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in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant

Replies of Qatar to the list of issues in relation to its initial report*

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



I. General information

Paragraph 1

1. The Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar of 2004 guarantees equal economic, social and cultural opportunities for all citizens. Article 19 stipulates: “The State is to uphold the pillars of society and to guarantee security, stability and equality of opportunity for citizens.” The Constitution also identifies the component parts of society, in which regard article 18 states: “Qatari society rests on the pillars of justice, benevolence, freedom, equality and good morals.” Society in Qatar is also underpinned by social solidarity, as per article 21 of the Constitution which states: “The family – founded on religion, morality and patriotism – is the cornerstone of society. The law is to define the means whereby the family is to be protected and consolidated, whereby its bonds are to be reinforced and whereby mothers, children and older persons are to be sheltered in its bosom.”
2. The Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar does not distinguish between citizens and residents; quite the contrary, it establishes the principle of equality for residents in terms of rights and freedoms. Article 34 stipulates: “Citizens are equal in rights and duties”, while article 35 guarantees the right to equality and non-discrimination before the law, stating: “All persons are equal before the law and there shall be no discrimination on grounds of sex, origin, language or religion.”
3. Qatar having acceded to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights under Decree No. 41 of 2018, the Covenant acquired force of law by virtue of article 68 of the Constitution.

Paragraph 2

4. There are 20 private associations and institutions in Qatar, which operate in several cultural, professional, scientific and social fields. The recent Decree-Law No. 21 of 2020 concerning private associations and institutions aims to make such associations and institutions more flexible in the pursuit of their goals, and to provide an appropriate environment for them to operate, especially as concerns registration procedures. The Decree-Law also endorses amendments under which new members of an association enjoy their full rights immediately and no longer have to wait for six months to pass after joining the association, as was the case with the earlier Act.
5. Under the Decree-Law, the licence of an association can be renewed under a decree from the minister. Moreover, private associations and institutions are allowed to operate in the educational, social, scientific, cultural and professional fields.
6. The Decree-Law includes provision for a mechanism whereby associations can hold plenary meetings to elect their governing board in such a way as to promote equal opportunity among all members of the association, including equal opportunity to attend the plenary meetings and participate in ballots. Under the Decree-Law, an electoral committee is to be formed with members of the association, a move intended to ensure that associations remain independent in the running of elections for their own governing boards, free from ministerial interference.
7. The Decree-Law makes it easier for associations to conduct activities consistent with their goals, as set forth in their statutes. In fact, if associations wish to organize or take part in seminars, conferences, training courses or similar events, such activities can be conducted merely on the basis of a notification to the ministry rather than via a request for prior authorization.
8. Under the Decree-Law, associations are required to retain their financial and administrative records indefinitely. Moreover, all participants in a plenary meeting have the right to examine the records of the association, a move that is intended to ensure good governance of the association’s activities and to ensure oversight of the governing board by the plenary.

9. In addition, the Decree-Law envisages a sliding scale of penalties under which a member or director can be held liable for an act of wrongdoing that might harm the association, without the entire association being penalized, and it opens the possibility of reconciliation for offences envisaged in the Law.

Paragraph 3

10. Legislators in Qatar have taken legal steps to ensure that judges, lawyers and prosecutors are adequately trained. Article 6 of Amiri Decree No. 25 of 2014 regarding the organizational structure of the Ministry of Justice states that the Institute of Legal and Judicial Studies is to undertake the following activities:

- (a) Providing judges, members of the Office of the Public Prosecution and their assistants and jurists in government departments with training to develop and update their capabilities and skills in terms both of academic knowledge and its practical application;
- (b) Training lawyers;
- (c) Producing qualified candidates – nominated by the Supreme Council of the Judiciary or the Prosecutor General – for appointment as judges and prosecutors.

11. In 2018, the Office of the Public Prosecution opened the Institute of Criminal Studies, which concerns itself with training and capacity-building for prosecutors, including all legislation and treaties that are relevant to the work of the Office of the Public Prosecution.

Paragraph 4

12. The State of Qatar does not consider itself bound by the provisions of article 3 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, for they contravene Islamic sharia with regard to questions of inheritance and descentance.

13. The State of Qatar shall interpret the meaning of “trade unions” and matters related to unions – as set forth in article 8 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Labour Code and national legislation. Qatar reserves the right to implement that article in accordance with such an understanding (as described below under article 8 on trade union rights).

Paragraph 5

14. The Qatar Fund for Development operates in the fields of education, health care, economic empowerment and climate change, as these are considered to be priority areas for cultivating human life and enabling individuals to pursue self-improvement and advancement in their lives.

15. The Qatar Fund for Development has been able to protect and guarantee those rights for the beneficiaries of projects, which it runs in several countries and without discrimination of any kind on the basis of race, sex or other condition, as stipulated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

16. The Qatar Fund for Development runs projects, provides humanitarian assistance and chooses optimal partners through the use of scrupulous internal procedures. These procedures involve the evaluation of potential partners according to a body of set criteria; the use of risk management instruments; ensuring the compatibility of projects and partners; and the use of monitoring and evaluation tools to ensure alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals by assessing the effectiveness and impact of funded projects. This means that international aid and projects are delivered impartially and without discrimination, thus ensuring that the objectives of the Fund are fulfilled and that the aid provided by Qatar is delivered to needy groups around the world and duly supervised to avoid any potential corruption.

17. Qatar has signed numerous economic, trade and investment agreements with its trading partners, as well as agreements to encourage and protect reciprocal investments.

When negotiating such agreements, Qatar remains committed to making due allowance for human rights and environmental protection, in line with the international treaties to which the State is a party.

18. As concerns the allocation of 0.7 per cent of the country's gross national income (GNI) to official development assistance (ODA), it should be noted that the Qatar Fund for Development has already provided the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) with all information and statistics relative to the assistance provided by Qatar in 2020, on the basis of State allocations. The information provided showed that the proportion of ODA/GNI for Qatar stood at 0.42 per cent, which is higher than the Development Assistance Committee average of 0.32 per cent.

Paragraph 6

19. The State of Qatar is making intense efforts to curb global warming. Alongside the increasing efforts on the part of the international community to fulfil the Paris Agreement, Qatar is working to supply the cleanest forms of natural gas as a way of facilitating the energy transition. In 2021, Qatar launched its ambitious nationally determined contributions plan under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in which it pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25 per cent compared to the business-as-usual scenario, by 2030.

20. Qatar plans to improve energy efficiency across various economic sectors, and is reinforcing its plans with a number of key initiatives. These include increasing carbon capture and storage, expanding the renewable electricity generation network, converting to electrical forms of transportation in order to reduce fuel consumption and investing in natural solutions such as blue carbon projects.

Paragraph 7

21. Over two decades, Qatar has been working to develop its legislation and practices so as to prevent human rights violations in work related to commerce, infrastructure and construction. The *kafalah* sponsorship system and the requirement for exit permits have both been abolished, and a law has been enacted regulating the rights of domestic workers. At the same time, wage protection mechanisms have been improved, labour dispute-resolution committees have been established and a fund has been set up to support persons affected by violations against their entitlements perpetrated by commercial companies.

22. Such actions on the part of the Government serve as guiding principles for business and human rights vis-à-vis, for example, equality between workers, prevention of discrimination against women, maternity rights, working hours, rest and holidays, wages, the prohibition of forced or coerced labour, the protection of children from economic exploitation or employment in activities harmful to their health and development, and the application of occupational health and safety standards.

23. The State has signed 38 bilateral agreements and 14 memorandums of understanding with labour-sending States regarding the provision of legal protection for migrant workers before their recruitment and the regulation of such recruitment.

24. Qatar has opened visa centres in six labour-sending countries, namely Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, India and the Philippines, and it has plans to open centres in Tunisia, Kenya and Ethiopia. The purpose of the centres is to provide greater protection for workers against all possible abuses and violations during the recruitment process, to deliver integrated services that cover all recruitment procedures and to enable employment contracts to be signed outside the country.

