

Chapter II

Yemen's Political System

A Multiparty Democratic System

After realizing re-unification, Yemen successfully introduced a multi-party democratic system adhering to the values of public liberty and human rights as clearly stipulated under the Constitution and the Law. The Constitution is the basic reference in defining the form of government and system of governance. In addition, it defines general authorities, rights and duties of individuals and other aspects related to building the state economically, culturally, socially, militarily, etc.

An Arab Islamic State

The Constitution confirms that the Republic of Yemen is an independent sovereign Arab and Islamic state. Arabic is the official language of the country. It also confirms that Islamic Sharia is the source for all legislation.

A United State

The Constitution stipulates that Republic of Yemen is an indivisible unit and none of its parts may be surrendered.

A State of Law

The Constitution confirmed that the law is above all and that all citizens are equal in rights and general duties. Article (149) stipulates that the judiciary is independent without any authority over it.

A Pluralistic Democratic State

The Constitution confirms that the people are the possessors and origin of authority and that this authority is exercised directly by means of general referenda and elections. This power is exercised by means of legislative and executive councils, courts and through local councils. Commitment to democracy is absolutely affirmed as the basis of governance through the peaceful transfer of authority and the maintenance of personal freedom, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to political participation and the right to organize and vote and seek nominations for political office. The law regulates the provisions and measures for forming political parties and organizations and their engagement in political activities.

The Branches of Government

The Constitution sets out how the powers of the three branches of Government are laid out and regulated as follows:

I. The Legislative Branch

Parliament is the legislative authority that approves laws and general policies of the Government. It also approves the general socio-economic development plan, the budget, the final accounts, etc. Parliament also exercises oversight of the work of the Executive Branch. Parliament is made up of 301 members, who are directly and freely elected in secret ballots during general elections. The term of Parliament is six years, starting with its first session. The President calls for the elections of a new Parliament at least sixty days before the expiry of the Parliamentary Term.

The main organ of Parliament is its Presidium. Members elect the Speaker and three Deputy Speakers from amongst them. Those elected comprise the Presidium of Parliament. The Speaker of Parliament is responsible for presiding over sessions. He also represents Parliament in contacts with other authorities and speaks on Parliament's behalf. He also supervises the work of Parliament and that of all of its organs. The Presidium is the permanent organ of Parliament. It is responsible for Parliament work. It exercises authorities set forth under the Constitution and procedural by-laws. It also undertakes supervision of activities of Parliament and its different committees. It assists the committees in performing their tasks. Parliamentary Committees are formed on a permanent basis to help Parliament carry out its legislative, control and directional responsibilities. The tasks are designated to the committees according to field of expertise. These committees concentrate on addressing specific areas that demand in-depth examination. Recommendations made by these committees are deemed essential and influential in the debates and decision-making process inside Parliament. Each of the 19 committees has members ranging from 10 to 15 MPs.

Parliament conducts two ordinary sessions in a year. Internal by-laws set out the dates and duration for holding ordinary sessions. Extraordinary Parliamentary sessions may be held by decree of the President of the Republic or by decree of the Parliament's Presidium at their own discretions, or by a written request by a third of the total number of MPs. A session may not be adjourned during the last quarter of the year until after debate and approval of the State's general budget is done.

The Constitution provides that a quorum of the meetings of Parliament is achieved by the attendance of half of the members, excluding members who declare that they are vacating their seats. Decisions are issued by absolute majority of present members inside the Chamber (public or secret session). Closed sessions may be held based on the request of the Speaker, President of the Republic, Cabinet or at least twenty of the total number of MPs. An MP may neither engage in tasks that are the responsibility of the executive and judiciary, nor can a member jointly hold membership in Parliament and local councils or any public position. However, an MP can hold parliamentary membership and a cabinet post at the same time. No one may undertake prosecution, apprehension, arrest or subjection to any panel action of MPs unless with permission of Parliament (Parliamentary immunity). This excludes cases where members are caught red-handed engaged in a crime, in which case Parliament should be immediately informed about it. However, membership of Parliament is not forfeited unless the member has lost any of the conditions for membership in Parliament or if the member was severely negligent in the duties of membership.

Duties of Parliament

Parliament is responsible for ratification of international general political and economic treaties and conventions. Such agreements may relate to defense, alliances, reconciliations, peace, borders issues and agreements that demand ratification due to subsequent state financial commitments. The Constitution compels the Prime Minister within 25 days after the formation of Cabinet to present to Parliament the government's general program to obtain a motion of confidence. Parliament may present recommendations to the Government on general matters or duties and on the performance of any Cabinet member. Cabinet must comply with such recommendations. If it was impossible for Cabinet to comply, it must present Parliament with justifications for such non-compliance. If Parliament is not convinced by such justifications, it can take measures to withdraw its confidence on any of the deputy prime ministers or any of the ministers in question. However, such withdrawal of confidence would need a quarter of the members of Parliament. Parliament can only issue such decision until after seven days have passed from its presentation. The decision for withdrawal of confidence must be approved by a majority of the members of Parliament.

Prosecution of Cabinet

The Constitution grants the right to each Member of Parliament to direct inquiries to the Prime Minister, any of the deputy prime ministers or any Minister for accountability purposes. It also grants the right of Parliament to withdraw confidence from government.

Dissolution of Parliament

The President is not entitled to dissolve Parliament except when necessary and only after a referendum approved by the people. A decree to dissolve Parliament must include the reasons upon which the dissolution is based and a call for the voters to elect a new Parliament within sixty days. The Constitution grants the President of the Republic the right to call early parliamentary elections, without requiring a referendum but in the following cases:

- If the elections do not lead to a majority that enables the President to assign anyone to form a cabinet and a coalition government could not be set up.
- If Parliament withholds confidence on the government for two consecutive times.
- If Parliament withdraws its confidence from the government twice during two consecutive years.

Achievements of Parliament

Immediately after unification was declared, a coalition Parliament was first formed through the merger of the two legislative authorities in the former two parts of Yemen. The coalition house was able to accomplish several legislative, control and parliamentary activities and tasks. Most significantly, Parliament debated and approved Article (37) of the Constitution related to the establishment of the head of

state. It also approved the draft of the Constitution for the unified Republic of Yemen by putting it to a popular referendum in 1991. It also set out constitutional measures related to the authorities of the government and the re-election of the President for a new term.

The transition Parliament under the draft Constitution approved 95 decrees, laws and bilateral and international agreements. Arrangement on institutional conditions for the new state were arranged and the first general elections were held for members of Parliament after the Political Parties' Law was issued to further entrench democracy in Yemen.

After the brief war in the Summer of 1994, Parliament in secret ballot elected Ali Abdullah Saleh as President of the Republic by a majority of 253 votes. The vote was in accordance with Article (158) of the Constitution. In other achievements, Parliament approved 102 decrees and laws, ratified 7 oil agreements and protocols, 13 bilateral, regional and international agreements and 18 loan agreements. Parliament also intensified its oversight of the executive branch across issues that are of concern to the public and the livelihood of the people. It also debated the state's general budget and its appendices for the period 1994-1997. MPs also made visits and participated in activities overseas related to parliaments of fraternal and friendly states. Parliament also hosted Arab and foreign parliamentary delegations.

Crowning legislative achievements, the General Secretariat of Parliament issued a Legislative Encyclopedia for all legislation approved by Parliament for the period May 1990 to May 2004. It comprises four sections spanning 623 pages. The encyclopedia includes all legislation issued by Parliament. The issuance of this Encyclopedia reflects the large volume of legislation in place regulating legalities of government organs. It also aimed at annulling pre-unity legislation and the issuance of alternate legislation in various areas. Alternate legislation included those related to courts, public liberty, education, civil and military service, economics, services, trade, investments and fiscal affairs.

The Advisory Council 1994-2001

Republican Decree No. 4 for 1994 was issued on provisions related to the setup of a Consultative Assembly as part of implementing stipulations under article (115) of the Constitution. The article stipulates the establishment of an Advisory Council (AC) with specialized competent members, in order to broaden the participatory base of views and consolidate democratic practice. The AC is a representation of all political, community and scientific forces. It is regarded as a senior advisory organ for the President of the Republic. Article (2) of this law set out the duties designated for the AC, which include the diagnosis of and advice on studies and proposals that help the government carry out its development strategies. This is part of mobilizing public support for strengthening democracy. Similarly, the AC presents views on laws based on the request of the President prior to debate in Parliament. The AC undertakes the assessment of economic development plans and provides relevant expert advice. Other duties also deal with development and the state's general budget. The AC has three boards, a Presidium, a Secretariat and eight specialized committees. The AC has held plenary meetings to discuss different topics. In view of its expert role, a

proposal has been made to turn the AC into a higher representative body that will contribute to reinforcing the role of Parliament.

The Consultative Assembly 2001

A Republican Decree was issued to transforming the AC into a Shoura Council which is a Consultative Assembly (CA), with an expanded membership from 59 to 111 members. Those members represent a select group of politicians, intellectuals, opinion makers and experts from all the areas of Yemen. The CA presents views on strategic issues facing Yemen.

In accordance with the constitutional amendments of 2001, the authorities of the CA were set out in Articles (125 to 127). A number of committees are to be formed within the framework of the CA. These committees include the Human Rights and Public Freedoms Committee. The CA exercises the following constitutional authorities:

- It provides studies and proposals that help the government draw up development strategies. The CA also presents proposals that help make government institutions more efficient and that will contribute to solving social problems and strengthen national unity;
- It provides opinion and advice on crucial issues as requested by the President of the Republic;
- It presents views and advice that contribute to the formulation of government national strategies across domestic political, economic, social and military and security fields and on regional Arab issues;
- It provides opinions on the policies, plans and programs related to administrative reform and modernization of government organs and improving government performance;
- It participates with Parliament in endorsing nominations for the office of President of the Republic and ratification of socio-economic plans, treaties and agreements related to defense and alliances, peace and reconciliation and border issues. The CA consults with Parliament on issues requested by the President of the Republic and needing joint decision by both Houses;
- It follows conditions of the press and non-government organizations (NGOs) and suggests ways to further develop their roles;
- It assesses economic, fiscal and monetary policies and evaluates the implementation of annual investment programs;
- It reviews reports by the Central Organization for Control and Auditing (COCA) and in turn presents recommendation to the President.

The CA had made good achievements. It had a major impact on some important developments and economic decisions. It undertook research and held seminars on remedies and diagnostics of several complex issues and made relevant recommendations. Among the issues were blood feuds, the draft Local Authorities Law, the financial situation in the Republic of Yemen, Management in Yemen, Population and Development, the draft Law for Carrying Firearms, Environmental Conditions and the Future of the Environment in Yemen, Food Security, Labor and Development, Loans and Assistance and their Impact on Development. It also

debated draft Republican Decrees related to the formation of the Higher Council for the Accounting Profession, the Geological Survey and Mineral Resources Authority, the Higher Council for Maternal and Child Care, the General Corporation for School Furniture and Equipment, etc. The CA also debated draft laws on privatization and standardization and quality control, as well as on Youth in the Age of Social Change, Higher Education, the Labor Market and other economic, cultural, public information and commercial issues.

