

# The Kingdom's Efforts in Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Older Persons







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# Introduction

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince—may Allah protect them—places high importance on the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons, rooted in the Islamic principles of compassion and care for the elderly. This commitment is reflected in the Kingdom's national strategies and initiatives, particularly Vision 2030, which seeks to enhance the quality of life for all segments of society, including the elderly.

In alignment with its core values, the Kingdom has consistently reaffirmed its dedication to safeguarding the rights of this esteemed group through comprehensive legislation and the implementation of targeted initiatives. These efforts ensure access to health, social, and psychological services, promoting independent and dignified living for older persons.

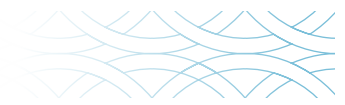
Both regionally and globally, Saudi Arabia stands out as one of the leading nations in advocating for the rights of older persons. The Kingdom continues to support international efforts aimed at advancing their rights, demonstrating its ongoing commitment to inclusive development and meaningful societal participation for all.

## Legal and Institutional Framework for Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Older Persons in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

### First: Legal Framework for the Rights of Older Persons

**National legislation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia guarantees older persons the right to development, healthcare, and a supportive, enabling environment. This commitment is reflected in various legal instruments, including but not limited to:**

1. The Basic Law of Governance, issued by Royal Decree No. A/90 dated 27/8/1412 AH (corresponding to 2/3/1992 AD), stipulates in Article (27) that “ The State shall guarantee the rights of the citizens and their families in cases of emergency, illness, disability and old age. The State shall support the Social Insurance Law and encourage organizations and individuals to participate in philanthropic activities.”
2. The Law of Literacy and Adult Education, issued by Royal Decree No. M/22 dated 9/6/1392 AH (corresponding to 20/7/1972 AD), which aims to combat and eliminate illiteracy.
3. The Health Law, issued by Royal Decree No. M/11 dated 23/3/1423 AH (corresponding to 4/6/2002 AD), in which Article Four stipulates that the state shall provide healthcare services for the elderly.



4. The Social Care Homes Regulation, issued by Cabinet Resolution No. 322 dated 14/9/1434 AH (corresponding to 22/7/2013 AD), along with its executive rules, regulates all provisions related to the admission of older persons into care homes and the services provided to them within these facilities.
5. The Law on Protection from Abuse, issued by Royal Decree No. M/52 dated 15/11/1434 AH (corresponding to 21/9/2013 AD), serves as a legal safeguard against abuse for all family members, including older persons.
6. Cabinet Resolution No. (162) dated 6/7/1427 AH, concerning social security, aims to provide social protection for the most vulnerable groups, including individuals over the age of sixty.
7. The Royal Decree No. (M/73) dated 6/8/1443 AH, approving the Personal Status Law, which includes numerous articles and provisions aimed at preserving the integrity of the family unit and protecting the rights of its members.
8. The Royal Decree No. (M/47) dated 3/6/1443 AH, approving the Rights and Care of Older Persons Law, which is designed to enable older persons to live in an environment that preserves their rights and dignity. The law emphasizes the importance of raising community awareness and promoting education to clarify the rights of older persons, with the aim of fostering respect and appreciation for them. It also calls for the provision of reliable statistical data on older persons to support related studies and research, and to assist in developing targeted plans and programs. The law provides for the implementation of tailored programs that enhance the skills, experiences, and hobbies of older persons, and support their integration into society. It encourages capable older persons to engage in work and benefit from support programs aimed at employers. Moreover, it promotes volunteer efforts that serve older persons. In addition, the law mandates the rehabilitation of public and commercial facilities, residential neighborhoods, the surrounding environment, and mosques to ensure they meet the needs of older persons, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. It also requires the allocation of designated spaces for older persons in public facilities and events, and encourages the private sector, business owners, and civil society organizations to establish private centers and social clubs to serve older persons. Among the key provisions of the law are:

Article Two, paragraph (2): “Older persons shall be enabled to live in an environment that preserves their rights and dignity.”

Article Two, paragraph (5): “Capable older persons shall be encouraged to work, and shall be enabled to benefit from support programs directed to employing entities.”