II. Issues relating to the general provisions of the Covenant (arts. 1–5)

Maximum available resources (art. 2 (1))

Paragraph 8

- (a) **The proportion of persons living below the poverty line and the levels of inequality, defined as the ratio between the total income accruing to the richest decile of the population and the total income of the poorest 40 per cent of the population**

25. Average per capita income by population segment (2017)

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Monthly amount in Qatari riyals</i>
Average per capita income of the poorest 40 per cent of the population	3 577
Average per capita income of the richest 10 per cent of the population	20 354
Increase in the income of the rich vis-à-vis the income of the poor (<i>source</i> : five-yearly income and expenditure survey)	5.7

- (b) **The proportion of public revenue that is generated through taxes**

26. Tax revenues for the years 2013 to 2020 (survey conducted every eight years).

<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>
16 828 383 314	30 911 216 295	5 008 122 966	42 220 582 516	28 596 200 677	32 840 535 115	46 900 531 818	39 564 537 046

27. General budget of the State of Qatar (in millions of Qatari riyals)

<i>Data</i>	<i>2012/13</i>	<i>2013/14</i>	<i>2014/15</i>	<i>09-2015/15</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>
Total income	284 442	348 536	335 617	187 211	170 856	163 272	207 915	214 749	171 186
Oil and gas	219 374	321 930	275 855	153 269	140 717	132 988	173 129	169 986	133 291
Various incomes from transfers	65 068	26 606	59 762	33 915	30 139	30 284	34 786	44 763	37 895

- (c) **Tax rates levied on corporate profits and on personal income**

28. It should be noted that Qatar levies taxes of three types:

- Income tax of 10 per cent on taxpayers' taxable income (on companies);
- Tax of 5 per cent withheld at source on activities that are unrelated to any enterprise permanently established in the State of Qatar;
- Excise levied at different rates on harmful goods: 50 per cent on fizzy drinks; 100 per cent on energy drinks; 100 per cent on tobacco products; 100 per cent on special goods.

The State of Qatar does not impose value added tax or any tax on personal income.

- (d) **Public expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product and, within total public expenditure, the proportion of the public budget that is allocated to social spending**

Public expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product

<i>Year</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
2010	32%
2011	27%
2012	29%
2013	32%
2014	30%
2015	42%
2016	38%
2017	35%
2018	29%
2019	32%
2020	35%

Paragraph 9

29. The following significant measures have been put in place with a view to creating an efficient and effective national system to combat money-laundering:

Legislative measures

- Anti-Money-Laundering and Financing of Terrorism Act No. 20 of 2019 and its implementing regulations, as amended by Act No. 19 of 2021 in the light of observations made by the evaluations team of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF);
- Anti-Terrorism Act No. 27 of 2019;
- Amendments to the Criminal Code (Act No. 11 of 2004), the Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 15 of 2011 and Act No. 9 of 1987 to combat dangerous drugs and psychotropic substances and to regulate their use and commerce; the amendments serve to criminalize specific categories of predicate offences;
- Amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure (Act No. 23 of 2011) to reinforce powers to investigate money-laundering offences;
- Amendments to legislation governing non-profit organizations and charitable activities, notably by amending certain provisions of Act No. 15 of 2014; also changes to the way zakat funds are collected and disbursed under Act No. 12 of 2021, with a view to preventing illicit financing through the collection and transfer of funds via entities or channels most at risk of exploitation;
- Amendments to the Companies Act No. 11 of 2015, the issuance of Unified Economic Register Act No. 1 of 2020 and its implementing regulations and the reorganization of endowments under Act No. 9 of 2021 in order to establish a centralized national system of transparency and verifiable beneficiaries.

Risk assessment

- A national risk assessment has been completed, approved and disseminated to the relevant authorities, who have incorporated the outcomes of the assessment into their own sectoral policies and strategies;
- In the light of the outcomes of the national risk assessment and taking account of the action plans of the authorities involved, a national strategic plan for the period 2020–

2025 has been launched to combat money-laundering, the financing of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction;

- A mechanism has been established to monitor the timely implementation of the action plans;
- A sectoral risk assessment concerning accredited non-financial professions and businesses has been carried out: lawyers, estate agents and notaries (Ministry of Justice) and gold traders, accountants and corporate service providers (Ministry of Commerce and Industry);
- A sectoral assessment related to risks of money-laundering and terrorist financing in the financial sector has been carried out (Qatar Central Bank and Qatar Financial Markets Authority);
- A sectoral assessment related to risks of money-laundering and terrorist financing in the non-profit sector in Qatar has been carried out (Regulatory Authority for Charitable Activities).

Institutional framework

- Anti-money-laundering units have been set up in relevant ministries and other national bodies (Ministry of the Interior, Office of the Public Prosecution, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Ministry of Justice);
- An operating system for the National Counter-Terrorism Committee has been developed, an office to deal with matters related to terrorism has been established and targeted financial sanctions have been applied by the Office of the Public Prosecution;
- A bureau for seizures and confiscations has been opened in the Office of the Public Prosecution.

Human resources and training

- The human resources of the competent authorities have been supplemented with experts in the field of combating money-laundering and terrorist financing;
- A national training programme on combating money-laundering has been run for personnel in the competent authorities and for persons working in the private sector.

Technological resources and solutions

- Advanced technological solutions have been adopted for collecting, analysing, accessing and distributing data and statistics. This takes place at both the national level, thanks to the Qannas programme which is supervised by the Anti-Money-Laundering and Financing of Terrorism Committee, and at the level of the competent authorities in the exercise of their duties, such as the Financial Information Unit, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Qatar Central Bank.

Legal assistance

- Qatar can affirm that it operates within the United Nations principles relating to criminal justice systems, which are derived from international standards, and it has applied those principles in the form of legislative amendments and procedures intended to guarantee a sustainable and effective system of legal aid;
- Article 221 of the Code of Criminal Procedure stipulates: "All persons accused of a criminal offence have the right to a lawyer to defend them. If accused persons fail to appoint a lawyer, the court shall assign defence counsel on their behalf."

Non-discrimination (art. 2 (2))

Paragraph 10

30. Please refer to the reply to paragraph 1 under general information.

31. Qatar has acceded to a number of international treaties concerning racial discrimination, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid.

32. Qatar has enacted laws to regulate the courts and the Office of the Public Prosecution. It has also issued the Criminal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Civil Code and the Labour Code, and it has set up national mechanisms to protect the rights of individuals against abuses by the administrative authorities, such as the 2007 establishment of a special division to adjudicate administrative disputes.

Equal rights of men and women (art. 3)

Paragraph 11

33. Qatar acceded to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1976. Moreover, article 68 of the Constitution stipulates that treaties and conventions have force of law once they have been ratified and published in the Official Gazette. Thus, article 1 of the Convention, which includes a definition of discrimination, is considered to be part of national law, and courts and law enforcement agencies are required to abide by that definition when enforcing the Convention.

34. Article 54 of the Constitution states: “Public service is a national duty. In performing the duties of their office, public officials shall have the public interest as their sole object.”

35. Taking the Constitution as its guide, legislation regulating the labour market in Qatar does not contain any negative discrimination against women and does not envisage any distinction between men and women regarding salaries and employment benefits. Qatari law does not stipulate that women must obtain authorization from a male guardian as a prerequisite for employment, and there is nothing in national legislation that discriminates against women vis-à-vis the labour market or employment conditions, be it in the public or private sectors. In this regard, please review the Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004) and the Civil Service Human Resources Act No. 15 of 2016 which contain generic terms to prescribe rights and obligations. The Labour Code sets forth rules and conditions for Qatari jobseekers, governing how they can be appointed to a post and describing the jobs that are suitable for them on the basis of their age and technical abilities (arts. 20, 21 and 22 of the Code). Article 6 of the implementing regulations of the Civil Service Human Resources Act, which were issued under Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 32 of 2016, stipulates which documents public-sector job applicants are required to submit, and those documents do not include authorization from a male guardian. In accordance with policies and plans for the “Qatarization” of jobs, the Ministry of Labour seeks to encourage Qatari women to work in the private sector. To that end, it provides them with support and helps them derive benefit from high-level educational qualifications, with a view to rebalancing the labour market.