The League of Senates and Consultative Assemblies

Yemen has increasingly played a leading regional role contributing to the adoption of issues facing the Arab and Muslim worlds in particular and humanitarian issues in general. Yemen has contributed positively and effectively in regional and international spheres. Yemen was host to the First Meeting of League of Senates and Consultative Assemblies. This meeting was held in Sana'a during 28th-29th September 2004. Participants from 17 Arab and African states gathered to consider several issues of interest as a follow up to the Constituent Conference for the League held in late April 2004. The meetings in Sana'a presented a forum for dialogue amongst a select group of parliamentarians, opinion makers and advisors. The participants expressed commitment to proceed with progress towards achieving the League's noble objectives. The League is seen as a bridge of friendship and cooperation among its member states. It also offers horizons for further dialogue and strengthened democratic values, a reinforcement of pluralism, freedom and protection of human rights and a building of foundations for civil society. In addition, the League is seen as a means for interaction with other countries of the world.

The final communiqué presented a set of recommendations that confirmed the need for cooperation in order to spread world peace and put an end to all forms of destruction and bloodshed. The league underlined the right of nations for self-determination as a global demand for stronger peace and end to all forms of occupation. The League also expressed greater confidence and hope for a more distinctive future role in serving and developing the Arab and African parliamentary work. The League expressed desire to enhance trends towards greater adherence to democratic practice and respect for human rights and personal freedoms. In addition the League pledged to work towards greater commitments to the fundamental standards of sound governance and broadening cooperation and mutual benefits.

II. The Executive Branch

Article (105) of the Constitution stipulates that the President of the Republic and Cabinet shall exercise executive authority on behalf of the people. Article (106) stipulates that the President of the Republic is the head of state and is elected according to the Constitution. The President shall also have a Vice President designated by the President himself. The President shall also be elected by the people in competitive elections. The President shall be deemed to be the candidate who obtains an absolute majority of voters. If none of the presidential candidates obtains an absolute majority, the elections should be held again according to same previous measures for the two candidates who obtained the highest number of votes.

Term of the Presidency

The Constitution sets out the term of the Presidency as seven solar years, which begins with the date the President is sworn in. The Constitution does not allow any person to hold the office of President for more than two terms. Article (111) stipulates that the President of the Republic is the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. The Constitution also bans the President from undertaking business activities during the term of his presidency or any other commercial, financial or industrial activity. The President may not buy or lease anything from government funds either, even if this is done by means of public bidding. He may not sell such thing, rent it out or barter it either.

Duties of the President of the Republic

The Constitution grants the President specific authorities and assigns him specific duties. The most important of these are:

- Assigning a person who forms Cabinet and issuing a Republican Decree naming its members.
- Establishing diplomatic missions, assigning and re-calling ambassadors.
- Granting political amnesty.
- Declaring emergencies and calling for general mobilizations.
- Endorsing death sentences.
- Forming the Consultative Assembly and designating its members.

The Cabinet

The Government is the second branch of the executive authority and is the highest administrative authority in the state. All government administrations, organs and executive institutions are under the Cabinet. Cabinet comprises the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers. The Prime Minister selects members of his Cabinet in consultation with the President of the Republic. The Prime Minister seeks a motion of confidence on his Cabinet from Parliament on the basis of a program for the term of government. The Prime Minister and the members of his Cabinet are accountable before the President of the Republic and Parliament. Neither the Prime Minister nor any of the ministers may occupy any other public post, even indirectly can they engage in any other profession commercial, industrial or otherwise. They may neither take part in any commitments undertaken by the Government or any public institutions nor hold a cabinet post and membership in a board of directors of any company. They may neither buy, rent nor barter assets, even through public bidding with government funds nor are they entitled to sell, lease or barter any of their own assets.

Responsibilities of the Cabinet

The Cabinet is responsible for carrying out the overall political, economic, social, and cultural and defense policies of the state, in accordance with valid laws and decrees. Cabinet is responsible for undertaking the following:

- Consultation with the President of the Republic on the preparation of broad outlines of the foreign and domestic policies;
- Preparation of draft economic policy and annual state budget;
- Preparation and presentation of draft laws and decrees to Parliament or the President of the Republic;
- Adoption of necessary measures for maintaining domestic national security of the state and the protection of the rights of Yemeni citizens overseas;
- Follow up the implementation of laws and safeguarding Government assets;
- Assignment and dismissal of senior employees in accordance with the law, the implementation of policies that aim to develop technical capacities of government staff and the enhancement of the qualifications of manpower in accordance with the needs of the country and economic planning needs;
- Supervision and management of the monetary, credit and insurance systems;
- Entrance into grant and loan agreements within the limits set out by the general policies of the state and the Constitution.

The Local Authority

According to the Constitution, Local Authorities are considered the third branch of the executive after the President of the Republic and the Cabinet. Article (146) confirms that administrative units enjoy legal status. Local Authorities should have local councils that are elected freely and directly at the governorate and district levels. Local Councils shall exercise their duties and authorities within their administrative units. They are responsible for recommending programs, plans and investment budgets for administrative units. They are also responsible for supervising, monitoring and ensuring accountability of their organs.

The same Article in the Constitution also sets out the process for nomination and holding Local Councils' elections. It also sets out the procedures by which Local Councils operate their financial resources and the rights and duties of their members. In addition, it defends their role in implementing development plans and programs without prejudice to financial and administrative decentralization, which form a basis for the local administration system. The Constitution considers both administrative units and Local Councils as an integral indivisible part of the authority of the state. Governors are responsible and accountable to the President of the Republic and to Cabinet. The implementation of their decisions is binding in all cases. The Law also sets out the method for oversight of the work of the local councils.

III. The Judiciary

The Constitution defines the judiciary as an independent, entity with judicious, financial and administrative authority. No entity may interfere in any way in the judiciary or in any matter in the affairs of justice. Such interference is considered a

crime punishable by law. The Constitution also confirms that the judiciary is an integrated unit. Judges may not be dismissed except in the cases and conditions set out by Law. Judges may not be transferred from the judiciary to non-judicial positions unless it is with their own consent and the approval of the council responsible for their affairs. The law regulates the disciplinary hearings for judges and their profession. The Law also defines the role and responsibilities of the Higher Judicial Council and the mechanism of nominating and designating its members. The Council ensures that guarantees granted to judges in terms of assignment, promotions, dismissal and removal are adhered to and applied. The Council is also responsible for considering and approving the judiciary's budget. The Supreme Court is considered the highest body in the country's judicial set-up. The law sets out the formation of the Court, its jurisdictions and the proceedings to be followed.

The Supreme Court undertakes the following tasks:

- Provides rulings on lawsuits and claims related to the constitutionality of laws, by-laws, regulations and decrees;
- Provides rulings on jurisdictional disputes among judiciary entities;
- Investigates and presents its views on the propriety of objections or appeals referred to the Supreme Court by Parliament with respect to the appropriateness of any of the latter's members.
- Provides rulings on final verdicts in civil, commercial, personal status and criminal cases. Similarly, it provides rulings on administrative disputes and disciplinary claims, in accordance with the law.
- Undertakes the trial of the President of the Republic, Vice President, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers and Vice Ministers.

Hearings of the Supreme Court shall be public unless the Court decides for secret hearings, in consideration of public order and exposure to vices. In all cases, the rulings of the Supreme Court must be publicly announced.

Modernization and Reforms of the Judiciary

The political leadership and the government agenda attach attention and priority to accelerating reforms and modernization of the judiciary in a bid to enhance its performance and efficiency. The reform includes staffing the judiciary with specialized and distinctively competent judicial cadre, the preparation and rehabilitation of assistant judicial staff and raising the standard of living of members of the judiciary. The government has commissioned the construction of premises and furnishing and equipping for the courts. A diagnosis of obstacles facing the judiciary has been undertaken. The Government has also held judicial conferences, including the First Judicial Conference in December 2003. This conference assessed the status-quo in the judiciary and the country's court system. Attention has been increasingly given to specialized courts, such as commercial courts and public property courts plus improving the performance of recording and documentation of judicial matters. The Government also sought to modernize the judicial system with IT and promoted cooperation links with judicial entities in other countries.

A Modernization and Development Strategy for the Judiciary

The Ministry of Justice has developed a comprehensive medium term strategy for the modernization and development of the judiciary. The strategy underlined commitment to reinforcing the independence of the judiciary and capacity development of judicial staff and the development of specific job descriptions for positions in commercial and public property courts. The Ministry of Justice has been working on modernizing laws and organizational by-laws, constructing and equipping premises of the judiciary. The Ministry has linked up all judicial premises with an integrated information network, designed quarterly and annual implementation programs and a matrix of specific tasks.

Legal Reforms

The unification of the two parts of Yemen brought about hard work towards putting in place a single legal system in line with the new Constitution encompassing both systems that existed in the previous two parts of the country. The Ministry of Legal Affairs took on an important role in the preparation of new unification legislation to address the legislative gap that would have obstructed the natural flow of the life of the society. The legislation has been subject to amendment and replacement to accommodate developments and/or changes. Among the changes are constitutional amendments, the adoption of a Local Authority system, broadening freedom, setting up the frameworks for political and labor/professional unions, economic development and the implementation of economic, financial and administrative reforms. The Ministry of Legal Affairs adopted a program for legal reform. Through this program, the Ministry was able to conform legislation and meet the requirements arising due to changes and development in society. The role of the Ministry was not just limited to the legislative aspect but also plays as a legal advisor to the Government. It has provided the legal protection for the government organs according to requirement set out by the law. The Ministry also functions to disseminate and build legal awareness through the issuance of the *Official Gazette*, where all laws, decrees and by-laws issued by the President of the Republic or the Prime Minister are published.

Democracy, the Backbone of Unification

The adoption of democracy by the Unity State has been seen initially by the issuance of Law No. 25 for 1990 Concerning the Press and Publications. The law confirmed the right to knowledge, intellectualism, expression, communication and obtainment of information. Democracy in Yemen has taken a more practical form away from the typical norm in most developing countries, with strong commitment and adherence to public freedom through intellectual, dogmatic and moral values of the society. Democracy in Yemen took on a moderate course, which allowed Yemenis to practice democracy as a development conduct that primarily contributes to steering national transformations that go beyond just a form of pluralism and partisan press.

Yemen's democratic experience was the passage by which Yemen was able to face and address subsequent political challenges. Democratic political openness helped improve the image of Yemen overseas and reinforced confidence in the capabilities

and sincerity of the Yemeni people to realize a better tomorrow, which in turn was recognized and supported by the international community. Donor agencies and countries linked their assistance to the success of democratization in Yemen. International development aid and foreign direct investment have seen an increase from the late 1990s onwards, a reflection of steady progress and continued appreciation of Yemen's adherence to further democratic advancement in the country.

The political leadership has explicitly recognized the significance of introducing reforms of pre-unity politics and the adoption of a democratization process across all aspects of life including the development of a role for civil society and the adoption of a more balanced foreign policy with all neighbors and states in the region. Reforms also meant addressing the development of the legal and legislative systems and undertaking a comprehensive economic, administrative and financial reform program and developing policies conducive to the promotion of a leading role for the private sector.

Political Pluralism and Partisanship

The adoption of democracy in society meant open political party pluralism. Political parties that existed underground benefited from the openness of the political system and declared their political activities in the open. This led to a rise in the number of political parties in the country. The partisan map of Yemen comprises a number of political affiliations, of which 22 are officially licensed as political parties and organizations. These parties exercise their political activities in accordance with their own political platforms along the lines of the Constitution and the Law for Political Parties and Organizations.

Article (5) of the Constitution confirms that the political system in Yemen is based on political and partisan pluralism with the aim of achieving a peaceful transfer of authority. The Constitution [Article (58)] grants the people the right to organize and to form scholastic, cultural and social organizations and national federations. The Government safeguards this right by taking the necessary measures. Political and partisan pluralism that rests on constitutional legitimacy has become a right and a pillar of the political and social regime of the Republic of Yemen. Such right cannot be annulled or limited. No means can be used to curtail the right of the people to exercise this right either. Similarly, no political party or organization may misuse this right in a way that is in conflict with national interests and the sovereignty, security, stability and national unity of Yemen.