Article Two, paragraph (7): “Public and commercial facilities, residential neighborhoods, the surrounding environment, and mosques shall be rehabilitated to be suitable for the needs of older persons.”

Article Two, paragraph (8): “Places for older persons in public facilities and public occasions shall be allocated.”

Article Three of the law states: “The older person has the right to live with his family, and the family must provide shelter and care for him, with the responsibility resting on the family members.”



Article Ten of the law provides: “The Ministry shall provide the necessary medical devices and supplies free of charge to needy older persons, and shall bear the associated maintenance and operational costs.

Royal Decree No. (M/73) dated 6/8/1443 AH was issued approving the Personal Status Law, which includes numerous articles and provisions aimed at preserving the family structure and protecting the rights of its members.

Furthermore, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a party to several regional and international human rights instruments and conventions that contain provisions related to the rights of older persons. These include the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities “CRPD”, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women “CEDAW”, and the Arab Charter on Human Rights. Any regional or international instrument to which the Kingdom has acceded is considered part of its legal system and holds the same binding legal authority as national legislation. This is because the legal instrument used to issue domestic laws is the same one used for the Kingdom’s accession to or ratification of international treaties. In this regard, Article (70) of the Basic Law of Governance states: “Laws, treaties, international agreements, and concessions shall be issued and amended by Royal Decrees.

## Second: Institutional Framework for the Rights of Older Persons:

Government agencies and civil society institutions cooperate in an integrated manner to protect and promote the rights of older persons by adopting appropriate measures to implement these rights, including:



The Human Rights Commission was established by Cabinet Resolution No. 207 dated 8/8/1426 AH (corresponding to 12/09/2005 SD), and it is an entity with legal personality headquartered in Riyadh, with branches in various regions of the Kingdom. It has complete independence in exercising its competencies and aims to protect and promote human rights in accordance with international human rights standards in all fields, raise awareness about them, and contribute to ensuring their application in light of Islamic Sharia provisions. It is the body responsible for providing opinions and advice on human rights issues.



The organization of the Human Rights Commission includes many competencies that work together to achieve the objectives for which it was established, and these competencies can be summarized as follows:



### Monitoring and Follow-up

This function involves ensuring that government agencies implement the legal foundations related to human rights—including regional and international agreements, laws, regulations, orders, and decisions. It also includes identifying violations, taking legal action regarding them, and conducting visits to prisons and detention centers at any time without the need for prior permission from the competent authority. The HRC then submits reports on these visits directly to the King.



### Redress

This role entails receiving and verifying complaints related to human rights, taking appropriate legal action, and filing or responding to lawsuits concerning human rights matters.



### Providing Consultation

The HRC provides opinions on draft laws related to human rights, reviews existing laws and proposes amendments in accordance with legal procedures. It also offers its views on international human rights instruments regarding the Kingdom's accession to them or their provisions. Additionally, the HRC prepares annual reports on the human rights situation in the Kingdom and offers technical advice to individuals and relevant civil society institutions.



### Awareness and Education

The HRC is responsible for formulating general policies to promote human rights awareness. It proposes methods for spreading a culture of human rights through educational, training, and media institutions and platforms, including social media and the Commission's website. It also organizes and participates in conferences and seminars on human rights issues, in accordance with applicable legal procedures, and issues bulletins, magazines, and publications aligned with its objectives and responsibilities.

## National, Regional, and International Cooperation

This function involves collaborating with national, regional, and international associations, organizations, and institutions operating in the field of human rights to achieve the Commission's goals and strengthen its partnerships





The Family Affairs Council was established by Cabinet Resolution No. 433 dated 20/10/1437 AH (corresponding to 25/7/2016 AD), which, under Article Six of its organizational structure, mandates the formation of several committees, including the “Older Persons Committee.” This national committee is responsible for developing preventive plans, projects, and awareness programs aimed at addressing the needs of older persons. It also formulates the general policy for elderly care in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The FAC proposes regulations and bylaws that ensure older persons enjoy a dignified social life and elevated status. It promotes awareness of the conditions and issues facing older persons to protect their family and social standing and strengthen their positive role in society. The FAC further encourages families and supports their involvement in caring for elderly members. It also conducts research on improving methods of care and services provided to older persons, in cooperation with regional and international organizations active in this field. In addition, the FAC proposes programs and projects tailored to the experiences and interests of older persons and undertakes studies, research, seminars, and conferences on various aging-related issues in collaboration with universities, research centers, and specialized organizations.