36. The Constitution affirms the principle that all citizens have equality of rights and duties before the law, irrespective of gender. This provision ensures that women are protected from all forms of discrimination and affords them equal opportunities that enable them to strengthen their capacities, protect and promote their rights and participate positively in the development of society. The legal framework underpinning the principle of equality and non-discrimination is enshrined in articles 18 and 19 of chapter II of the Constitution, entitled “Fundamental elements of society”.

37. Legislators in Qatar make explicit reference to wage equality in article 93 of the Labour Code, which states: “A working woman shall receive the same wages as a man for doing the same work.”

38. In 2021, around 57 per cent of women of all age groups in Qatar were economically active. This figure is higher than the global average and is increasing due to the support provided in the form of resources and policies.

39. Women account for in excess of 58.3 per cent of the local labour market and are well represented in the area of foreign policy, security, the judiciary and the military. They also represent 15 per cent of entrepreneurs, with investments amounting to \$25 billion.

40. Women also hold positions of leadership in the State of Qatar, with three female ministers (Minister of Health, Minister of Education and Minister of Social Development and the Family). In addition, a Qatari woman has been elected to the position of Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council.

41. In the area of international cooperation, women occupy several diplomatic posts in the foreign missions of Qatar while, in the past, Qatari women have been members of numerous international organizations, particularly organizations active in the field of human rights and social development, for example:

- United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities; Special Envoy for Humanitarian Relief of the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States; member of the United Nations Human Rights Committee; member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. In 2017, for the first time, four women were elected to the Shura Council, while two were elected in 2021;
- At the second high-level meeting of the Global Judicial Integrity Network, Qatar submitted a proposal for the United Nations to adopt a draft resolution on an international day for women judges. The proposal, which aimed to support fair representation of women in the judiciary, arose from the fact that Qatar was the first country of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to enable women to enter the judiciary, in 2010. Efforts by the Qatari judiciary with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs resulted in the submission of a draft resolution, which was then unanimously adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, decreeing 10 March each year as the International Day of Women Judges.

III. Issues relating to the specific provisions of the Covenant (arts. 6–15)

Right to work (art. 6)

Paragraph 12

42. Qatar pursues effective legislative and administrative policies to uphold workers’ rights and protect them from discrimination, abuse and exploitation. In a historic move, on 30 August 2020, Qatar adopted comprehensive legislative amendments aimed at creating a modern and dynamic labour market, ensuring ongoing recruitment and providing decent work for all.

43. The Ministry of Labour, which is responsible for enforcing and monitoring compliance with the Labour Code, is keen to ensure the effective implementation of recent legislative amendments which have led to radical changes in the labour market. Act No. 21 of 2015 regulating the entry, exit and residency of migrant workers represents an important change with respect to previous legislation. In fact, it abolishes the *kafalah* system, replacing it with a contractual working arrangements and it defines – under articles 21 and 22 – the circumstances in which a migrant worker is permitted to change employer. The relevant details are illustrated below.

Abolition of exit permits

Decree No. 95 of 2019 of the Minister of the Interior removed the need for workers in the following areas to acquire authorization before leaving the country: ministries and other government bodies, public entities and institutions, oil and gas and related industries, shipping, agriculture, animal husbandry and private offices. Exit permits for domestic workers have also been abolished, and they no longer require permission from their employer.

Eliminating the requirement of “no objection” to a change of employment from a migrant worker’s employer

(a) Under Decree-Law No. 19 of 2020, which amends certain provisions of the Act regulating the entry, exit and residency of migrant workers, such workers can change employer in accordance with rules and procedures laid down by the Ministry of Labour;

(b) Decree-Law No. 18 of 2020 amending certain provisions of the Labour Code authorizes both the worker and the employer to terminate the employment contract without giving reasons, provided that the notification period is respected;

(c) The Ministry has set up an online notification service that workers can use either to terminate a contract and change employer or to leave the country definitively. The service facilitates the implementation of the new procedures for the movement of workers envisaged in the above-mentioned legislative amendments. It is the Ministry of Labour that decides on the application submitted by a worker.

Time limit for changing employer

The change of employer must take place during the validity period of a residency permit, unless the permit has expired for reasons beyond the control of the migrant worker concerned, or within a period of 90 days after its expiry.

<i>Requested statistics</i>	<i>Period 1 September 2020– 31 December 2021</i>
Approved requests to change employer	267 538
Requested statistics	<i>Period 1 September 2020– 31 December 2021</i>
Approved requests from domestic workers to change employer	9 093

Prohibition of sequestration of passports

(a) Act No. 21 of 2015 envisages penalties for the sequestration of migrant workers’ passports. In fact, the sequestration of a passport constitutes a criminal offence which, legislators have decreed, attracts a fine of 25,000 Qatari riyals (QR).

(b) It should be noted that residency permits now take the form of a document that is separate from the passport. Ministerial Decree No. 18 of 2014 specifies the conditions and specifications of what constitutes decent accommodation for migrant workers and states that such workers must be able to keep their personal documents and possessions, including passports.

(c) In practice, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of the Interior and the Office of the Public Prosecution cooperate with one another to ensure that workers’ passports are not withheld. Complaints regarding the sequestration of passports are referred to the Office of the Public Prosecution where, in most cases, they are investigated and the offending employers required to return the passports then sent before the courts. Labour inspectors at the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs are receiving training on forced labour and human trafficking including how to identify such offences and recognize relevant indicators, the most important of which is the withholding of passports.

(d) As a result of these efforts, there has been a steady and noticeable decline in the number of complaints related to the withholding of passports. This indicates that employers are being careful to abide by the law and to avoid the penalties envisaged for the

confiscation of passports. At the same time, controls are being increased with inspections that focus on potential human trafficking. Moreover, there is greater awareness among workers about the provisions of the Labour Code and the workers themselves have greater power and can submit complaints to the authorities. Thanks to all of this, the withholding of passports is no longer an effective way for employers to exercise control, as it was in the past.

(e) The Ministry of Labour and the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking have been cooperating with the International Labour Organization (ILO) on awareness-raising campaigns aimed at preventing the sequestration of passports. Brochures on the subject have been produced and distributed widely among employers and workers, and messages in 10 different languages have been posted on social media concerning workers' right to hold onto their own passports.

Right to just and favourable conditions of work (art. 7)

Paragraph 13

44. Act No. 17 of 2020 regarding a minimum wage for workers and domestic workers has been issued, and the minimum wage itself has been fixed under Ministerial Decree No. 25 of 2020, according to which employers are required to pay their workers a basic wage of not less than QR 1,000 per month. In addition, employers who do not provide adequate accommodation or food for their workers are required to pay a minimum housing allowance of QR 500 per month and a minimum food allowance of QR 300 per month.

45. The minimum wage came into effect in March 2021. For its part, the Council of Ministers issued Decree No. 33 of 2020 establishing the Minimum Wage Committee and approving its internal regulations. The Committee meets every three months or as required to examine and review the minimum wage. The members of the Committee also consider the suitability of conditions in the labour market, taking due account of economic factors, including economic growth, competitiveness and productivity, as well as the needs of workers and their families. Formed in accordance with article 5 of Act No. 17 of 2020, the Minimum Wage Committee began its meetings by reviewing international experiences in the determination of wages, as well as the economic conditions in the Qatari and international labour markets.