Law No (66) for 1991 regulates and sets in place partisan activity and the proper legal basis for the political and partisan pluralism. The law includes provisions and measures related to the formation of political parties and organizations and their activities. It also defines pre-requisites that must be met for the establishment of a new party or for the continuation of a political party. The Political Parties and Organization Affairs Committee oversee the adherence to these regulations. The Committee has already registered 22 political parties and organizations, which contribute to the advancement of political, social, economic and cultural conditions and further deepen democratic practice in the Unity State.

Major Political Parties in Yemen

Political Party	Date Founded
The General People's Congress	August 1982
The Yemeni Socialist Party	March 1979
The Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah)	September 1990
The Popular Nasserite Unionist Organization	September 1990
The Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party (Yemen)	June 1990
National Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party	October 1996
The Truth Party	March 1993
The Democratic Nasserite Party	October 1990
The Popular Nasserite Reform Organization	January 1990
The Liberation Front Party	December 1990
The National Social Party	February 1997
The National Democratic Front	September 1990
The Popular Unionist Liberation Party	January 1997
The League of the People of Yemen Party	February 1996
The Popular Unity Party	April 1996
The People's Democratic Party	December 1996
The Democratic September Organization	September 1990
The Yemeni Unionist Congregation	November 1992
The Yemeni League Party	February 1997
The Federation of Popular Forces	March 1992
The Democratic Federation of Popular Forces	April 1999
The Yemeni Greens Social Party	March 2000

Leadership Approach to Democracy

Over his longstanding presidency, President Ali Abdullah Saleh has all along recognized the seriousness of an absence of full fledged popular participation in the decision making process. He also recognized the subsequences of drawing political process to the skids of improvisation and despotism. He also recognized the need of the governing establishment to return the historical role of individuals and their civilized contributions and effective participation in the formulation of major transformations in the course of human life. The President has seen the transformation to democracy to be based on objective and mature pillars that absorb the sensitive considerations and detailed reflections of the realities of the Yemeni sphere.

It was apparent that President Ali Abdullah Saleh was committed to the adoption of democratization. "Our continued conviction is that for the magnanimous goal of democracy to be achieved, in terms of releasing freedom of expression, thought, work and constructive criticism must be a real democracy. This can only be through daily practice and not just through meaningless slogans and words that have no substance. The latter are only meant for consumption and exaggeration. That is why our practical steps confirm our proper approach towards democracy and are noticeable proof of our persistence in respecting the wish of the people", said the President.

In President Ali Abdullah Saleh's thinking, democracy occupies a space that is deemed to be an essential guarantee for public freedoms and for the establishment of proper and progressive relations among the institutions of Government and the people, making democracy in Yemen quite distinct. The philosophy behind such democracy is derived from three crucial facts, which formulate its cultural, moral and behavioral pillars:

First: Democracy in Yemen is an Islamic democracy derived from the spirit of Islam and its moral ideals, which make the freedoms and conduct a behavior that is not absolutely free and permissive for individual improvisation. At least this is to the extent that is defined by the religious values and morals, which are indeed capable of balancing democratic practice between its liberating conduct on the one hand and its noble humanitarian functions on the other;

Secondly: It is a Yemeni Arab democracy that is unique among the democracies of the world. Yemen's democracy originates from the social, cultural, political and economic reality of the Yemeni society and of the Arab World;

And thirdly: The logical in-phasing of Yemeni democratic practice is the prevailing characteristic of its practical philosophy. It is impossible to cross the stages of democratic rehabilitation of the society, or the training and experimenting with smaller models and initiation of democratic practices, until it becomes easy for society to expand in its forms and to improve upon its experience and set up its constitutional institutions.

Undoubtedly such visions are a mindful and advanced description of a way for the political buildup of the state. Yemen's democratic experience is regarded as one of successful experiences in terms of absorbing the political roles and desired objectives and practices on the ground. Democracy in Yemen has brought about political transparency adaptive to national variables and space given to political programs to move forward within the conditions, internal configurations, and historical dynamics of the Yemeni society. Yemen's democratic experience has evolved to political pluralism that has become a good and sound Arab model.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh has been able to show flexibility in dealing with and entertaining a wide-range of national political forces reflecting his devotion to maintaining national unity. The unification of the country takes precedence over narrow partisan interests and political ends. Even if it meant giving some concessions, unity remains at the forefront with no question or doubt. A National Re-alignment Document was signed by all political forces in the country including the opposition in March 2003. The basic rule of a responsible democracy has been to direct it towards building up the unity of the nation. Political work and competition should pour into this objective away from partisan ends.

Yemen and the G-8 Industrialized Countries

The participation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh in the world leaders' summit in Sea Island, Georgia state (USA) during June 8-10, 2004 reflected the recognition of Yemen as a main actor in international and regional politics and economics.

The statement of President Ali Abdullah Saleh at the Conference painted a clear picture of Yemen's pioneering role in the region and outlined political and economic reforms, manifested in the democratic transformations that have been adhered to in the form of political pluralism, freedom of expression and the press, respect for human rights and broadening popular participation in decision making and the empowerment of women in political life and other aspects of society.

The acceptance to attend the Summit was consistent with Yemen's vision. Such vision calls for addressing proposals for reforms in the broader Middle East Region, reforms that are long overdue. However, realizing reforms in our region must conform to the requirements and needs of the peoples of the region across political, economic and social developments, keeping in mind the particularities of historical cultural traits. The visit of the President to the United Nations Headquarters and his official talks with the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan represented another symbolic dimension that confirms Yemen's adherence to playing a role in any reforms which do take into account the special characteristics of each and every country in the region. UN Secretary General applauded Yemen's democratic progress and development as a pioneering experience in the region. UN Chief said achievements in Yemen have been manifested in parliamentary, presidential and local council elections and commitment to reducing poverty.

The Democracy and Human Rights Conference and the International Criminal Court

Yemen played host to the Democracy and Human Rights Conference and the International Criminal Court in Sana'a during 11-12 January 2004. The conference was an important regional and international event with unprecedented attendance from the Arab World and internationally, as 800 participants attended the conference representing governments, official agencies, parliaments, senates, and NGOs from the Arab World, Africa, Asia and Europe. President Ali Abdulla Saleh inaugurated the conference with a keynote speech, in which he set out Yemen's adherence to the principles of democracy and human rights. He said "the gathering of such a large number of participants in Sana'a is a manifestation of the world's recognition to the approach that Yemen is committed to." He also stressed that democracy is the option of the day for all peoples and a rescue ship for all political regimes, especially in the Third World. "It is the only course to achieve security, stability, development and realizing a better future for our countries", asserted the President. He also affirmed that human rights are closely linked and concurrent with democracy and law and order. That is why it is essential to remove obstacles and address all forms of discrimination, repression and repulsive exploitation of human beings and their rights.

For three days, all the eyes of the world were set on Sana'a, not only as the Capital of Arab Culture, but also the Capital of Arab Democracy. This is the city that, in a decade and a half presented the essence of a unique experience that has become a model in political and partisan pluralism, freedom and institution of free press. The participants who represented a wide array of expertise exchanged views transparently on concerns and issues related to democracy and the International Criminal Court. The Conference, which was organized by the Yemeni Government, in collaboration with the European Union, through the Organization of "No Peace without Justice"

was a success. It provided a platform for Arab states and their neighbors to enter into a serious dialogue to exchange views, identify the accomplishments, assess the difficulties and obstacles related to democracy. The conference also recommended periodic dialogue and consultations to be undertaken at the regional level and whenever necessary. In addition, it succeeded in creating an environment for developing dialogue and exchanging experiences, and render possible assistance to states of the region to develop themselves within the framework of their political, cultural and religious environment.

The participants applauded the democratic experience of Yemen and its positive outcomes on all aspects of life, from developing an election system to the separation of powers and public participation in government through local councils. They commended the government's support for promoting civil society and NGOs. Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the United Nations, in a statement read on his behalf by Mr. Daniello Tark, Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, confirmed the significance of holding this conference in a country like Yemen, in which many important steps had been realized in reinforcing democracy and human rights.

The Sana'a Declaration

At the end of the conference, the "Sana'a Declaration" was adopted endorsing the underlying principles for maintaining democracy and human rights. Participants also adopted the Sana'a Statement on Arab NGOs, and agreed to follow up on efforts to set in place future mechanisms for coordination and cooperation amongst represented organizations and other organizations that were not able to participate in the conference. The Statement is a lead into promoting future dialogue among Arab, regional and international government and quasi government entities.

A Medal of Dialogue among Civilizations

On November 21st, 2004, the National Center for Russian Glory awarded President Ali Abdullah Saleh the Medal for Dialogue among Civilizations in recognition for his role in promoting dialogue among civilizations and tolerance among cultures of the world. The medal is awarded based on an international referendum and political consensus within the Russian Federation on whom deserves such honor. The awarding ceremony was attended by senior government officials and an elite of scholars, politicians and intellectuals. The Medal was meant to honor a leader, whose national and international accomplishments manifested an outstanding record. The medal is in recognition of the role of the President in adopting dialogue among civilizations, strengthening Yemeni-Russian relations and his historical role in realizing the unity of Yemeni homeland. It also recognizes the President's handling of issues and problems like the settlement of border conflicts with fraternal and neighboring states through diplomatic and peaceful means, and his advocacy and strong desire for the establishment of balanced relations with fraternal and friendly states to safeguard regional and international peace, security and stability.

The Medal of Dialogue among Civilizations is the 12th medal which has been awarded to President Ali Abdullah Saleh from fraternal and friendly states. The decision to award the Medal stated: "The Medal Awarding Committee in the Center of National Russian Glory has decided to award Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh the Andre I Award for Dialogue among Civilizations. This is in recognition of his remarkable accomplishments in strengthening the friendship and cooperation between the people of Russia and Yemen and for his achieving the idea of Dialogue between Civilizations and Cultures and for his contribution to the international efforts to combat terrorism".

Elections, a Testimony to Democracy

The re-unification of Yemen and the declaration of the Republic of Yemen was the beginning of a democratic era based on political pluralism and freedom of expression. Practical steps to nurture the emerging democracy started with the adoption of a Constitution that was put to a popular referendum on May 15-16, 1991. The new Constitution which was ratified and approved by the Yemeni people in every administrative unit and constituency was conducive to the promotion of democracy in society. The "yes" votes for the Constitution registered 98.3%. The Constitution had also become a social contract that expresses the wish of the Yemeni people and regulates the building of a state of law and order. The referendum on the new Constitution was the underlying test for the nation to adhere to a system of democracy and openness and to abandon old practices.

The Electoral System in Yemen

The electoral system in Yemen provides advanced features. The electoral process is dynamic and maintains a set of regulations and ten mechanisms for administering them. Those mechanisms underline the need to maintain diagnosis of any shortfalls and legal drawbacks that surface during the practical application in the different stages of the election process. Features of the Yemeni electoral system include:

- Pursuing the most advanced methods for free, direct, general and equitable elections through secret ballot;
- A set up that includes different authorities of the state in accordance with constitutional and legal legitimacy and in compliance with the wishes of the people as expressed by ballot boxes. These authorities are Parliament, the Presidency of the Republic and local councils;
- Holding general elections on the basis of freedom and competition. This is a right enjoyed by the Yemeni people upon reaching the age of 18, male and female without any discrimination. This includes the right for nomination and voting on the grounds of equality in rights and obligations;
- The Constitution states in Article (159) that the Supreme Electoral Commission should be independent and neutral. The Elections and Referenda Law has set out all controls and regulating measures that will lead to guaranteeing the independence and neutrality of the Committee in the performance of its duties. The electoral system also grants the Yemeni emigrants overseas the right to participate in presidential elections and in referenda;

- Non interference of any kind by the Executive Authority in administration of the elections or in their supervision and monitoring. Major political parties and organizations participate in the membership of the Supreme Electoral Commission.