## Prominent Initiatives and Programs in the Social, Health, and Economic Fields

### The Right to Social Care

In line with Saudi Vision 2030, the Kingdom has taken significant steps to enhance care and residential services, aiming to empower and integrate older persons into all areas of life. The Kingdom continues to expand its efforts in infrastructure development and policy enhancement to address the needs of older persons and ensure the realization of their rights across various sectors. These efforts reflect the Kingdom's firm commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, particularly those related to eradicating poverty, ensuring good health and well-being, reducing inequalities, and promoting inclusive and sustainable societies for all, with a special focus on older persons.



**Human Resources and  
Social Development**

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development has implemented a number of measures aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of older persons, most notably:

1. The Ministry provides comprehensive care—health, social, and psychological—to elderly individuals through social care homes located throughout the Kingdom, currently numbering 12 homes. These homes serve individuals aged sixty or above who are unable to care for themselves and whose families lack the capacity to do so. They also care for elderly patients with no providers, referred by hospitals, provided they are free from contagious or mental illnesses. These programs and services are managed by specialized staff across various disciplines to ensure high-quality care for the residents.
2. The Ministry offers financial and in-kind assistance to needy elderly individuals and their families through the Social Security Agency, in addition to providing assistive devices such as wheelchairs, medical beds, hearing aids, and other necessary equipment.
3. A home care program is in place to provide support to elderly individuals within the family setting through regular follow-up visits.

4. The Privilege Card for Older Persons grants cardholders priority access to services and discounts on public services provided by government, private, and civil entities. It also facilitates all procedures related to the cardholder and expedites their completion.
5. The initiative “Diwaniyat Al-Awwalin” (Elders’ Council) aims to create a welcoming and engaging environment for older persons to spend their time in meaningful recreation, connect the present with the past, draw on the wisdom and experiences of earlier generations, and foster communication between parents and children.

### The Right to Education:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia places great importance on ensuring the right of older persons to access education, implementing a range of programs and initiatives that empower them to continue learning and actively participate in society. These efforts align with the Kingdom’s commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 4, which focuses on quality education. The following are among the most prominent initiatives implemented in this context:



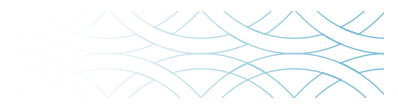
وزارة التعليم  
Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education has developed dedicated adult education programs targeting all illiterate individuals, offering them educational services free of charge. A comprehensive roadmap has been established to combat alphabetical illiteracy across the Kingdom’s regions and governorates. The Ministry has also supervised a number of mobile literacy campaigns in remote areas to reach and educate residents

resulting in a reduction of  
the national illiteracy rate to



**%5.6**



## Key initiatives and services include:



“Learning Neighborhood Centers”: These programs are available to all individuals aged 15 and above who wish to enhance their life, educational, and professional skills. They are supervised by the General Administration for Continuing Education.



Adult Education Schools: The General Administration for Continuing Education also oversees the provision of formal education services free of charge to older persons who did not have the opportunity to complete their studies. These services cover all educational stages: primary, intermediate, and secondary.



“Ain Channel” Service: A dedicated educational channel that broadcasts adult education programs and lessons, offering educational enrichment content tailored to adult learners.



“Literacy Community” Program: An initiative aimed specifically at older persons, offering an alphabetical literacy program along with financial incentives to encourage participation. The program targets illiterate individuals wherever they may reside across the Kingdom’s regions, cities, and governorates.