*Statistics concerning workers who benefited from the minimum wage Decree
between 1 Mar. 2021 and 31 Oct. 2021*

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>No.</i>
Number of workers whose status has been regularized	296 494

46. The wage protection system is an integrated electronic system that was developed at the initiative of the Ministry of Labour to administer and document the payment of workers' wages in establishments that are subject to the Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004). The purpose of the system is to ensure that employers continue to pay workers' wages regularly and on time, in line with the laws and conditions envisaged in the Labour Code, and thus achieve greater clarity and transparency on how workers' wages are calculated. The system includes entries on food and accommodation allowances and overtime, and is capable of monitoring payments that fall below the minimum wage. Consideration is currently being given to the possibility of adopting positive incentives in the form of "certificates of compliance", which are to be issued to contractors and are to be a prerequisite for submitting public procurement bids. More than 1.66 million workers (96 per cent of skilled workers) have registered with the wage protection system. Furthermore, as a way of supplementing an initiative of the Ministry and Qatar Central Bank to facilitate the opening of bank accounts by domestic workers, consideration is being given to adopting a mechanism for domestic workers, similar to the wage protection system.

Wage protection system statistics 2020/21

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total number of workers (year's end)</i>	<i>Payment rate</i>	<i>Non-payment rate</i>	<i>Approximate number of unpaid workers</i>
2020	1 607 547	84%	16%	257 208
2021	1 735 195	80%	20%	347 039

47. As part of its efforts to protect migrant workers during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Ministry of Labour issued a set of directives that companies are required to act on in places of work and accommodation in order to protect workers and ensure payment of their wages. To raise attention to its own policies, the Ministry launched a campaign that ran from 5 to 22 April 2020. It involved 4,151 field visits to workers' places of work and accommodation, as well as the distribution of 88,000 brochures and the sending of 572,754 text messages to employers. As a result of the initiative, awareness was raised among 271,174 workers. The Ministry has continued to reach out to owners of companies, and it has taken measures – including warnings and referrals to court – against companies that violate workers' rights.

48. The Ministry has also conducted rigorous inspection campaigns in workplaces and workers' accommodation to monitor possible violations by commercial companies of Ministry policies and directives intended to protect workers, guarantee the payment of wages and the ensure the implementation of precautionary measures against coronavirus. Figures in this regard are given in the following table.

Monitoring and penalties as a result of inspection campaigns

<i>No.</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Number</i>
1	Total number of visits of inspection	7 204
2	Number of cautions to cease violations	428
3	Number of establishments entered on the red list	4 718
4	Number of recorded violations	437

Paragraph 14

49. The Civil Service Human Resources Act No. 15 of 2016 does not differentiate between job applicants on the basis of sex or gender. In this connection a number of measures have been taken, which are illustrated below.

50. The Bureau for the Civil Service and Government Development and the Ministry of Social Development and the Family organized a “career day for the employment of persons with disabilities” in which 17 government bodies were involved in a rapid recruitment campaign and 35 candidates were interviewed via the “Kawader” platform, of whom 30 were accepted.

51. In application of article 73 of the implementing regulations of the Civil Service Human Resources Act, daily working hours are reduced by one hour for persons with special needs. Moreover, an educational plan to raise awareness about their rights and the support services available to them is being rolled out across several media outlets.

52. The government scholarship plan for the academic year 2022/23 has been approved. The plan, which reflects the needs of the governmental sector, includes 4,050 areas of specialization (for men and women).

Training government officials without discrimination

- The Bureau ran 1,107 training programmes between October 2021 and June 2022. In all, 22,142 trainees participated in career development training programmes and 783 trainees in leadership and supervisory programmes, from various government agencies;

- Eleven training programmes have been run on the use of Microsoft Teams software to provide services to the public. A total of 170 trainees from government departments participated in the initiative;
- Thirty training programmes for jobseekers were run with the involvement of 345 trainees drawn from among persons registered on the database of the “Kawader” platform.

Promotion entitlement procedures for government officials without discrimination

- The Bureau monitors government departments’ compliance with the Civil Service Human Resources Act and seeks to ensure that State employees receive all the rights to which they are entitled. It also proposes public policies, including a proposed change to promotions policy so that it is based on an assessment of efficiency and performance as well as on seniority;
- The Bureau has launched different projects, that are in the process of being implemented, to monitor State employees and help them give the best of themselves.

Procedures for reducing government officials’ financial grade or dismissing them under the Civil Service Human Resources Act, within strict limits related to violations or prohibited actions

The Bureau seeks to limit instances in which government officials have their financial grade reduced or are dismissed. Such measures can be applied by government agencies, in the event of violations, under the discretionary powers that are accorded to them by the Civil Service Human Resources Act. One of the steps taken in this regard is a grievances and complaints committee, which considers grievances submitted by officials if they feel that they have not been heard or have suffered an injustice.

State support for government officials without discrimination

- A committee to examine grievances and complaints filed by public officials who are subject to the Civil Service Human Resources Act was established under Council of Ministers Decree No. 17 of 2018. The decisions taken by the committee are enforceable and binding upon the executive authorities;
- The committee accepts all grievances and complaints submitted to it then follows its own approved procedures without making any distinction or discrimination between complainants (be they Qatari or non-Qatari, with or without disabilities, male or female);
- Officials are granted advances, without discrimination. In fact, advances for such things as marriage or cost of living may be granted, after the completion of the necessary procedures, to any category of Qatari officials who so requests, without exception or discrimination;
- As is shown by the foregoing, all appointments, training, adjustment of status, promotions and other actions involving State officials are dispensed without exception or discrimination. They are not limited to one particular category to the disadvantage of others but include everyone: Qataris, children of Qatari women, persons born in Qatar, non-Qataris and females as well as males. Apart from qualifications and ability, the difference may be in the rate at which the different categories apply for posts and this is being addressed through programmes that are in the process of being implemented. Thus, there is no discrimination in the aforesaid matters or in other rights envisaged in the Civil Service Human Resources Act such as wages and benefits.

Paragraph 15

The following steps have been taken as part of the efforts made by the Ministry to strengthen labour inspection mechanisms, including with regard to occupational health and safety

A labour inspection policy has been adopted which is intended to be used as the main reference when conducting inspections and as a guide to ensure optimal performance on the part of labour inspectors. The policy is also to serve as an important guide when developing strategies, programmes and plans relating to labour inspections. The 2019 annual report of the Labour Inspection Department had the aim of improving the transparency and accountability of inspection services, in line with ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81). In addition to this, a comprehensive training plan was developed for the period 2019–2021 with the provision of specialized training on different subjects for all labour inspectors. Subjects included labour inspection skills, the Labour Code, forced labour and human trafficking. Furthermore, the number of inspectors has been increased so as to render inspections more expeditious and effective. Some of the main areas covered by labour inspections are considered in detail below.

Procedures

53. The Labour Inspection Department came into being under the provisions of article 20 of Amiri Decree No. 13 of 2019, which concerns the organizational structure of the Ministry. The Department has been given the following tasks:

(a) Collecting data and information under recognized indicators, then conducting analyses with a view to the strategic and optimal use of the resources of the Labour Inspection Department, in cooperation with other State bodies and institutions;

(b) Developing and implementing an evidence-based investigation strategy by setting strategic priorities that target the companies chiefly responsible for violations, so that visits of inspection are proactive and based on risk analysis in the targeted sectors. Labour inspectors also consider workers' complaints, which are handled impartially and with full confidentiality, and are careful to verify violations before taking any corrective or punitive action, while also collecting information that may help prevent any future violations;

(c) Conducting continuous training and development; ensuring the requisite technical support to staff of the Labour Inspection Department; appointing a sufficient number of inspectors with the necessary qualifications and experience to ensure the effective discharge of their duties; providing interpreters to enable the inspectors to communicate effectively with all workers;

(d) The Labour Inspection Department continues to operate in line with principles of transparency and accountability, respecting the confidentiality of data without compromising the effectiveness of its inspections.

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Statistics</i>	<i>Period 10 October 2020– 10 October 2021</i>
Labour Inspection Department	Number of inspections to workplaces and places of accommodation – company departments	35 280
	Number of companies found to be responsible for workplace violations	6 994
	Number of companies found to be responsible for accommodation violations	2 509
	Number of companies found to be responsible for wage violations (report duly drafted)	2 982
	Number of inspections that resulted in advice and guidance	4 840
	Number of approved and accepted visits	17 955

Occupational health and safety

54. Under the Qatari Labour Code, all companies are required to apply general occupational health and safety standards in all places of work, and to provide a healthy working environment. Companies are also required to take the measures necessary to protect workers from any potential health risks or other hazards.