First Parliamentary Elections (1993)

The first parliamentary elections were held on 27th of April 1993. This was a display demonstrating democracy in practice. The elections attracted regional and international election observers monitoring the elections process including voting and ballot counting. The elections had been a real test for political parties and organizations representing a spectrum of ideologies and philosophies as the country undertook its first democratic experience and political contest. The registered electorate for the 1st elections numbered 2.7 million male and female voters. Total voter turnout was 2.3 million (84.7% of the registered electorate). Candidates numbered 3,166, of which 1,226 were partisan candidates and 1,940 were independent. Female candidates number 42, of which 18 were partisan nominees and 24 were independent.

Political Parties Participating in the 1993 Parliamentary Elections

Party	No. of Seats Won
The General People's Congress	122
Yemeni Socialist Party	56
Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah)	13
The Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party (Yemen)	7
Al-Haq Party	2
The Popular Nasserite Unionist Organization	1
The Popular Nasserite Reform Organization	1
The Popular Nasserite Democratic Organization	1

More than 22,000 people took part in the management of the elections representing the different political parties. There were also 4,000 volunteers who took part in monitoring the elections throughout the country. Seventeen international observers monitored the elections from different countries and international agencies, in addition to other monitors representing the European Union and the diplomatic corps in Yemen.

The elections results led to the formation of a coalition government of three political parties, the People's General Congress, the Yemeni Congregation of Reform (Islah) and the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP). This is the first time in which a left wing party like YSP aligns with Islamists (Islah) in one government.

Second Parliamentary Elections (1997)

The second parliamentary elections were held on April 27, 1997 exactly four years after the first elections. The second elections constitute a success in maintaining the momentum in deepening democratic practices in society. This sentiment was echoed by a wide range of regional and international observers who monitored the election process along with all political parties in the country, including procedures, vote counting and announcement of final results. The outcome of the 1997 elections drew a new political map that confirmed the development of awareness and progress in political evolution. The second elections had brought to an end a political crisis that resulted from the merger and subsequent political in-fighting and squabbling within the coalition government.

Registered voters numbered 4.6 million, of which 1.2 million were females. There were 12 political parties that participated including the ruling coalition parties, the PGC and the Islah and six parties which form the National Council for the Opposition. An additional four parties participated in the polls representing another opposition bloc, the Higher Coordination Council for the Opposition, along with the independent candidates. The total number of candidates was 2,125, of whom 1,399 were independent nominees. The number of female candidates was 23, of whom 15 were independent. There were 37,000 people administering the elections comprising election supervisory committees, election main committees and ballot committees. More than 20,000 people monitored the elections representing local observers and those representing international agencies and organizations. Twenty observers also monitored the polls and the election process representing Arab and foreign countries, in addition to the media and democracy and election advocacy groups. Voter turnout registered 2.8 million (61.3% of total registered voters). The new Elections Law No. 27 for 1996 imposed on candidates to use election symbols to make it easier for illiterate voters to cast ballot.

The 1997 elections results gave the majority to the GPC with 187 seats, the Islah Party with 53 seats, the Nasserite Unionist Party with 3 seats and the Ba'ath Party with 2 seats. The independents gained 54 seats. Independent candidates that won in the elections joined either the GPC caucus or the Islah caucus, with 36 going to the former and 10 joining the latter.

The Presidential Elections of 1999

The Presidential Elections of 23 September 1999 underlines commitment to the peaceful transfer of authority, being an essential pillar of the political regime in the Republic of Yemen. These elections were important progress and adherence to democratization. Presidential elections in Yemen had been the first in the region, in which the head of state reaches the Presidency through the ballot box. The constitutional amendments of 1994 allowed voters to elect the head of state. This amendment made the elections for the president direct. Twenty four people contested for the post of president. The nominees represented a wide array of politicians and independents. Only two of the contestants were confirmed by Parliament. These were Ali Abdullah Saleh, as a candidate for the GPC, the Islah and the National Opposition Council, and Mr. Nagib Gahtan Al-Sh'abi as an independent. The number

of registered voters was 5.6 million. Turnout was 3.8 million voters who cast ballot (67.4%). Ali Abdullah Saleh gained 96.2% of the votes against 3.8% for Al-Sh'abi.

Several arrangements were taken to facilitate the voting. Yemen was viewed as one voting district in its entirety. There were 2,337 voting centers. The election process was administered by 53,000 people. Election monitors numbered 707 local observers representing NGOs and 22 observers representing Arab and international organizations and foreign embassies. There were 239 representatives from the local, Arab and international media.

Local Council Elections (2001)

The first elections for local councils were held in 2001 marking another step towards enhanced democratization in society. There were 22,000 men and women who contested the local council seats in the governorates and districts. They represented an array of political parties and organizations, as well as independent candidates. The percentage of voters reached 49.4% of the total registered electorate. The elections, which also coincided with the referendum for constitutional amendments, resulted in the victory of 6,283 male and female candidates for the district local council seats and 417 male and female candidates for the governorate local council seats. The GPC was able to win 274 seats in the governorate local council and 3,807 seats in the district local councils. The Islah followed with 85 seats in the governorate local council seats and 1,449 in district local councils. The YSP won 16 seats in the governorates and 219 seats in the districts. The independents were able to gain 32 seats in the governorate local councils and 765 seats in the district local councils. Some of the other parties also won seats in the district local councils only. These elections were witnessed by local, Arab and international monitors.

Third Parliamentary Elections (April 2003)

The Elections of April 27, 2003 were undertaken at a time a new permanent voter registry has been developed and has become the basis for future elections. The representation of political parties in the Election Supervision Committee included 48% for the opposition parties, 44% for the GPC and 8% for the Supreme Electoral Commission. Districts were divided into electoral centers with a set of criteria addressing geographical, social and population aspects. Districts were divided into 5,621 voting centers, in accordance with the Local Authority Law and its subsequent amendments. Previous divisions remained for parliamentary districts which total 301 districts. The registered electorate was 8.1 million voters, of whom 3.4 million were women, compared to about 1.3 million women voters in 1997. Election turnout was 76.6%. Twenty one political parties competed in election filing 991 candidates. The number of independent candidates was 405. Women participated actively in the elections committees and as voters. Eleven women candidates contested the elections. The election process was administered by 80,000 people and was monitored by 21,000 local, regional and international monitors. The GPC won 76.1% of the votes, followed by the Islah with about 15% of the votes. The YSP managed to win about 2.3% of the votes and 4.6% for the independents.

Civil Society

The Yemeni Constitution recognizes the right of people to form political parties and professional, trade, scientific and cultural associations. It stipulates the freedom of opinion and expression. Such values and principles outlined in the constitution enabled civil society to grow and start the development of draft laws and regulations guiding civil society. These legislations included the Law for Political Parties and Organizations and the Law for Associations and Foundations, the Law for Unions (Syndicates), the Law of the Press and the Law for Demonstrations and Marches. Such legislation grants civil society the legal framework to exercise constitutional rights without restrictions, except when it comes to the abuse and misuse of these privileges that undermine or damage public interests, conducts and health. Those laws provide the proper climate and environment for the freedom of civil society and promotion of partnership with government.

Civil Society Institutions

The establishment and development of civil society has evolved over the years. The post-unity era starting from 1990 was characterized by the adoption of democracy and political pluralism and the recognition of the right of society to organize in political, social, economic and cultural institutions or organizations, independent of government. This stage has seen quantitative and qualitative development, where latest official data suggests that there is a boom in the number of NGOs in Yemen reaching 4,388 associations, foundations, cooperatives and federations (compare to only 508 in 1990).

Evolution of the Number of Civil Society Organizations

Year	No. of NGOs
1990	508
1991	571
1992	908
1993	1,087
1994	1,168
1995	1,344
1996	1,557
1997	1,754
1998	2,155
1999	2,660
2000	3,175
2001	3,628
2002	3,969
2003	4,428
2004	4,888

The Government of Yemen played a positive role in the re-formulation of the role of NGOs and the promotion of their activities in areas like social care, provision of services and reinforcement of local development for the communities. The establishment of human rights organizations constituted a qualitative shift in the nature of societal activities. This affirms signs of political modernization of Government and society. NGOs working in new fields like consumer protection, protection of antiquities and the environment, combating violence against women also surfaced. There has been also an increase in the number of women NGOs and those catering to the handicap and Yemeni returnees and overseas refugees. These NGOs have sought to strengthen popular participation, enable individuals and groups to fulfill their needs, advocate their rights and defend their interests and enhance their voice and participation in public matters.

NGOs are active in local development nationwide. The City of Sana'a maintains the highest number of NGOs due to greater population density, political importance and economic, cultural, education and commercial significance.

The Legal Framework for NGO Activities

The Associations and Foundations Law No. 1 for 2001 has been among the key legislation in the country's democratic transformation and adoption of a new philosophy for community work. This law was finalized following extensive dialogue and debate. The Law reflects a qualitative leap that paved the way significantly for NGO activities. It also allowed courts for taking the proper jurisdiction to rule decisively in disputes that could arise between NGOs and concerned ministry. This will limit the illegal personal interference in the activities of NGOs and grass root foundations. The Law does not restrict financial relations between local NGOs and

their counterparts overseas either. The Ministry of Social Affairs should basically be advised of such arrangements. The NGO Law also gave Arab and foreign expatriate communities the right to set up associations and foundations, pending their adherence to the laws of Yemen and compliance by the general conditions of their establishment.

Government-NGO Relationship

The NGO Law includes provisions for regulating relations between the Government and civil society including the nature of support and funding. The Law also regulates the integration of performance and function. The Government provides financial and in-kind support to community associations, according to some guidelines and criteria. The most significant of these is that an NGO should help realize public benefit. Some government entities delegate the implementation of some of their operations to prominent NGOs in areas like re-productive health and family planning programs and social care homes. The idea is to involve NGOs in the development process of society.

The NGO Law attempts to provide some sort of balance by means of broadening the freedom of NGOs and the fields in which they are engaged in. The Law is least excessive in control and oversight of NGO activities. The Law has assigned the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) to be the government entity concerned with the implementation of the NGO Law and with oversight of all the activities of NGOs. The Law transferred technical supervision of conditions and activities of cultural and artistic NGOs and their respective federations to the Ministry of Culture. Responsibility for sports associations and clubs and their respective federations was meted out to the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Technical supervision and oversight of NGOs ensures that these NGOs operate within the confines of valid laws. The MSAL and its branch offices in the governorates supervise the internal elections conducted by NGOs to ensure that they are proceeding in accordance with relevant legal procedures. The MSAL also initiates a series of facilitating measures like adopting registration, and replacing yearly renewal by three to four years renewals or for the election term of the association, foundation or union.

Cooperative Associations and Federations

NGOs have become a significant part of public life. During the post unification period, NGOs began to play a considerable role in organizing and helping advance the modernization of society. They also contribute to relief operations, advocacy for human rights, professional organizations and unions.