## The Right to Health

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has undertaken a range of measures to ensure that older persons enjoy their right to health, reflecting its commitment to both national standards and relevant international conventions in this field. In line with Saudi Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goal of “Good Health and Well-being,” the Ministry of Health has launched numerous programs aimed at improving the health and well-being of older persons, including the following:

- Primary healthcare services, such as the Elderly Health Care Program, which provides comprehensive, integrated, preventive, therapeutic, and rehabilitative healthcare services of high quality. These specialized services target older persons through both governmental and non-governmental entities. One of the key components is the Early Detection Program for physical, mental, and psychological health issues, which has contributed to reducing disease, disability, and mortality rates, while enhancing overall well-being and quality of life for the elderly.
- Primary healthcare centers are available across all cities and villages in the Kingdom. These centers focus on collecting and updating health data for elderly visitors, monitoring their conditions, and facilitating access to services. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development also collaborate to provide home healthcare services to older persons within their residences.
- The establishment of units for older persons in various hospitals across the Kingdom. These newly established units are dedicated to delivering healthcare services tailored to the needs of older persons. Each unit includes an elderly clinic and a multidisciplinary team—known as the Geriatric Medicine Team—comprising a geriatric consultant, nurses, a social worker, a therapeutic nutritionist, and a physical therapist. These teams operate in accordance with established Geriatric Medicine standards.





صحتي  
Sehhaty



The “Sehhaty” application, which enables older persons to access remote medical consultations from certified and reliable doctors under the supervision of the Ministry of Health.



The “Wasfaty” application is an advanced electronic service designed to enhance the quality of healthcare and ensure the availability of medications. It connects hospitals and primary healthcare centers with community pharmacies, allowing patients to conveniently receive their prescribed medications free of charge from the nearest participating pharmacy. The service also offers home delivery of medications, improving access and convenience, especially for older persons.



The “Qareboun” application, offered by the National Center for Mental Health Promotion, provides psychological and mental health consultations under the supervision of specialized professionals. The app functions as a comprehensive digital library, offering a wide range of resources on mental health through modern formats such as text-based content, infographics, and visual media.



The “Home Health Care Services” program delivers comprehensive healthcare and continuous follow-up for patients who are unable to visit health facilities, directly within their homes. A trained healthcare team works in coordination with the patient’s treating physician to conduct a thorough assessment of the patient’s medical and social condition. This includes evaluating the home environment and the family’s ability to support the patient’s care. A medical file is created both at the hospital and in the patient’s home, based on approved forms, and a schedule of home visits is developed in accordance with the patient’s medical needs.

As part of the Kingdom’s commitment to providing comprehensive care for older persons, referral hospitals, specialized clinics, and home healthcare centers offer training programs for caregivers. These include certified training courses for staff at social care homes, provided by medical services, as well as training for family caregivers through home care programs—ensuring quality support for older persons across different care settings.



The Ministry of Health has undertaken significant efforts to improve the health of older persons, enhance their quality of life, and achieve one of the objectives of Vision 2030, which is to raise the average life expectancy to 80 years. Comprehensive aging assessments are conducted across various settings, including primary healthcare centers, specialized geriatric clinics, virtual geriatric clinics, and home healthcare services.

**Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment (CGA):** More than 360,000 elderly individuals have been assessed in primary healthcare centers. The Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment aims to detect health problems (physical, mental, and social) and risk factors associated with chronic diseases and disability at an early stage. It includes, among other elements: promoting physical activity and exercise, encouraging healthy nutrition, providing health awareness and education, raising awareness among older persons, their families, and society about age-related health issues and prevention methods, promoting the importance of aging, and supporting and training care providers.

## Providing social support networks

01

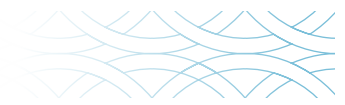
Elderly care centers

02

elderly clubs

Digital literacy for older persons: Providing training for older persons in digital literacy ensures their continued communication and access to telehealth services, social platforms, and online learning, thereby supporting their independence. - Establishing a virtual geriatric clinic in the Virtual Health Hospital. - Developing standards suitable for older persons in hospitals.

Work has also been carried out to reform community and home care approaches by shifting the focus from institutional care—such as elderly care homes—to home and community-based care models, under the supervision of the Home Health Care Department at the Ministry of Health. This transformation has included enhancing home care services by allocating more resources to caregivers and offering affordable medical and social support within the home environment. Additionally, more community centers have been established to serve as hubs for elderly care, social interaction, and health promotion. Preventive healthcare programs have also been implemented, focusing on physical activity, nutrition, and cognitive health, with the aim of delaying or reducing long-term dependency.