55. An occupational health and safety policy has been drafted, in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Health and through consultation with employers' and workers' representatives. In particular, the policy aims to strengthen the system for registering workplace injuries and occupational illnesses, improve data collection and analysis, raise public awareness, promote training, increase inspections and ensure the exchange of best practices among authorities at the various levels of the national occupational health and safety system. A comprehensive health, safety and environmental profile has been developed, thanks to collaboration with ILO and with the British Health and Safety Executive.

56. The Ministry undertakes visits to companies, workplaces and places of accommodation to ensure that the Labour Code and health and safety standards are being duly implemented. If a hazard comes to light that threatens the health and well-being of workers, the Ministry takes measures to close the offending establishment, fully or partially, until the situation has been resolved. The Ministry can, if necessary, request assistance from the competent authorities. Jointly with the Ministry of Public Health, a national health and safety policy has been adopted at a State-wide level, which has the following aims:

- Establishing a unified database of workplace injuries, deaths, accidents and illnesses;
- Developing comprehensive occupational health and safety policies, strategies and plans with a view to reducing the number of workplace accidents, injuries, deaths and illnesses;
- Ensuring that all companies operating in the State comply with laws, decrees and regulations concerning occupational health and safety.

Statistics concerning work-related injuries and deaths

57. The national policy on occupational health and safety, which was adopted in 2020, has the specific purpose of collecting, analysing and disseminating data.

58. Particular reference should be made to a report, drafted in 2021 in collaboration with ILO, on the "collection and analysis of data on occupational injuries in Qatar", which has been published on the ILO website. The report – which was prepared by an independent team that used a rigorous research methodology to collect data on fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries during 2020 – also includes a detailed analysis of the causes of injuries, the age groups and nationalities of the workers involved and the sector in which they work. The recommendations contained in the report are currently in the process of being implemented with a view to enhancing the collection and analysis of data on workplace injuries, improving worker protection and welfare, and preventing avoidable accidents and illnesses.

Mortality statistics

<i>Year</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>
Workplace deaths	123	117	66

Protecting workers against heat stress

59. Ministerial Decree No. 17 of 2021 concerns the precautions necessary to protect workers from heat stress. It focuses on increasing the time period during which work in the open air is prohibited during summer. Under the new rules, outdoor work is prohibited from 10 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. from 1 June to 15 September each year. The new legislation includes important additions, notably by designating a maximum temperature beyond which all work is prohibited. In fact, the law now states that all work-related activities must cease when the temperature exceeds 32.1 degrees, as measured with a wet bulb globe temperature meter, which calculates temperature, humidity, air temperature and thermal radiation, regardless of

the time of day or period of the year. Thanks to field visits to places of work carried out by inspectors from the Ministry between 1 June and 15 September 2021, 338 violations were recorded and 463 sites were closed down.

60. As a result of these efforts, the number of people who visited one of the four Qatari Red Crescent clinics for disorders related to heat stress was significantly lower in 2021 than it had been in 2019 and 2020.

Paragraph 16

61. The Ministry provides multiple channels to facilitate the submission of complaints by workers and domestic workers. These include a 24-hour hotline and smartphone apps including the “Amerni” app.

62. The Ministry has also recently launched a unified complaints and reporting platform to enable individual employees and workers in the private sector, as well as domestic workers, to submit complaints online. The system also envisages a reporting service, under which all citizens and residents in the country can use the platform to report general violations of the Labour Code. For the first time ever, the mechanism enables persons reporting violations of workers’ rights to submit their complaint to the Ministry without revealing their identity.

63. In order to promote means of legal recourse and complaints mechanisms for migrant workers, legislators enacted Act No. 13 of 2017 for the establishment of committees to settle labour disputes.

64. Workers can now also submit their complaints to the National Human Rights Committee, an important innovation that has built confidence among the workforce. In addition to this, the Ministry of Labour constantly and comprehensively evaluates complaints mechanisms, settlement processes and labour dispute-resolution committees.

The Ministry is keen to take any measure to deter violations of the Labour Code, as described in the following paragraphs.

1. Wage protection system

65. Under Decree-Law No. 18 of 2020 amending certain provisions of the Labour Code, employers who violate the wage protection system are liable to a term of imprisonment of 1 year and a fine of QR 10,000. Violations also have the effect of interrupting all dealings with the Ministry of Labour, which does not tolerate employers who violate the wage protection system, but refers them to the courts for the appropriate penalties to be handed down. Between January and June 2022, 3,201 wage violations by companies were recorded.

2. Labour dispute-resolution committees

66. The Ministry has established committees to settle labour disputes. In the event of a dispute relating to the application of the law or of a contract of employment, both the worker and the employer are, in the first instance, required to submit the matter to the competent department of the Ministry, which is to take the measures necessary to settle the dispute amicably within a period not exceeding seven days. If both parties then accept the result of the settlement, their agreement is to be recorded and becomes enforceable. If no settlement is reached or if the worker or the employer rejects it, the question is to be referred to a labour dispute-resolution committee. Between January and June 2022, 3,318 cases were referred to such committees.

67. Council of Ministers Decree No. 6 of 2018 served to establish committees for the settlement of labour disputes and to define their rules of procedure and the mechanism for the enforcement of their decisions. Such committees duly came into being in March 2018. Each committee has one judge who is appointed by the Supreme Council of the Judiciary and two from the Ministry of Labour. In order to facilitate matters for workers and spare them from having to appear in court, the committees sit in the headquarters of the Ministry.

3. Workers' Support and Insurance Fund

68. The Workers' Support and Insurance Fund was established under Act No. 17 of 2018 for the purpose of providing sustainable financial resources to support workers and to pay their entitlements under decisions handed down by the labour dispute-resolution committees, if the employer concerned is insolvent or otherwise unable to pay. The sums disbursed are to be subsequently collected from the employers.

69. Since it was established, the Fund has disbursed financial entitlements to 5,803 workers for a total value of QR 15,919,844 million (equivalent to \$4.37 million). At a meeting of the managing board of the Fund in November 2021, a decision was taken to pay an additional QR 52 million (equivalent to \$14.28 million) for the benefit of 3,000 workers.

70. Should an employer take action against a worker as a consequence of the latter having submitted a complaint, the Ministry considers such an action to constitute retaliation against the worker on the part of the employer and a violation of the Labour Code and other legislation in force, and it takes legal measures against the employer, including that of placing the company concerned on the red list.

Trade union rights (art. 8)

Paragraph 17

71. Workers' right to strike is enshrined in article 120 of the Labour Code, which envisages certain conditions that regulate strike action so as to safeguard the rights and safety of workers, protect workplaces and ensure that public order remains unaffected.

Workers may strike if it is impossible to reach an amicable resolution between them and their employer, in accordance with the following conditions:

- Approval by three-quarters of the general committee of workers in the trade or industry concerned;
- A minimum of two weeks' notice to the employer prior to launching the strike, and the approval of the Ministry, after coordinating with the Ministry of the Interior, with regard to the time and place of the strike;
- No detriment to State assets or to the property, security or safety of individuals;
- No strikes are permitted in vital facilities; i.e., oil and gas and related industries, electricity, water, ports, airports, transportation and hospitals;
- No resort to strike action save after the failure of conciliation or arbitration between workers and employers, in accordance with the present Act;
- None of the foregoing conditions are to restrict workers' right to strike.