NGOs in Yemen

Type of NGOs	Head Offices	Branches
Cooperative Associations and Federations	١,٣١٩	-
Skilled Trade Associations	٣٨	-
Fisheries Associations	١٤٠	-
Housing Associations	٢٤٠	-

Consumer Associations	٩٤	-
Agricultural Associations	٧٧٩	-
General Associations	٦	-
General Federations	٣	٢١
Community Associations and Foundations and Central Popular Organizations	٣,١٦٣	٤,٦
Forums	٩	-
Clubs	٢٢٠	-
Unions	٣٢	٦٠
Fraternities	٥	-
Friendship Societies	٢٠	١
Scientific Societies	٤٦	١٠
Professional Societies	٥٩	٢
Cultural Societies	٥٠	٤
Social Associations	٥٠٤	٨٨
Charity Foundations	٨٩	١
Charity Associations	٢,٠٨٦	١٢٨
General Federations	٤٣	١١٢

The number of public interest groups has significantly increased in recent years in areas like fighting corruption, environmental protection, public health and citizen's defense in general. They contribute to the refinement and formulation of opinions and viewpoints, and raise concern on political and economic matters by means of providing alternative proposals and solutions. These groups seek to improve society and cater to public interest.

Human Rights

Yemen has seen important transformation in the area of human rights and freedom. Important legislation has been adopted guaranteeing and supporting personal freedoms and joined international conventions and treaties related to human rights. National institutions and NGOs have been established in human rights defense and protection in society. The Constitution of Republic of Yemen guarantees political, economic, civil and social rights and freedoms, the right to life and security, the right to ownership and to work, freedom of religious belief and worship and freedom of speech and expression. Democracy, political pluralism and the independence of the court system are the underlying protection and safeguards for human rights.

Human Rights Institutions

The government of Yemen has paid close attention to human rights issues and public liberties and personal freedoms. The government adopted the basic legislations starting with the Constitution. The government committed itself and signed and ratified international and regional treaties and conventions related to human rights.

The High National Committee for Human Rights

Issues of human rights were taken up by a number of government entities until 1997. Then, a Prime Minister's Decree was issued for the formation of a government committee, known as the Committee for Human and Civil Rights. A High National Committee for Human Rights was formed to replace the Committee for Human and Civil Rights. This was based on Republican Decree No. 20 for 1998, which was amended by Republican Decree No. 92 for 1999. Both decrees sought to represent the largest number of Government entities dealing with human rights and the inclusion of human rights related NGOs and leading social dignitaries, forming a Consultative Board with the membership of specialists and academia. Both decrees outlined responsibilities and methodology of work taking into account relevant internal and structures and by-laws of the Committee and the subcommittees. Republican Decree No. 89 for 2001 also approved raising the level of representation of the High National Committee to be chaired the Prime Minister.

Responsibilities and Duties of the High National Committee

The Republican Decree establishing the High National Committee and its internal by-laws have all outlined duties for both the Higher Committed and the Permanent Subcommittee. The duties include the following:

- Drawing up policies, plans and programs that ensure the maintenance of human rights in the Republic of Yemen;
- Strengthening the role of the relevant entities concerned with human rights issues and protection of human rights in general, in accordance with the Constitution and valid laws and international treaties and conventions that Yemen is adhering to;
- Supervising the application of international treaties and conventions associated with human rights by the national relevant concerned entities;
- Supporting and promoting NGOs that are active in human rights;
- Supervising the preparation of periodic reports that are presented from national entities to international organizations on the extent of implementation of international treaties and conventions on human rights;
- Receiving letters, memos and notices presented by the various international personalities, authorities, and agencies that are concerned with human rights;
- Considering and responding to human rights concerns in accordance with the fundamentals and rules guiding the Higher National Committee;
- Collecting and documenting all international treaties, conventions and data and information on human rights;
- Commenting and providing opinions on laws, treaties, conventions and reports on human rights;
- Studying incoming reports from the international organizations on human rights and providing opinions and responses thereto;
- Preparing studies, reports, and analysis on human rights issues and presenting appropriate suggestions;
- Supervising the preparation and implementation of activities that manifest Yemen's participation and celebrations that are devoted to the achievements and gains that the international community realized in the area of human rights.

Other Active Agencies in Human Rights

- A. The Committee for Public Liberties and Rights in the Consultative Assembly: The Committee plays an advisory role in the protection and reinforcement of human rights and role of NGOs. The Human Rights and Public Liberties Committee in the previous Council investigated cases and events related to human rights violations, especially in prisons;
- B. The Public Rights and Liberties Committee of Parliament: A permanent committee in Parliament, which plays an important role in the ratification of international treaties related to human rights and making sure that national laws enacted by Parliament are consistent with commitments entailed in the international treaties. The Committee can also investigate issues related to human rights violations. The Committee has the right to interrogate the government on any claims of human rights violations;
- C. The Petitions and Complaints Committee in Parliament: This is also a permanent committee of Parliament. The Committee plays an important role in compiling and debating the grievances related to human rights. The Committee is also responsible for investigating complaints into violations. It can also interrogate the government on any claims of violations to human rights.

The Ministry of Human Rights

The Government that took office in April 2001 named a new cabinet minister for Human Rights for the first time occupied by a Lady Minister under Republican Decree No. 105 for 2003. The decision clearly reflects the government commitment to human rights. A bylaw for the new Ministry of Human Rights (MHR) outlined its duties, which aim to reinforce and safeguard human rights taking into account coordination with the relevant responsible ministries, entities and authorities. It also set out guidelines for strengthening national mechanisms for the protection of human rights in order to ascertain Yemen's compliance with international treaties, conventions and accords ratified by the Republic of Yemen. Towards realizing human rights' objectives, the following mandate has been granted to the MHR:

- Propose policies, plans, programs and measures that will be adequate for strengthening, safeguarding and implementing human rights, in coordination with the relevant concerned entities;
- Study existing legislations and laws and the extent that they are in harmony with the principles and rules laid out in the international treaties and conventions related to human rights; present the needed amendments in accordance with the Constitution and effective laws;
- Receive and consider complaints presented by the citizens, authorities and agencies; and address the matters that are within the responsibilities of MHR in coordination with the relevant concerned entities;
- Enhance legal awareness among citizens by guiding them to rights guaranteed to them constitutionally and legally, in addition to spread human rights culture within the society by using all means of disseminating awareness;
- Strengthen areas of cooperation with the NGOs that are active in human rights;
- Contribute to the preparation of specialized studies and research in human rights;
- Prepare periodic reports on Yemen's compliance to its international commitments in coordination with the relevant concerned entities;

- Coordinate with international organizations engaged in human rights and develop areas of cooperation therewith;
- Develop skills and build the capacities of the staff of MHR technically and academically through preparing and implementing rehabilitation and training programs in coordination with the relevant concerned entities;
- Gather, analyze and document information related to human rights and the government policies thereto;
- Strengthen relations with the ministries, authorities and organizations that are concerned with human rights issues;
- Present regular periodic reports on the activities and accomplishments of MHR to the Cabinet;
- Carry out any other tasks and responsibilities that are called for by the nature of MHR's work or assigned thereto;

Yemen's Compliance with International Treaties and Conventions

Yemen signed and ratified most of the international treaties addressing human rights issues, and has internally adopted and adhered to national legislations and laws complementing these international treaties. Programs of successive governments continuously re-affirm Yemen's full adherence to international treaties and conventions supporting human rights and freedom.

Significant International Treaties Ratified By Yemen

International Declaration of Human Rights
International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
International Convention on Political and Civil Rights
International Treaty for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
International Treaty to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
The Agreement to Combat Torture and Other Forms of Harsh Treatment and Cruel, Inhumane or Offensive Punishment
International Agreement on Children's Rights
International Agreement Against Genocide
International Treaty to Ban Trading of Persons and Exploitation of Others in Prostitution
International Treaty on Refugees
International Treaty Banning All Forms of Racial Discrimination
International Protocol on the International Treaty on Refugees
International Treaty for Banning and Punishing All Forms of Genocide
The International Agreement on Waiving All Statutes of Limitations on War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity
International Treaty on Women's Political Rights
International Agreement on Agreement to Wedlock, Minimum Marriage Age and Registering Marriage Contracts
International Agreement Banning Trade of Human Beings and Exploitation of Others
International Agreement for Banning and Punishing Racial Segregation
The Four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the 2 Additional Protocols of 1997

MAJOR ACHEIVEMENTS

MHR is exerting accelerated efforts towards laying down a straight course that will lead the Ministry to playing outstanding roles, performing a social and humanitarian mission that confirms the democratic approach Yemen has chosen to embark upon. This will be by means of working on a number of fronts simultaneously. The most significant of these is progress in the activities of MHR, contribution to spreading awareness on the laws and rights, circulation and dissemination of ideas that help to reinforce human rights. In addition, they include realizing the desired transformation towards building partnership with civil society in order to implement the Ministry's strategic vision. Finally, MHR should be able to maximize on past successful experiences and good practices in human rights.

Yemeni Women

Yemeni women over the last 15 years have become effective partners in all aspects of life from being empowered, involved and active in political, social and economic spheres including civil society. Since the Declaration of the Republic of Yemen, the official and community commitment has been to broaden women participation in political, economic, social and cultural life. Yemeni laws and legislation have underlined women's rights. The national strategies and policies of the government followed the spirit of the Constitution in terms of focusing attention to improving and upgrading the conditions of Yemeni women. Yemeni women have increasingly taken up major positions of responsibility and senior posts, whether at the employment or the political levels. Women are now to be found in economic, political, educational, health, cultural and information sectors and diplomatic corps. Women have also occupied a ministerial post in government. There are now 123 women diplomats compared to a total of 585 male diplomats. In courts, there are 35 women working in the judiciary, with one woman being a member in the Supreme Court. There are also 35 women lawyers.

Yemeni Women in Politics

Article (31) of the Constitution stipulates that "women are the sisters of men and they are entitled to the rights and obliged with the duties that are called for and guaranteed by Islamic jurisprudence and as dictated by Law". The Constitution also sets out the foundations for regulating political life, so as to guarantee for all citizens, men and women, the right of citizenship and expression of opinion without discrimination. Article (8) of Law No 66 Concerning Political Parties and Organizations stipulates in paragraph (iv): "that no political party or organization may be established on the basis of discrimination among citizens due to gender.". Article 9 of the same law also bans the inclusion of any condition for membership in the internal by-laws or political programs of any political party on gender discrimination.

The Law also grants women the right to vote and to run in the elections. Women have participated in the different elections as voters, candidates, monitors and regulators in all committees. Yemeni women also occupy an acceptable space in political life with 42% of the total registered electorate being women. Similarly in political parties and organizations women maintain 25-50% of membership. Observers have seen an evolution in the support of women in political participation. The General People's

Congress for example has had a certain percentage of seats for women in Parliament and local councils.

Economic and Social Participation of Women

The Yemeni government paid attention to the situation of women and poor families through a set of policies addressing poverty alleviation and minimizing economic and social impacts with special emphasis on the development of human resources and the integration and empowerment of women in development. The government aimed to develop and expand social protection systems, such as providing homes for minors, the handicapped, the disabled, the elderly and rehabilitation centers for poor women. Expanding the capacity of these homes through building new establishments and improving the quality of services they provide have been high on the government agenda. The Government, through its responsible institutional organs provides the opportunities for women to have access to benefits and loans just like men. The amendment to the Law for Social Care No. 31 for 1999, which extends the categories, covered by social welfare to women without providers, in addition to the family with a provider who is cutoff or missing or whose provider is in jail.