Changes in policies, regulations, and structural modifications: Regulations and policies have been reformed to foster an environment that encourages innovation in elderly care. This includes advocating for stronger quality standards for elderly care facilities and service providers, as well as introducing elder-friendly hospitals as a recognized standard of care. In addition, legislation such as the Older Persons' Rights Law has been supported to protect the rights of older individuals and to ensure they receive dignified and compassionate care. Policymakers are also being encouraged to engage in long-term planning and budgeting for elderly care by establishing advisory councils or dedicated task forces (Global Dementia Observatory).

Social support and caregiver support: Temporary care services have been established to enable caregivers to take short breaks while ensuring uninterrupted care for older persons. Financial, psychological, and emotional support is also provided to family caregivers through counseling services and incentive programs. Additionally, peer support programs have been developed to connect older persons and caregivers with supportive communities

The Ministry has also issued a set of standards for elder-friendly facilities and developed a national strategy for the health of older persons. Moreover, it has launched specialized fellowship programs in geriatric medicine, which have contributed to increasing the number of specialists from 40 to 90 doctors over the past five years.



## The Right to Work

The Kingdom has adopted policies supporting the empowerment of older persons in the labor market through training and rehabilitation programs, and by providing flexible work environments that consider their needs and benefit from their experiences. These efforts are consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 8 related to providing decent work for all, Goal 10 regarding reducing inequalities, and Goal 1 on eradicating poverty, within the framework of the Kingdom's commitment to Vision 2030. Among these prominent efforts:

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development has launched a set of initiatives and programs, including: stimulating and supporting balance in the labor market and training programs, leadership guidance for female cadres, the parallel training initiative, encouraging remote work, flexible work, and freelance work, and has launched the National Platform for Saudi Female Leaders. The Human Resources Development Fund has also worked on support and preparation programs for women, such as: employment support programs, "Qurrah" to support working mothers by caring for their children during working hours, and the "Wusool" program that facilitates transportation to and from work for working women, among other programs.

The Kingdom also provides an integrated system of financing and support programs for small and medium enterprises, covering all sectors and stages, including older persons and retirees who can benefit from financing programs, either through personal financing programs for retirees or through enterprise financing programs if they meet the regulatory conditions. The Small and Medium Enterprises Bank was established by Cabinet Resolution No. 376 dated 4/7/1442 AH, corresponding to 16/2/2021 AD, due to the Saudi leadership's keenness to organize, support, develop, and nurture the small and medium enterprises sector in the Kingdom and raise the productivity of these enterprises and increase their contribution to the GDP from 20% to 35% by 2030.



Within the framework of Saudi Vision 2030, the social security system has been developed with the aim of enabling beneficiaries to achieve financial independence and transform into productive individuals through rehabilitation and training programs, in addition to providing for the basic minimum needs of eligible families.

In November 2023, social security allocations were increased by raising the minimum social security pension for a family from (SAR 1,100 for the beneficiary and 50% for each dependent) to (SAR 1,320 for the beneficiary and 50% for each dependent).



The "Citizen's Account" program was also launched with the objective of mitigating the potential impact of economic reforms associated with Vision 2030, by providing direct cash transfers to citizens with middle and limited income.

## Second: Contributions of Civil Society Institutions:

Civil society institutions play a vital role in implementing developmental and humanitarian programs that support society at both national and international levels, thereby promoting the values of social and humanitarian solidarity. Some of these institutions are particularly focused on providing integrated care for older persons and supporting their active participation in society. One example is:



A non-profit charitable society committed to supporting older persons, advocating for their rights, assisting in their care, and enhancing societal awareness of their status and role.





A civil association organization dedicated to serving older persons aged 60 and above, both men and women. It focuses on addressing their psychological, recreational, health, and social needs. The association is headquartered in Riyadh.



This association was established to raise public awareness about Alzheimer's disease and to support patients and their families. Its mission is to contribute to the improvement of both health care and social care services provided by the relevant entities.