72. As regards labour organizations, joint labour committees were established under Ministerial Decree No. 21 of 2019, which concerns labour committees in companies that are subject to the Labour Code. The Decree thus gives effect to section 13 of the Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004), which stipulates that employers and workers are to elect their representatives and that joint labour committees are to be formed in companies that employ 30 or more workers, with employers and workers being represented equally. The committees serve "to regulate work, production methods, training programmes and risk prevention; to improve compliance with occupational health and safety norms; to raise the general cultural level of workers; and to consider individual and collective disputes and attempt to resolve them amicably". This legislation, which also allows migrant workers to elect their representatives and is the first of its kind in the Gulf region, helps to improve the working environment, reduce tensions and open the way for workers of all cultures and nationalities freely to express their concerns and grievances and to discuss them in the joint labour committees in an effort to reach appropriate consensual solutions. The work of the committees is, in fact, akin to that of trade unions as, it should also be noted, Qatar has entered reservations with respect to article 8 of the Covenant.

Right to social security (art. 9)

Paragraph 18

73. The Act in question includes provisions under which certain categories can benefit from social security allowances: persons of unknown parentage, orphans, persons incapable of work, older persons, widows, divorced women, abandoned wives, families of persons in prison, families of missing persons and families in need.

74. Council of Ministers Decree No. 46 of 2014 set the amount of the social security allowances payable to beneficiaries envisaged in Social Security Act No. 38 of 1995, and the rules whereby such allowances are allocated. The Act defines the amount of monthly social security allowances to the various categories of beneficiary.

Information concerning women's right to housing

75. Housing Act No. 2 of 2007 does not differentiate between Qatari beneficiaries, be they men or women, employed or unemployed. There is no distinction made, either in the provisions of the Act or in the decrees issued to implement it, which are:

- Decree No. 17 of 2007 of the Council of Ministers, regarding priorities and regulations concerning the housing system;
- Decree No. 18 of 2007 of the Council of Ministers, regarding priorities and regulations concerning the housing system for persons in need (free housing).

This is demonstrated by the following

(a) The Act stipulates that Qatari nationals have the right to benefit from the housing system, without discrimination between women and men. The Council of Ministers has issued a number of decrees regulating the conditions for accessing the housing system for persons in need (free housing) and, although Qatari women also benefited from this in the past, it was via the construction of an annex attached to their family home. Under the new law, women have the right to obtain an independent housing unit or a rental allowance. They also benefit from the loan-based housing system, under which citizens get a plot of land free of charge and a subsidized loan with which to build a dwelling.

(b) The Ministry of Social Development and the Family has a citizens' housing department that examines the applications it receives, in accordance with applicable regulations and decrees. The department considers the applications on the basis of the documentation provided by the applicants, reviewing each case on its own merits.

(c) Priority under the Act – presupposing the availability of financial resources – is given to persons with dependents, to married persons and to categories who are in real need of accommodation.

(d) The citizens' housing department studies applications for the use of the housing system, verifies the correctness of the data and documents submitted then makes recommendations on the applications prior to their approval, as follows:

- In order to benefit from the system, unmarried persons, whether male or female, must: (1) Be maintaining a parent, sibling or other person they are legally obliged to support; or be over the age of 35; or be a widowed or divorced woman who is over that age and has no children. (2) The persons concerned or their dependants must not have already acquired suitable housing. Multiple beneficiaries are to be allocated a single dwelling if they are first- or second-degree relatives;
- Persons not in employment who are either disabled or are divorced or widowed women, and who are entitled to benefit from the housing system (persons in need);
- Persons may change their application to benefit from the housing system for persons in need to an application to benefit from the loan-based housing

system, provided that they have a Qatari relative willing to act as sponsor; the monthly instalments are then deducted from the sponsor's salary;

- Persons in need are housed in properties owned by the State;
- Housing under the loan-based system is owned by the beneficiary; a title deed is issued in the beneficiary's name and is released 15 years after construction.

(e) The citizens' housing department disburses a rental allowance to persons need whose applications have been approved under the provisions of the Housing Act and its implementing regulations, until such time as homes can be provided by the Qatar Development Bank.

(f) When the Qatar Development Bank provides the homes, the Ministry of Social Development and the Family rents them and allocates them to beneficiaries. In the time that elapses between approval of the application and the provision of the housing units by the Bank, the citizens' housing department provides a monthly rental allowance.

Protection of the family and children (art. 10)

Paragraph 19

76. The Family Code (Act No. 22 of 2006) covers all family-related matters, including the wish to marry, the formation of a family, agreement and disputes in relationships, rights of spouses, financial and social issues, and the effects of separation on couples and children. All these matters are dealt with in accordance with the provisions of sharia.

77. In the Family Code, legislators have given prominence to children on several scores. In matters of parentage, maintenance and custody, for instance, the child's interest is a key criterion. Notably, the Family Code also sets an age of custody that is higher than that envisaged in the different schools of jurisprudence. Under article 183 of the Code, the child's views and preferences concerning the suitability of the disputing parties as custodians may also be taken into account. Article 188 further provides that decisions to transfer the custody of a child should be executed gradually, taking into account the child's interest, and that any use of force required to execute such decisions must not be directed against the child.

78. Qatar prohibits the employment of children under the age of 18 in all professions, including agricultural and domestic work.

Right to an adequate standard of living (art. 11)

Paragraph 20

79. Qatar attributes great importance to providing housing for workers. In fact, the Labour Code and Decree No. 18 of 2014 of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs both stipulate that workers are to be provided with suitable accommodation.

80. The Labour Code underscores the need to apply occupational health and safety conditions within workplaces and workers' accommodation. It includes a number of legal provisions obliging employers to enforce those conditions and envisages penalties for any violations. It should be noted, moreover, that the occupational health and safety section of the Labour Inspection Department has a staff that includes trained inspectors who have the status of judicial officials, as well as experts in medicine, engineering and chemistry. The section monitors the effective application of these conditions through periodic and unannounced inspections, as well as via awareness-raising campaigns and the media.

81. Within the context of the State's efforts to support development projects that address the concrete needs of the country's labour force and improve workers' living standards, Barwa al-Baraha, the country's first workers' city, was inaugurated and began operating in 2016.

The creation of Beit Aman for migrant workers

82. The Hamad Medical Corporation, which is part of the Ministry of Health, has opened Beit Aman, a health facility dedicated to caring for workers who are recovering from injuries.

Efforts made and measures taken by the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with other bodies to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on workers**1. Raising awareness about the measures taken by Qatar to protect migrant workers from coronavirus**

83. Inspection campaigns have been carried out in companies and among employers to verify compliance with occupational health and safety standards and to ensure that employers are duly paying their employees' wages.

84. Text messages with advice on how to avoid coronavirus infection have been sent out on a rolling basis to all companies, communities and individuals in the country.

The following working groups have been created to operate alongside other stakeholders

- A working group to educate and counsel workers, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Health and the Qatar Charity organization. Thanks to this group, 90,000 leaflets on coronavirus prevention methods have been distributed in several languages (Urdu, Hindi, Malayalam and Nepalese) as well as 26,000 sterilization kits;
- A rolling inspection and sterilization campaign has been conducted in 232 workers' residences in various part of the country, in cooperation with a company specializing in cleaning and hospitality;
- Educational films on how to prevent coronavirus among the workforce have been produced in the languages spoken by the workers;
- An educational brochure for workers has been issued. The brochure, which contains basic information about health and work under current circumstances, has been produced in several languages and disseminated via the Ministry's social media sites;
- See also information under paragraph 13 (art. 7).

2. Oversight and penalties

- The Labour Inspection Department at the Ministry conducts intensive inspection campaigns to monitor employers' compliance with the provisions of the Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004) and its implementing decrees. In the event of any violations, the Department takes the necessary legal steps, in accordance with established procedures;
- In the event that they fail to report suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19, employers are liable to the penalties envisaged in Act No. 9 of 2020 amending certain provisions of Decree-Law No. 17 of 1990 concerning the prevention of infectious diseases;
- The Ministry has also conducted rigorous inspection campaigns in workplaces and places of accommodation to monitor possible violations by commercial companies of Ministry policies and directives concerning the implementation of precautionary measures against coronavirus (see under paragraph 13 (art. 7) for a table showing the results of the campaigns).