Statistics indicate that the participation of women in the economy is growing. The participation of women in the rural economy is 25.9% against 70.7% for men. However, in the urban areas the rate falls lower to 11.5% against 68% for men. Women's participation centers on traditional work primarily in agriculture and fisheries. In education the rate is 4.3% and 2.6% in manufacturing. The private sector and NGOs take in 91.7% of the working women, compared to 6.3% in the government sector. There is a significant percentage of women engaged in domestic industries (home) such as food, clothing and traditional handicrafts.

Women's Education and Training

In recent years, the Government adopted strategies and policies that underline the importance of improving and expanding education, training and reducing the existing gender gap. The most significant of such strategies are the National Strategy for Eliminating Illiteracy and Adult Education, the National Strategy for Girls' Education and the Basic Education Development Strategy. These strategies underline the ultimate objective of increasing girls' enrollment in basic education from 55% in 2005, to 70% by 2010 and to 90% by 2015.

In 2004, the implementation of the Fast Track Initiative began and YR 2.1 billion was appropriated for the Basic Education Development Strategy. The Ministry of Education (ME) instructed governorate offices to waive school fees for boys and girls coming from poor families. This is in implementation of the Law for Social Welfare to encourage girls' enrollment in basic education. The ME also prepared a 5-year strategy for school nutrition to encourage girls' enrollment in basic education and reduce drop-outs.

Institutional Mechanisms for Upgrading the Conditions of Women

The Higher Women Council (HCW)

Republican Decree No. 25 for 2003 was issued to recreate and organize the Higher Council for Women (HCW), under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister with a number of Ministers as members in addition to representatives from relevant government entities and NGOs plus the chair of the National Committee for Women (NCW), the Vice Chairman of NCW, NCW coordinators in the City of Sana'a and other governorates, and 6 prominent women. The HCW is primarily responsible for integrating women issues in economic, social and cultural policy.

The National Women Committee (NWC)

The NWC is another important institutional mechanism set up by the government for the advancement of women. It also deals with following up on the implementation of strategies related to women's affairs. The NWC was created in 1996 and was later re-structured in 2000 to become the implementation, administrative and advisory organ of the HCW. NWC is a financially and legally independent entity. A separate budget allocation is appropriated for the NWC within the state budget. The NWC relies on primary organs to carry out its duties. These are the chairmanship of NWC, the subordinate organizational units that undertake the daily routine duties and tasks, and the advisory and coordinating organ, which consists of members of the NWC and NWC coordinators in the governorates and the different central government organs. The NWC has been able to realize many accomplishments since its creation. The most significant of these include:

- Preparation of the National Strategy for the Development of Women, which is the first of its kind in the Arabian Peninsula;
- Preparation of reports on the extent of implementation of the commitments in the international declarations, conventions and treaties on women, i.e. the Beijing Platform for Action for Women, the International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Annual Report on Women's Conditions in Yemen;
- Organizing campaigns for supporting and advocating for women candidates in the 2003 Parliamentary Elections, assessing the difficulties and obstacles that prevent women from reaching Parliament, and formation of a team to mobilize support for the quota system in the elected councils;
- Arrange discussion meetings, workshops, and seminars to support women candidates;
- Celebrate occasions such as the International Women's Day held on March 8, and organize the Second National Conference on Women to focus on integrating women in development and alleviating poverty of women;
- Implement several training programs in coordination with other entities;
- Participate in the various discussion meetings, workshops, seminars and activities organized by government agencies and NGOs, in addition to participating in several activities overseas including meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the Extraordinary Summit for Arab Women and in the Summit itself;

- Establishing a data-base on NGOs managed by women or that target women in their activities, in order to ensure coordination and communications mechanisms;
- Conduct studies and reports related to women affairs and issues;
- Form a working team to recommend amendments to laws that include discriminatory stipulations against women, and follow up procedures for their approval.

The Higher Council for Maternal and Child Care

This Council was formed by the Republican Decree No. 32 for 1999 with the Prime Minister as the chair and membership of a number of personalities related to the tasks and policies of the Council in maternal and child care. Despite the Council's coordinating role, it is involved in the direct implementation of projects in areas of early childhood development and the adoption of children issues, advocating for and defending their rights and monitoring their conditions.

Women's Departments in the Government Ministries and Agencies and the Women's Development Departments in the Governorates

In 1999, the Prime Minister issued a directive for the establishment of women departments in government ministries and organs. The aim was to strengthen the participation of women in decision making posts. Republican Decree No. 265 for 2001 related to the organizational by-laws of the governorate and district head offices, also stipulated the establishment of special departments for women development in the different governorates that should be subordinate directly to the Governors' offices. These departments are to contribute to drawing up policies at the governorate level and to follow up on the programs for women in the respective governorates.

Non-governmental Mechanisms and Programs

The Federation of Yemeni Women

The Federation of Yemeni Women (FYW) is one of the oldest and largest voluntary grass root organizations in Yemen. FYW is an independent organization that is active in supporting and strengthening leadership capacities in society. FYW conducts several awareness workshops for society in general and women in particular on the importance of education and work, in a bid to empower women to protect themselves from any social abuse, to generate their own income and to have an effective role in development. FYW aspires to upgrade the status of women economically and to have them obtain all rights stipulated in the Constitution, legislation and laws of Yemen and other international agreements. The FYW is currently the umbrella of the major NGOs that participate in the implementation of the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction (PRSP). FYW is also the primary member in the "SHIMA" Network for Women Advocacy. FYW is also effectively active in the Yemeni Family Care Association and the Arab Family Organization.

A Higher Elections Preparatory Committee was formed in 2003 for FYW to carry out elections in all its branches. New management boards have been elected under the leadership of the Executive Office. The General Assembly Conference was held in September 2003.

The FYW sought to have a presence in all the governorates of the Republic. It proceeded to open 21 branches, in addition to a separate branch in Socotra Island, in view of its geographical remoteness. Currently, the FYW is attempting to open a new branch in Raimah Governorate. The FYW has worked towards supporting the districts with FYW centers so that rural and coastal women can take advantage of services on offer. The FYW expanded its presence and activity in urban and rural areas. The Strategic Plan of the FYW is to prepare a common vision for the future that will enable the Federation to play a primary and effective role in adopting the issues of Yemeni women, and in implementing the strategic orientations and objectives adopted by the FYW. The Plan focuses on the following:

- Enabling women educationally and reducing the gender gap in primary and secondary schools;
- Enabling women economically, especially in the rural and remote areas and women with special needs;
- Improving the level of awareness in health and on early marriage;
- Ensuring effective participation of women politically;
- Reinforcing institutional capacities.

Several women charity associations have been established since 1995. These are concerned with providing care and rehabilitation of women, in health, socially, educationally and economically, in order to improve the capacities and the standard of living of women. The activities of these associations focus on the implementation of rehabilitation, training, educational and awareness policies, programs and schemes. These associations do not differ much from their predecessor associations in the substance of their concerns, their strategic objectives and general orientations.

The government has drawn up several general policies and strategies. Some of these are related particularly to women and women issues. These strategies aim specifically to reduce the gender gap in various development fields. The most apparent of these strategies are the National Strategy for the Development of Women, which was prepared by the NWC in consultation with relevant concerned entities. Prime Minister's Decree No. 212 for 2003 was issued directing all government organs to implement the strategies and the assignment of to follow up on the implementation. NGOs participated in the implementation as being the primary and effective partners in advocating women rights.

The Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational Training prepared the National Strategy for Women Work, in coordination with a number of government entities. The strategy was ratified and approved by Cabinet in 2001. The strategy aims to achieve the training and integration of women in the labor market and to upgrade their professional capabilities and help them obtain skills for improving their job opportunities. In addition, it seeks to draw attention to the appropriate conditions for investment in capacity development of women and reduction of poverty and subsequent effects on health, social, cultural and psychological conditions of women.

Human Rights of Women

Human rights of women have been strengthened by virtue of the orientation of the unified state of Yemen. Women have been able to gain their rights that were in the past inaccessible including political rights. Despite the progress during recent years, women rights are still confronted with some significant legal and technical shortfalls. The NWC, in coordination with NGOs, undertook a review of the legislative framework of the Republic of Yemen. It identified the discriminatory texts against women in a number of laws, and took procedures for amending such legislation with legislative and executive entities. Ratification has been achieved for amending five discriminatory texts in the Labor Law, Personal Status Law, Law of Citizenship and the Prison Regulations Law, the Civil Conditions and Civil Registry Law. The NWC in coordination with Parliament is still following up procedural steps to continue reviewing and amending any discriminatory legislation.

Foreign Policy

The historic Aden Agreement was consummated on 30 November 1989 between the leaderships of the two parts of Yemen. Under the agreement, Yemen was reunited ending partition of the country. Ever since, Yemen's foreign policy became an expression of this important strategic reality. However, no noticeable change took place, in terms of the general principles guiding the previous Yemeni foreign policy agenda. The major determinants that drove Yemen's foreign policy remain pretty much the same and primarily address the respect for Yemen's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, equal relations among nations, strict adherence to human rights, peaceful coexistence and adherence to the United Nations Charter and the Charter of the Arab League. Special attention has been directed to the regional sphere and commitment to developing Yemen's relations with states of the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of African.

Ties with the Arab and Islamic World

The Constitution of the Republic of Yemen underlines in Article (1) the association of the Yemeni people to the Arab and Islamic worlds. Yemen is an independent, sovereign state and an indivisible unit. The Yemeni people are part of the Arab Nation and the Islamic World. Accordingly, the foreign policy supports Yemen's earnest drive to build an edifice of Arab cooperation, to consolidate links with the Arab family and to work to maintain Arab security and address Arab issues.

Flexibility and Openness

Within record time, the Republic of Yemen was able to consolidate its international relations in the broadest sense. The flexibility and pragmatic openness and the respect for international conventions that were adopted by Yemeni diplomacy enabled Yemen to considerably consolidate contacts with almost all countries of the world. Yemen maintains 56 accredited missions in fraternal and friendly states and non resident

representations in 40 other states, covering the world. Yemen also maintains other technical attaches. This reflects the growth in Yemen's relations with these countries. The unification of Yemen has been accompanied over recent years with critical international developments and events, which presented challenges demanding more effective involvement in issues facing the international community and commitment to stronger regional and international relations. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the appearance of policies of hegemony due to the supremacy of a single superpower were among the challenges culminated by events of September 11, 2001 in the United States. Yemen was able to bridge relations and build partnerships with the United States and European countries. Yemen attaches importance to such relations as it exerts efforts to establish more balanced relations and a more active role in the international arena and promote greater economic and political relations that support Yemen's socio-economic development plans and the reform agenda that started in 1995. It has been the government policy to attract foreign investment and economic integration into the global economy. Yemen's foreign policy also sought to make contacts with all Arab countries to revive and advance the agenda of Arab solidarity and common interests.

A) The Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf Cooperation Council

Yemen's foreign policy has been based on ensuring the security and stability of every state, since security of a state is dependent on that of other states. This is especially true in the case of Yemen with its neighboring states. Yemen's policy has been to strengthen and further consolidate relations with regional countries on the basis of mutual respect, non-interference in its affairs and the settlement of disputes and differences through peaceful means. Yemen's regional relations in the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf have the most impact on Yemen's past, present and future. The common factors of religion, language, history, customs and traditions, are sufficient to create regional stability and tranquility.

The Yemeni-Gulf relations have progressed significantly towards strengthening cooperation based on mutual interests and prosperity and stability in the Arabian Peninsula. The policy has been to advance relationships in order to build up confidence among the peoples. Improved relations also underline commitment to supporting pillars for security and stability. Regional integration in view of geographical and sentimental proximity among the states of the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf has been translated into the admission of Yemen into the GCC bloc in initially four institutions, i.e. education, health, social affairs and sports.