## Key Services Provided to Older Persons

### :Recreational Services

As part of Saudi Vision 2030 and to promote inclusivity within the entertainment sector, the General Entertainment Authority has incorporated several regulations and procedures into its current policies to ensure the needs of priority groups—such as persons with disabilities, older persons, pregnant women, and those with infants—are taken into consideration in entertainment and support activities, including the following:



#### Crowd Management and Organization Controls

- Allowing persons with disabilities, older persons, pregnant women, and those with infants to use dedicated bypass lanes.
- Giving them priority seating in waiting areas.



#### Controls for Selling Tickets to Entertainment Activities

1. Granting priority groups the ability to bypass crowded lanes.
2. Allocating appropriate waiting areas for them.
3. Ensuring they receive services promptly and efficiently.



## Judicial Services

The Ministry of Justice has activated the electronic litigation system as part of its broader digital transformation strategy, aimed at ensuring speed, efficiency, and quality in judicial processes. To support older persons in accessing justice, the Ministry provides a range of tailored judicial services, including:

- Remote litigation service, which enables older persons to follow up on their judicial procedures from their homes without the need for personal attendance in courts, through modern technology means, ensuring easy access to justice and preserving their dignity, saving time and effort, and taking into account their health and social conditions.
- Providing free documentation services at the beneficiaries' locations for the most needy groups, including older persons, where it works to provide documentation services through a mobile group of notaries in various regions of the Kingdom working according to a system supervised by the Ministry of Justice.
- Allocating a platform for electronic judicial services (Najiz). The platform aims to provide electronic judicial services for more than (100) judicial services through a unified portal (najiz.sa) such as: electronic power of attorney issuance service and documentation services.

## Technical Services for Older Persons:

On June 30, 2021, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology launched the "Technology for All" campaign under the umbrella of the "Technology for Older Persons" initiative. This initiative aims to empower older persons by promoting the use of technology in their daily lives. It raises awareness about the importance of digital tools, guides users on how to operate key applications independently, and enhances their confidence and ability to keep pace with technological advancement. The initiative also encourages broader societal involvement in educating and assisting older persons with technology. It targets different segments of society based on their needs, offering technology-based solutions that align with Vision 2030's goals of building an ambitious digital nation, a thriving digital economy, and a dynamic digital society. While the Ministry has not officially disclosed the number of campaign beneficiaries, technical training courses provided by associated organizations have benefited a total of (1,118) individuals to date.



The Civil Status Agency at the Ministry of Interior also launched the “We Come to You” initiative, which aims to provide civil status services directly to all citizens and residents from targeted groups of older persons, which are groups that may face difficulty in accessing civil status offices. The initiative aims to facilitate access to services at the beneficiaries’ locations and save time and effort to reduce the need to visit civil status offices, which reflects on the comfort of the beneficiaries. The initiative includes providing various civil status services such as: issuing and renewing national identity cards, issuing replacements for lost or damaged national identity cards, and modifying profession and educational qualification. Mobile units provide their services to both genders in (53) locations around the Kingdom, where mobile units visit the beneficiary entities and are equipped with all the necessary equipment to provide services on site, including health centers, public parks, schools and universities, and governmental and private entities.

## Conclusion:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s efforts in caring for older persons serve as a leading example in promoting human values and providing a supportive environment that ensures a dignified life and meaningful community participation for this vital segment of society. These efforts are reflected in a comprehensive system of legislation, initiatives, and programs focused on protecting the rights of older persons and empowering them across various sectors and social spheres—foremost among them the Rights and Care of Older Persons Law. Guided by Saudi Vision 2030, where programmes and initiatives combine to achieve many objectives that have contributed to enhancing the quality of life, achieving the best levels in providing government services, strengthening the non-profit sector and other things that will enhance the enjoyment of human rights for all, including the elderly. these integrated practices, the Kingdom continues to advance its commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of older persons in alignment with the United Nations and international efforts. Saudi Arabia remains dedicated to taking progressive steps in this area, reaffirming its position as a proactive global partner in supporting the rights and wellbeing of older persons.