Support, assistance and conflict resolution

85. A 24-hour hotline and a text messaging service have been made available via which a specialized team receives complaints and responds to queries in 10 languages. In this connection, the Ministry has received:

- A total of 26,337 calls (23,502 from workers and 2,835 from employers);

- A total of 4,647 text messages;
- A total of 2,287 complaints via email, and 1,568 complaints through the “Amerni” app;
- A total of 1,568 complaints through the “Amerni” smartphone app.

3. Regulating contractual relations between employers and workers during the pandemic

(a) In order to ensure the sustainability of businesses and employment, the Ministry of Labour has directed that sectors and activities that are under governmental control may, with the agreement of employers and workers, cease activities, with workers taking unpaid leave or annual leave, reducing their working hours or accepting a temporary wage reduction. At the same time, workers must continue to be provided with suitable food and accommodation, free of charge. Employers and workers cannot agree to reduce or cancel these privileges. Workers who are isolating, are in quarantine or are receiving treatment continue to receive their basic pay and allowances regardless of whether they are entitled to sick leave.

(b) If contracts of employment have to be terminated, this must be done in full compliance with the provisions of the Labour Code and of the contract itself. The period of notice is to be respected, all outstanding payments are to be made and a ticket of return to the worker’s country of origin is to be provided. Employers remain responsible for providing workers with adequate food and accommodation until they are repatriated at the employers’ expense.

(c) In order to facilitate workforce rotation on the local labour market during the crisis, the Ministry of Labour has cooperated with Qatar Chamber to establish an online platform for labour rotation, which gives companies the opportunity to engage workers who were laid off as a consequence of the coronavirus pandemic;

(d) A total of 878,501 digital contracts have been concluded between workers and employers.

4. Health care

86. The Ministry has run awareness-raising campaigns to inform workers about the causes and symptoms of coronavirus infection, explaining that they must isolate and call the special 16000 COVID-19 hotline. Moreover, all workers, irrespective of their status, receive the treatment they need free of charge.

5. Support and assistance

- A sum of QR 3 billion has been allocated as part of a private-sector support package that envisages soft and fee-free loans for companies in difficulty, to help them pay workers’ salaries;
- A 24-hour hotline service has been provided to receive complaints and comments;
- The Ministry has appointed a specialized team that works round the clock to receive calls and messages in the following languages: Arabic, English, Hindi, Urdu, Filipino, Nepalese, Malayalam, Tamil, French and Sinhalese;
- There has been continuous communication, cooperation, coordination and exchange of information with labour attachés and workers’ communities in the country, with a view to supporting and assisting migrant workers.

Paragraph 21

87. The State of Qatar does not consider itself bound by the provisions of article 3 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, for they contravene Islamic sharia with regard to questions of inheritance and descentance.

88. See also information on women's access to housing under paragraph 18 (art. 9).

Right to physical and mental health (art. 12)

Paragraph 22

89. The country's health sector provides health education materials in both Arabic and English. For example, mothers receive an SMS with a link to access educational materials, while information about various reproductive health services has been placed on the official website of the Primary Health Care Corporation as well as on social media sites such as Twitter and Instagram. In addition to this, family-planning counselling and health-care support are available at all health centres, and family-planning advice is also provided directly by midwives while caring for mothers, both during pregnancy and following delivery.

90. There are specialized multilingual psychiatric clinics at Hazm Mebaireek General Hospital. During the COVID pandemic, they worked closely with the Qatari Red Crescent to facilitate access to psychiatric services and to provide assistance for migrant workers at quarantine sites.

91. Migrant workers have been given the possibility of contacting the multilingual national mental health helpline, as well as of accessing the direct referral service and the assessment and treatment services provided by the Hamad Medical Corporation. This has come about with support from the Supreme Legacy Committee. At the same time, one part of a public campaign to raise awareness about mental health specifically targeted migrant workers.

Paragraph 23

92. From the beginning of 2020 until the present, the health-care sector in Qatar has had to face the challenges posed by the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The health-care authorities dedicated their full energies to combating the pandemic and providing the necessary medical and treatment services for persons infected with the virus. In so doing, the authorities sought to provide universal health coverage, prioritizing the right to health for all persons and respecting human rights without discrimination. In fact, all residents of Qatar enjoy their right to health, while the State pays particular attention to the following categories: artisans, older persons, persons with disabilities, women and children. Moreover, no distinction is made between citizens and residents (migrant workers).

93. In the measures it has taken, Qatar has striven to strike a balance between protecting the health of individuals and meeting its human rights commitments under international treaties: avoiding bans, applying measures for limited periods and lifting those measures as soon as the risk ceased.

94. A COVID-19 response plan consistent with the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) was put in place to protect the health and ensure the safety of all members of society, of all categories, groups and communities.

95. Qatar dealt with the outbreak without applying overarching restrictions on personal freedom. Rather, it acted in accordance with its international obligations, which allow rights to be restricted for reasons related to public health for a limited period, without discrimination. This includes the imposition of quarantine on unvaccinated contacts and the isolation of infected persons in order to contain the spread of infection and protect the health of the population.

96. A safe travel policy was adopted, that took due account of people's freedom of movement and that evolved flexibly in line with the latest scientific studies and evidence.

97. Qatar had one of the lowest recorded mortality rates in the world: just 0.25 per cent of total infections.

98. A proactive testing and contact-tracing system was used to detect infections as they occurred and thus to enable the prompt delivery of the necessary health care so as to improve chances of recovery.

99. As of November 2021, more than 8 million COVID-19 tests had been conducted.

100. Basic public-sector health-care services have continued to be delivered to all groups, with recipients being given the option of receiving care in clinics or via remote consultation. At the same time, medications have continued to be delivered to patients who so wish, without them having to visit a hospital or health centre.

101. Urgent and emergency care has continued to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

102. The “Ehteraz” app has been created, which links users’ geographical location with the information about them on the health database, thus facilitating contact tracing and ensuring their safety, while taking due account of the confidentiality of personal information in accordance with relevant laws.

103. Awareness has been raised using various audiovisual and other means, in different languages including sign language.

104. Qatar has focused particular attention on the medical staff and civil society teams involved in combating COVID-19. Its efforts in this regard have involved running training workshops on infection control and personal protection protocols as well as the supply of personal protective equipment and periodic testing.

105. Qatar has made considerable progress in providing the population with safe and affordable vaccination against COVID-19:

- In compliance with the highest international standards to promote and protect the rights of citizens and residents alike, Qatar has provided free COVID-19 vaccinations to the country’s entire population, in primary health-care centres and vaccination clinics run by the Hamad Medical Corporation as well as in certain governmental and quasi-governmental facilities. In addition, two buses have been equipped as mobile clinics in order to facilitate access to vaccinations;
- Since the launch of the national vaccination programme, more than 86.5 per cent of the population of Qatar has been vaccinated, with priority being given to the groups most at risk of complications, depending upon age and state of health;
- Booster doses of the approved COVID-19 vaccine were administered six months after the second dose;
- On 9 January 2022, the Ministry of Public Health opened a vaccination centre in Bu Garn. The operational protocol of the new centre is to vaccinate persons working in the business and industrial sectors.

Paragraph 24

106. The State’s concern for public health is enshrined in the Constitution, and the prevention and treatment of illness is addressed in Act No. 7 of 1996 regulating medical treatment and health-care services in Qatar. The Act envisages measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the area of health care, particularly under article 4 which prohibits the charging of any fees or costs for the following: emergencies or accidents that require hospitalization, preventive mother and child health-care services, preventive health-care services for school students, infectious diseases and vaccinations. The Government meets the health-care costs of Qatari residents in the public sector. As for residents of Qatar who hold a residency permit, there is a nominal fee that is paid by the patient.

107. Reproductive and sexual health services are readily available and accessible in government-run health-care organizations including primary, secondary and tertiary health-care providers.

108. Information about access to health care and reproductive health care is available on the websites of the Ministry of Public Health and the Hamad Medical Corporation.

109. Services available include antenatal care, postnatal care, family planning services and screening programmes. All childbirths take place in hospital.

