Arab countries and 47th worldwide on the Global Innovation Index 2015, which tracks the performance of 141 countries and economies around the world. Published by the United Nations Intellectual Property Organisation in collaboration with Cornell University and the European Institute of Business Administration, the Index is based on 79 sub-indices and indicators, including the efficiency of universities, the number of patents, and research impact of individual countries.

The UAE's nuclear programme: The UAE is working to develop a peaceful nuclear programme as an environmentally friendly and more sustainable solution for meeting the country’s energy needs. By 2020, nuclear reactors will become the second most important source of energy in the UAE after natural gas, producing about 25% of electricity in the country.
The UAE has a rich civilizational and cultural heritage that is rooted in its authentic Arab and Islamic values as well as the natural environment which influenced the lifestyle, customs, traditions and emotional heritage of its people.

Emirate of Abu Dhabi: The Emirate has many tourist attractions, including the following:

Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Mosque (Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque): It is one of the main attractions of the city. This cultural edifice is an evidence of the country’s determination to preserve its Islamic heritage, and reflects the most brilliant Islamic architectural arts. It was built using the finest marble, stone, gold, precious stones, crystal and ceramic.

Saadiyat Island: A natural island characterised by its picturesque nature and several touristic and cultural facilities, including an international business hub, a beach golf course, the Zayed National Museum, Louvre Abu Dhabi and other museums, as well as recreational and beach facilities and hotels.

Yas Island: 20 km away from downtown Abu Dhabi, this island has a number of recreational facilities and is characterised by calmness and beautiful scenery.

Al Lulu Island: A tourist island par excellence. It has two beaches, two artificial fresh water lakes, and a lot of tourist facilities and services.

Emirates Palace: The venue of the Global Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament, and is one of the most luxurious hotels in the world. It stands on an artificial island just a hundred meters from the seashore.

Heritage Village: This gives its visitors glimpses of Emirati heritage through exhibits re-enacting water extraction from old wells and irrigation systems, and scenes of mud houses, old fishing villages and ancient markets, with the aim of familiarising visitors with the lifestyle of the population who were living in Abu Dhabi.

Ferrari World: An amusement park for young and old alike in Yas Island. It is the largest covered amusement park in the world, and is located next to Yas Marina Circuit, which hosts the Formula 1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.

Yas Mall: The largest shopping mall in Abu Dhabi. It has 450 stores, and is a ten-minute drive from the Abu Dhabi International Airport and a forty-five-minute drive from the city centre.

Emirate of Dubai: Dubai is the second largest emirate in terms of area. It is located on the east coast of the Arabian Peninsula in the southwest corner of the Arabian Gulf. It is characterised by cultural diversity and has many attractions that have become symbols of its rise, including most notably the following:

Burj Khalifa: The tallest building in the world today, rising more than 800 meters. It was officially opened in 2010.

Burj Al Arab Hotel: The only 7-star hotel in the world. It stands on an artificial island just a hundred meters from the seashore.

Dubai Marina: Dubai Waterfront was established on the shores of the emirate. It is located near to the centre of new Dubai and is connected with the port of Jebel Ali, Dubai Internet City and Dubai Media City.
**Palm Jumeirah**: The first palm-shaped island in the sea. Construction on this island began in June 2001.

**Atlantis Palm Jumeirah Hotel**: This is located in the centre of the crescent of the Palm Jumeirah in Dubai. The hotel features an aquarium with over 65,000 sea creatures as well as recreational facilities such as The Lost Chambers and a maze of corridors and underwater passages that offer a journey through ancient Atlantis.

**Emirate of Sharjah**: Sharjah has a lot of monuments and historical sites and features, picturesque beaches and many recreational facilities, including the following:

- **Qanat Al Qasba**: a water canal lined with many tourist facilities.
- **Sharjah Aquarium**: Includes more than 250 marine species, ranging from small to large fish, as well as other sea creatures.
- **Arabia’s Wildlife Centre**: This is home to many animals that live in the Arabian Peninsula. It provides cultural and scientific information as well as amenities and entertainment facilities.

**Emirate of Ajman**: Located on the Arabian Gulf coast, with historical landmarks that reflect the emirate’s deeply rooted heritage over its long history. One of Ajman’s most famous tourist attractions is Ajman Museum, which was originally a fortress, but has been converted into a museum to present the history and heritage of the ancestors. It features archaeological collections, traditional industrial and craft tools, and scenes of social life in the past.

**Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah**: Located in the north of the UAE, with a 64-kilometer long coast overlooking the Arabian Gulf. It is famous for its historical monuments that are linked to many of the past events in the region. Its tourist attractions include the following:

**Ras Al Khaimah Museum**: It showcases between its walls the authenticity of the past, featuring artefacts and archaeological landmarks dating back to ancient times.

**Wetland Reserve**: During the winter migration season, Ras Al Khaimah becomes a stopover for thousands of birds migrating from Africa to Asia, making the emirate an ideal place for bird watching. Wetland Reserve has become the main place to watch the birds, with flamingos being the most watched and admired.

**The Water Park**: A water park featuring many varied events and activities.

**Emirate of Umm Al Quwain**: Located in the north of the country, with an area of 750 square kilometres. It has many tourist areas, including the following:

- **Dreamland**: A park spreading over an area of 200,000 square meters along the coast of Umm Al Quwain. It is an entertainment complex featuring the largest aqua park in the region.
- **Siniya Island**: The largest tourist island in the region, with an area of 90 square kilometres. It is characterised by its beautiful nature, with seagulls, herons, hares and deer, as well as some archaeological sites dating back to the dawn of Islam.
- **Emirate of Fujairah**: Located on the Gulf of Oman in the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, bordered by the Gulf of Oman to the east, by Ras Al Khaimah and Sharjah to the west, and Kalba City to the south. It overlooks the coast of Oman, with a coastline of 70 kilometres. The Wadi Wurayah is an important tourist destination, located 45 kilometres to the north of the city. Masafi Falls is another tourist destination, leading to the Wadi Siji, which is one of the most beautiful valleys in Fujairah.