B) The Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa region is accorded priority in the foreign policy of the Republic of Yemen. Such policy follows a more balanced and pragmatic approach with countries of this region in view of the following considerations:

- The common sea borders with some of the countries in the region and their effects on Yemen's national security;
- A history of relations based on dialogue and the existence of large Yemeni expatriate communities in these countries with ties to Yemen;

- The current conflicts among states in the region and the continuing instability have ramifications and effects on Yemen in terms of security, economic and social aspects especially posed by the continuous influx of refugees from those countries into Yemen, and the vulnerability of regional and international security in the Red Sea.

Yemen has been leading regional and international efforts to settle the longstanding crisis in Somalia. Yemen has sponsored dialogues among Somali factions and adopted several initiatives on ending the Somali civil strife. Somali faction leaders met at the Sana'a Assembly meeting, which was announced on 13/10/2002 and the Sana'a Summit which was held on 27/12/2004. Yemen has also played a leading regional role and invited Somalia, Djibouti and Eritrea to come together to consider steps for safeguarding regional peace, security and stability. Yemen also presented an initiative for a comprehensive regional reconciliation and conflict resolution through dialogue.

C) Yemeni Diplomacy and Border Settlement

Yemen signed a border agreement with the fraternal state of the Sultanate of Oman in October 1992. Pending problems had been resolved through dialogue and mutual agreement on the basis of mutual interests and spirit of bilateral cooperation. The agreement had been a major accomplishment in the relations between the two countries and a good example to be followed in solving border disputes. Similarly, Yemen concluded a border agreement with the fraternal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in June 2000 on the basis of mutual benefit and interest ending 60 years of border conflict. The settlement had been widely welcomed regionally and internationally. It signaled a landmark achievement between the two countries. The agreement had resulted in improved bilateral relations and accelerated exchange visits by senior government officials from both countries.

Yemen followed the same peaceful approach towards dealing with the Huneish Island and the Huneish Archipelago issue after the Eritrea's aggression on the islands on 15/12/1995. Yemen presented an impressive example of wisdom by allowing the mind and logic to rule instead of violence.

By accepting international arbitration, Yemeni diplomacy averted a war in which both countries would have lost. Yemen also went through a political and diplomatic experience having to resort to every possible peaceful method to ascertain its sovereignty over the islands. In 9/10/1998, the Arbitration Panel issued its ruling, in which Republic of Yemen's sovereignty over the islands of the Huneish Archipelago, Zoqar, Jabal Al-Tair and the Al-Zubair Island Group had been confirmed. On 1/11/1999, Yemen once again took over Huneish and the Huneish Archipelago Isles and the Yemeni flag was once again hoisted on the islands. On 7/12/1999, the Ruling was also issued for the second phase demarcating maritime boundaries between the two states. This had also been attributed to good and sound Yemeni diplomacy.

D) Relations with the Arab World

The realization of Yemeni re-unification has contributed to strengthening the Arab situation in general. It also realized one of the principles and objectives of the Charter of the Arab League. Yemen's policies are based on an Arab vision that views Yemen as the root of Arabs and an indivisible part of the Arab nation. Yemen interacts with all issues of the Arab World. Yemen follows a policy that rests on the exertion of and aid to all efforts that support Arab solidarity and that mobilize all the capabilities to confront challenges and threats facing the Arab Nation. Yemen was able to set up brotherly relations with its sister Arab states in spite of all the complexities in the Arab World and the subsequent crisis that inflicts the region. Out of its Arab responsibility, Yemen has sought to unite the Arab rank to face regional challenges and developments. Yemen presented to the 113th Session of the Arab League Council held in Beirut an initiative on convening regular periodic Arab Summit meetings. The proposal was approved by an Extraordinary Arab Summit, which was held in October 2000 in Cairo. Further to these efforts, Yemen had also presented an initiative in 2003 for the establishment of an Arab Union. The Arab Foreign Ministers, in their Extraordinary Meeting on 13/1/2004 in Cairo, approved the proposal for the establishment of an Arab Parliament based on the Yemeni initiative on reforming the Arab League. The proposal was later presented to the Arab Summit Conference held in Algiers in March 2005.

Yemen's positions have been consistent and adhered to a set of principles that upholds respect for addressing the Palestinian problem. Yemen has all along supported the struggle of the Palestinian people to gain their legitimate rights for self determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital. Yemen had also welcomed the positive regional peace developments including the Madrid Peace Conference, the Gaza-Jericho First Agreement, the Road Map and other agreements signed between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel. Yemen emphasized the importance of reaching a comprehensive and just peace in the region, in accordance with decrees safeguarding international legitimacy. Yemen is also committed to its consistent positions with regards to the Middle East Peace Process and to supporting Arab negotiators in all the spheres, leading to Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and Southern Lebanon.

E) Africa

Yemeni diplomacy has been paying closer attention to the country's relations with the African continent. Yemen has worked to improve political, economic and cultural cooperation with all African states, especially countries in the Horn of Africa and East and South Africa, due to historical and geographical ties, in addition to the presence of Yemeni expatriate communities particularly in East Africa. Yemen has supported the establishment of schools for the Yemeni communities, the signing of agreements to establish joint committees, high level exchange of visits and opening direct flights with capitals of some of the states in the region.

F) Asia

Yemen's relations with Asian states have witnessed growth and improvement due to the continuous exchange of high level visits and joint cooperation commissions. Yemen has also set up new diplomatic relations with a number of Asian countries including independent countries from the former Soviet Union. Yemen's foreign policy focuses on reinforcing relations with East Asian states that are members of ASEAN in view of the mutual economic and commercial interests. Yemeni diplomacy has also exerted efforts towards contributing to the establishment of the Organization of States Overlooking the Indian Ocean in 1996 during a Meeting held in Mauritius Island.

G) Yemeni-American Relations

Yemen was able to convince the United States of America of the significance of the unity of Yemen, to strengthen security and stability of the region. Hence, the unity of Yemen was accorded the support of the United States. Similarly it was accorded regional and international blessings. However, the Second Gulf War broke out only a few months after the declaration of the Republic of Yemen. The war constituted a factor of transformation in the relations between Sana'a and Washington. Yemen was opposed to the use of military force and the foreign intervention in the region, which was led by the United States and called for a political settlement to get the Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. As a result, American aid to Yemen was cut, and relations between the two countries were shaky until the War defending unity in the summer of 1994. The United States viewed the secession attempt as an internal affair. This position was sufficient to form a basis for renewed relations between both countries, in addition to the role of Washington in ending the Yemeni-Eritrean conflict that contributed towards reinforcing the relations. In October 2000, the USS Cole destroyer was bombed near the Port of Aden. Again, relations became strained, despite Yemen's cooperation with the investigation thereof.

Relations began to take a turn for the better after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the US Pentagon in New York and Washington respectively on 11/9/2001. Yemen condemned the attacks and took security measures to pursue the suspected elements that are affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the other terrorist groups. The visit of President Ali Abdullah Saleh to Washington came two months after the attack, culminated with a security pact between the two countries, including training Yemeni security personnel on combating terrorism, supplying Yemen with the required equipment and support to the Yemeni Coast Guard. Yemeni-American relations have since then been stable. This can be construed by the assistance that the United States is providing Yemen in education, health and the development of rural and remote areas, especially in Marib and Al-Jouf Governorates. The US Agency for International Development (US AID) office has reopened in Yemen, after being closed since the early nineties of the last century.

G) With Europe

Yemen gives special attention to its relations with the European Union and the bilateral relations with all the European states. Developments in the European Union have increasingly led Yemen to improve relations with the EU being a strategic partner. The EU provides economic and political support for the implementation of

the reform program in Yemen that began in 1995. The Yemeni Government has sought to attract European investment to strengthen and improve the Yemeni economy. Relations between Yemen and the EU have witnessed improvement especially with the increasing regional importance of the new Yemeni state, and the continuous flow and exchange of high level visits. The Europeans support for Yemen goes primarily to the implementation of reforms and the adoption of local rule, democracy, respect for human rights and public freedoms. The European position during the war for the defense of the unity in 1994 had been to support the unity of Yemen. It also applauded the prudent policy of concluding border issues between Yemen and its neighbors in a peaceful manner and Yemen's position with respect to developments in the Horn of Africa, in addition to Yemen's assistance in catering to refugees from the Horn of Africa.

H) The Russian Federation

Relations between the Republic of Yemen and the Russian Federation in recent years have taken off with improved cooperation. There was not much to say about relations between the two countries in the early 1990s as the Russian Federation was passing through transformation in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was apparent that the diplomatic relations between both countries in the second half of the nineties saw positive improvement at different levels mostly through exchange of visits at the highest level. Most recently, President Ali Abdullah Saleh paid an official state visit to Moscow in April 2004.

I) International Organizations and Agencies

Yemen has had traditional links with specialized international and regional organizations and agencies. Yemen is a member in the United Nations and its affiliate international agencies since 1947 and a member in the Islamic World Conference since September 1969, the Non-Aligned Movement since 1955. Yemen's relations with these organizations have been characterized by fruitful cooperation with political, economic, social and cultural representations for these organizations in Yemen.

1. The United Nations

On May 21st 1990, the Secretary General of the United Nations was notified that the united state of Yemen will take the place of both the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in all regional and international organizations, and shall be committed to provisions of the United Nations Charter and respect all treaties and conventions signed between any of the former two parts of Yemen and other countries. The Secretary General was requested to notify all member states of the UN and UN agencies of this declaration.

The General Assembly session no. 45 issued a resolution on 5/12/1990 in which it welcomed the unification of both parts of Yemen and the declaration of the Republic of Yemen as a sovereign state on 22 May 1990. Since that date, the Republic of

Yemen has participated in all annual sessions of the General Assembly. Yemen's delegation contributed effectively in raising Yemen's stands on regional and international issues. The Republic of Yemen has also sought to enhance its presence and participation within UN agencies and organizations in economic, social and cultural fields.

2. Islamic Conference Organization

Yemeni diplomacy exerted great efforts to strengthen its presence in the Islamic Conference Organization as part of consolidating Islamic solidarity and supporting the just issues of the Islamic World. Yemen also seeks to defend Islam against a smear campaign that aims to distort the image of the religion. Yemen has been actively and effectively participating in the meetings and conferences of the Islamic Conference Organization at ministerial or summit levels. Yemen's foreign policy attaches importance to strengthening relations with Islamic countries given the common interests and mutual benefits that link Yemen with these states. Yemen plays host to the Islamic Conference Organization Conference of Foreign Ministers in June 2005.

3. Non-Aligned Movement

Yemen was among the leading states that participated in the Constituent Conference for the Non-Aligned Movement held in Bandung in 1955. It was also among the first states participating in the Preparatory Conference of the movement held in Cairo in 1961.

Since unification, the Republic of Yemen has effectively participated in all the conferences within the non-aligned framework. It gained the respect of fraternal and friendly states for its consistent positions that underline the objectives and principles of the movement.

International Economic Relations

Yemen has exerted earnest efforts to reinforce its economic relations with all fraternal and friendly countries. This has been crowned by more than 60 commercial and industrial agreements and protocols in trade and industry. There are also six committees under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister and his counterparts in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Sudan and Iraq. This is in addition to 23 joint ministerial committees with a number of fraternal and friendly states. Yemen is keen to improve its economic relations with regional and international blocs by means of passing compatible legislation and removing non-customs restrictions, which should enable Yemen to integrate its economy into the regional and international economy.

The Greater Arab Free Trade Area

In implementation of law no. 41 for 2002, Yemen joined the Greater Arab Free Trade Area. The agreement adopted by Arab states in this regard aims to facilitate and develop mutual trade among the Arab states. Yemen has begun the gradual reduction of custom fees, charges and other taxes with similar effect on the Arab commodities imported to Yemen as part of implementing a tariff reduction schedule of around 16% per annum reaching a zero tariff in 2010.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

Yemen has been exerting efforts to realize integrated relations with states of the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf in economic and other fields. GCC member states are primary trading partners with Yemen and are the most significant importers of Yemeni non-oil products like agriculture and fisheries. In the meantime, they top the list of countries exporting to Yemen. Commercial relations between Yemen and the GCC gained additional significance in recent years due to the signing of numerous economic and commercial agreements and protocols. The GCC secretariat and Yemen have established joint ministerial councils, committees and working groups to study the commercial legislative and legal aspects in Yemen and the GCC states.

The Sana'a Congregation States

Yemen has sought to create a league of the states of the Sana'a Congregation. The grouping includes the Republic of Yemen, the Republic of Sudan and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The most significant economic accomplishments of the Congregation include:

- Establishment of Specialized Businessmen Councils;
- Creation of a Joint Holding Company for Investment in food security;
- Work towards establishment of industrial zones and to encourage the private sector to participate in development of these zones;
- Participation in national, regional and international commercial exhibitions;
- Cooperation in banking services to facilitate smooth flow of trade between the three states;
- Establishment of an information network for businessmen to reinforce and strengthen trade relations;
- Cooperation in livestock and animal production.

Accession to the World Trade Organization

The steps taken by the Republic of Yemen towards joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) began in early 1998 when a ministerial committee considered Yemen's accession to the Organization. Yemen had made great strides along the course of reforms which commenced in 1995. The Government renewed interest in joining the Council in a declaration presented to Parliament in June 1998. This was followed by the formation of a national mechanism to prepare for and negotiate with the WTO. Other decrees followed and presented regulatory guidelines for the

establishment of a national mechanism called the General Policies Committee dealing with negotiations with WTO. A negotiating team and a communication and coordination office were established with the WTO to liaise between the national committee and the relevant concerned entities at the national level. The National Committee had also set up three sub-committees for the implementation of policies and objectives drawn up for the National Committee. These committees are intellectual property rights, trade and the services committee. A technical team was set up to support the Yemeni negotiating team.

The first practical step along the path towards Yemen joining the WTO was the presentation of an application to acquire observer status in WTO. The General Council of the WTO approved admitting the Republic of Yemen as an observer member in April 1999. The Government agreed on 31 March 2000 to present an official application for membership in the WTO. On 17 July 2000, the General Council of the WTO approved to accept the application unanimously. A task team was formed with open membership for all WTO members.

The national mechanism for membership started by preparing a Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime describing the economic and trade policies of the Republic of Yemen. This was the first document to be presented to the Organization. The preparation and review of the memo was completed and approved by the Government. It was then submitted to the WTO on 20 November 2002. Yemen received 167 questions on the Foreign Trade Regime Memorandum from WTO members, which have the greatest impact on international trade. Countries that submitted questions included the United States, the European Union, Canada and Australia. Questions are part of an investigation of facts on the economic and trading policies and legislations in effect in Yemen in order to assess their compliance with WTO regulations and requirements. The Yemen WTO national working committee prepared and forwarded answers to the questions on 22 June 2004.

A team of experts has been recruited to prepare tariff schedules or "the first presentation for getting commodities to the markets". The national team attaches significance to the training and human resource and capacity development. A number of activities, seminars, workshops and training programs have been conducted on issues related to WTO accession with support from the EU and other bilateral and international agencies and countries. Members of the national team have also participated in WTO process education and activities.

International Cooperation

Overseas development assistance constitutes an essential impetus for the development process in Yemen and for addressing the development challenges the country faces. It allows Yemen to be a player in international relations through development cooperation partnerships and involvement with the international community in addressing development and poverty issues. Since the unification of Yemen, the government sought to enhance relations and partnerships with regional and international donor organizations and countries in a bid to jointly participate in supporting Yemen's development process and agenda.

The Second Gulf War in the early 1990s and its negative consequences coupled with internal developments including the war for defending unity in 1994 had resulted in a retraction of overseas development assistance. The 1990s witnessed a gradual decline in overseas development assistance by regional and international donors (bilaterals and multilaterals). Some donors completely suspended their development aid programs for Yemen.

Overseas development assistance in loans and grants fell from about \$ 400 million on average in 1990 to less than \$ 100 million in 1995. Subsequently, the government had worked on ways to stimulate the resumption of development assistance by launching an economic, financial and administrative reform program adopted in early 1995. The Yemeni Government called for a donor Consultative Group meeting held in Brussels in 1997. The meeting resulted in donor pledges amounting to \$ 870 million to support the implementation of the reform program. Despite the non-fulfillment of donor pledges, the CG meeting had been an opportunity to embark on a new era in Yemen's relations with the regional and international donor community.

In view of the limited local resources available to address all development priorities and needs, the government embarked on a campaign to mobilize overseas development assistance and promote its commitment to maintaining reforms and addressing poverty. The Poverty Reduction Strategy (2003-2005) which was prepared by the Yemeni Government had become a contractual document with donors. This allowed Yemen to bring together the donor community to a Consultative Group Meeting held in Paris in October 2002. The objective of the donor conference was to seek contributions by the international donor community in supporting the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Donors were able to make pledges to fund the Strategy amounting to \$2.3 billion. The repeated visits of President Ali Abdullah Saleh to a number of countries in the region and all over the world stressed the importance of maintaining closer partnerships with the world. The visits have also been an opportunity to promote Yemen and mobilize resources to support its development agenda of primarily addressing poverty and unemployment in addition to supporting the government's implementation of its reform agenda.

Overseas Development Assistance to Yemen

During the years 1990-2004, overseas development aid in the form of grants and soft loans amounted to \$3.9 billion, an average annual basis of \$ 260 million (\$13 per capita). The donor map in Yemen includes governments and a small number of regional and international donors. The list of top donors in Yemen includes the multilaterals like the World Bank, the United Nations System, European Commission, regional Arab funds (i.e. Arab Fund, Islamic Bank, OPEC, etc). Bilaterally, Germany, Holland, the United States and recently the United Kingdom are the most significant donor states supporting development in Yemen. Development loans amounted to nearly \$ 2.7 billion during the period 1990-2004. The International Development Association (IDA-WB) ranked first with about \$1.4 billion. The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development ranks second with \$ 824 billion, then the Saudi Fund for Development with \$ 193 million and the OPEC Fund with an amount of \$ 74 million.

Significant Donor Agencies and States

State or Agency	Amount of Assistance (millions)
Total Grants and Assistance	1,246
Germany	280
Netherlands	240
United States	147
European Commission	250
Specialized UN Agencies	180
International NGOs	86
UK	28
Other states	35
Total Loans	2,658
WB	1,400
Arab Fund	824
Saudi Fund	193
Islamic Development Bank	167
OPEC Fund	74
Total	3,904

ODA grants have added up to \$1.3 billion during the same period (1990-2004). The average annual ODA provided by UN agencies amounted to \$60 million according to the country development framework that extends for 5 years, which totaled \$180 million by end of 2004. The European Commission provided during the period 1990-2001 about \$173 million, of which \$ 46 million was through the Food Security Support Programme. In the EC National Indicative Program 2002-2004, EC development aid amounted to 61 million euros. The EC is also providing a 13million euro- development program per year under the 2005-2006 indicative programme.

Yemen's relations with international non-governmental organizations have progressed well. Number of INGOs active in Yemen has risen by 40% compared to the first half of the 1990s. INGOs have numbered 44, of which 33 are foreign and 11 are Arab or Islamic, whose presence and activity increased mainly in early 2000. Total project financing implemented by Arab and Islamic NGOs amounted to \$35 million over the period 1990-2004, compared to a portfolio of \$51 million over the same period for other INGOs.

Bilaterally, Germany ranks first in terms of the volume of its development aid program to Yemen. Cooperation with Germany for the period 1990-2001 amounted to about DM 325 million, equivalent of 162 million euros. In 2001, Yemen was chosen as one of 4 model countries in the German Government Poverty Reduction Action Program to halve poverty in these selected countries by 2015. Germany's ODA to Yemen in 2002 reached 24 million euros and increased by 60% in 2003 and 2004 to 37 million euros per annum.

The Netherlands is also a major development partner in Yemen. Total ODA provided by the Netherlands amounted to \$142 million for the period 1990-2001, of which \$52 million constituted the total ODA until 1996. ODA increased to \$80 million during 1997-2001 in addition to \$10 million. In 2002, Yemen was selected also among the Netherlands list of main partner developing countries deserving priority attention for socio-economic development assistance. This resulted in an increase of Dutch aid by 35% reaching \$45 in 2002. However, due to the economic recession facing Holland, Dutch assistance to developing countries, including Yemen, had to be reduced by 60%. Subsequently, the annual Dutch assistance to Yemen has been reduced to about 21 million euros per annum since 2003.

Cooperation with the United States of America during the first half of 1990s had been strained due to the Gulf War. US development aid was suspended in the mid-1990s. By the end of the 1990s, the US resumed its development assistance through a small food aid program in 1999. Afterwards, US development aid picked up with additional annual food aid programs reaching \$113 million by end of 2004. After a 7-years suspension, USAID also resumed its activities in Yemen in 2002. USAID financing commitments for Yemen amounted to \$34 million for the years 2001-2004 in addition to \$5 million under the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). Security cooperation had also been strengthened after September 11 with security and military cooperation providing \$125 million in the form of hardware and training in counter-terrorism, support to the Coast Guard and support for the national de-mining program.

Japan provided development assistance to Yemen, amounting to \$105 million during 1990-2004 of which \$30 million was for the period 1990-1995. Japanese aid took the form of financial and debt reduction grants. Japan's ODA increased to \$7 million per annum during the period 1996-2000 and to \$10 million a year for the period 2001-2004. Britain also resumed its direct annual development assistance to Yemen after almost a decade of suspending aid during the 1990s. DFID's resumption in Yemen began with an aid portfolio of \$4 million in 2002 doubling to \$8 million in 2003 and to \$12 million in 2004. Other ODA sources for Yemen came through modest development contributions totaling \$30 million for the period 1990-2004 mostly coming from France, Italy. Recently Denmark resumed development aid to Yemen in 2004 by means of a partnership program to support good governance with an annual amount of 2 million euros.

Of the overseas development assistance to Yemen in the form of loans and grants, 60% went to supporting infrastructure in education, health, water and sanitation and agriculture sectors. The other 40% has been in the form of technical assistance, environmental, institutional building, human development and cultural heritage. Other ODA took the form of reduction of debt. Development aid has also been targeting the implementation of the country's reforms and addressing good

governance issues and gaps including civil service modernization, decentralization, judicial reform, gender, democracy and human rights. The annual disbursement rate reaches in most cases about 30% of the total ODA loans and grants. This is considered a good rate compared to other developing countries.

Development Aid Harmonization and Alignment

In order to buildup its ownership of development aid and programs and to optimize and improve the effectiveness of development aid, the government of Yemen has established a Technical Unit in the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation to help in the process of overall aid coordination and aid management mainly aid harmonization and alignment, and to function as a focal point for improving government-donor partnership. The Unit will primarily help the government institute an External Aid Policy; develop an aid management data-base system and an action plan for the implementation of the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Harmonization and Alignment for Improved Aid Effectiveness in developing countries.