110. There are channels for referral between the different levels of care.

111. Screening for cervical cancer and breast cancer takes place in both primary and secondary health-care institutions.

112. Referral channels from the primary level to the secondary and tertiary levels have been kept open. Access to abortion is regulated by article 17 of Act No. 2.

113. Doctors cannot perform abortions unless it is to save the life of the woman concerned. On condition that a pregnancy is less than four months advanced, abortion is admissible in the following cases: (a) If the pregnancy would cause certain and serious harm to the health of the mother; (b) If it is established that the fetus will be born with serious and incurable physical deformities or mental deficiency. The parents must consent to the abortion.

114. Abortions must take place in State-run hospitals.

Paragraph 25

115. Mental Health Act No. 16 of 2016 is the first law regulating mental health services in the country.

116. The development of community mental health services is central to the country's mental health strategy and to its fundamental national principles, which are to promote comprehensive and integrated mental health care.

117. The delivery of official mental health-care services in a primary care setting was piloted in three centres in December 2014, shortly after the launch of the national mental health strategy. This was followed by the provision of mental health treatment in primary care facilities in December 2016. Before being rolled out across all centres in the country, the delivery of integrated care has had to address issues of continuous training, guiding operational principles, psychiatric medication, health information support systems, information exchange and communication with specialized primary health-care facilities. In order to support this process, a head has been assigned to each health centre to act as a mental health specialist and supervise the integration process. Preliminary results from the primary health-care centres in which the system has been piloted indicate that significant progress has already been made. Primary health-care centres now routinely use screening tools to test patients for anxiety and depression, and are equipped to treat common mental disorders. Thematic integrated patient-management guidelines for doctors encourage them to adopt a step-by-step approach, using a combination of medication and psychotherapy, with the referral of more complex cases to secondary care.

118. Specialized mental health services have recently begun to be introduced in some primary care centres as a way of facilitating patients' access to specialized community-based care. In line with the strategy, specialized clinics providing psychiatric care for older persons have been launched in a number of primary health-care centres. The clinics, which are run by psychiatrists, are considered by patients to be less associated with the stigmas attaching to mental health, and this allows for the diagnosis of psychiatric problems and the optimal management of patients with mental disorders, within a primary care health-setting. The clinics thus help to improve patient satisfaction and reduce health-care costs.

Education, training and support for primary care

- The main factor behind the success of the integrated programme has been the continuing education, training and support on mental health issues given to doctors of the Primary Health Care Corporation;
- Family doctors and nurses have been provided with basic mental health training, while some family doctors have also received advanced mental health training to help

support the delivery of mental health services in primary care facilities. In that connection, the Primary Health Care Corporation engaged the services of Maudsley International to help train 600 doctors in basic mental health, of whom 60 then received advanced mental health training. In addition, 1,800 nurses were given awareness-raising training on mental health and patient management by the heads of mental health clinics that are part of the Primary Health Care Corporation;

- The training focused on mild to moderate mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety. This training and support was provided before launching the integrated programme of action;
- The Primary Health Care Corporation runs an ongoing mental health training programme for its staff as part of collaborative efforts to improve the delivery of primary mental health-care services. Specialists from the Hamad Medical Corporation have launched a training programme intended to improve awareness about mental health and to train primary health-care doctors. The training includes workshops and presentations about the realities and requirements of primary care and how it interacts with secondary care. In addition to this, the Hamad Medical Corporation developed supplementary and easy-access community mental health-care services during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included the creation of a national mental health helpline as well as special services for manual workers and artisans.

Right to education (arts. 13–14)

Paragraph 26

1. Two schools, one girls' secondary school, pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics curricula, and efforts have been made to create a suitable environment for girls to learn science and technology

- Qatar is placing an ever greater emphasis on education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The primary reasons behind this approach are the close links between education and research on those subjects and the development and creation of wealth.
- Studies have confirmed the need for a greater number of schools teaching science, technology, engineering and mathematics at a level comparable with international standards. Such an expansion should be gradual and considered, and take due account of indicators of achievement.
- The enrolment rate of Qatari students of both sexes in scientific and technological programmes at State-run schools has decreased. In fact, they account only for around 10 per cent, whereas the required proportion should be somewhere between 35 and 40 per cent. The most significant cause of this is a lack motivation to pursue science and technology among students in State-run schools and in private schools that follow the national curriculum, particularly among Qataris (both males and females). As a result, a science and technology school for boys was established which, at first, served to measure the impact, to test the success of the experiment and to set indicators of achievement. Four years on, strong and steady indicators of achievement and high success rates have been observed as well as outstanding and successful research by students.
- The attainment of indicators of achievement at the Qatar Science and Technology School for Boys, coupled to the need to increase the number of students enrolling in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (particularly among Qataris who, as their enrolment choices for 2020/21, are somewhat reluctant), has led to the establishment of an additional two schools, one a secondary school for girls.
- The same approach will be applied as was applied in the first school, with the adaptation of the curriculum and efforts to individualize education. Moreover,

buildings will be provided for additional laboratories such as the medical sciences laboratory (biotechnological and life sciences).

- This will allow for an expansion of the learning process to female students, with a particular focus on medicine. In addition, efforts have been made to create an architectural setting that provides an attractive and stimulating educational environment for female students, one that is compatible with the Qatari context as well as with the student's prior education and previously acquired skills. Initial planning work has thus been carried out methodically, on the basis of studies conducted by a project team in partnership with consultancy firms that are part of the Ashghal group.

2. Services for students with disabilities

(a) Comprehensive assessment services are provided for students with disabilities by a multidisciplinary team from the Roua Centre for Assessment, Counselling and Support, which is part of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, in cooperation with the Qatar Rehabilitation Institute, which comes under the Ministry of Public Health.

(b) The Roua Centre for Assessment, Counselling and Support also seeks to facilitate enrolment, in cooperation with other departments within the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

(c) Early intervention services – based on international systems and programmes – are provided to students with disabilities. They include the PECS programme, which stimulates students' learning and communication processes and the ABA system of applied behaviour analysis.

(d) Specialized technological hardware and software has been provided to students with disabilities, which they can use in schools, either collectively or individually, as a means to empowerment and to facilitate the learning process, depending upon their own abilities.

(e) State-run schools are classified in the following way on the basis of the services they provide to students with disabilities, depending upon the severity and degree of the disability and the students' needs:

- Inclusive schools for students with autism, intellectual disabilities or other disabilities that require special education, who are educated alongside their peers without disabilities. There are 70 such schools throughout the country;
- Inclusive schools for students who are blind, which run programmes in cooperation with the Noor Centre for the Blind. There are four such schools, two primary schools (boys and girls) and two secondary schools (boys and girls);
- Inclusive schools for students with hearing disabilities, which serve students with cochlear implants. There are two schools of this kind, one for boys and one for girls, that seek to support and stimulate students, to develop their hearing skills and to help them integrate seamlessly with their peers;
- Specialized schools:
 - The Al-Hedaya schools for children with special needs, of which there are five, plus two kindergartens. They exist to serve children with autism or intellectual disabilities who require intensive support;
 - The Audio Education Complex, which is made up of two schools, one for boys and one for girls, for the education of students with hearing disabilities.

(f) A secondary-level vocational and technical syllabus for students with disabilities has been launched in State-run schools, the purpose being to train and prepare such students to enter the labour market, according to their abilities. Under the programme, students with disabilities are assessed to determine their capabilities, inclinations and readiness, then classified and admitted into the appropriate vocational and technical course, the end in view being that of providing society with students who are able to exercise a profession.

(g) Family counselling for students with disabilities is provided by experts, both during and after the student-assessment process.

(h) Every effort is made to ensure that students with disabilities are included in competitions and events run by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, as well as in external competitions and events, according to their abilities.

(i) The Ministry of Education and Higher Education has launched a competition dedicated to students with disabilities under the title: “My disability is the secret of my talent”. The initiative – which is being run under the patronage of the Minister of Education and demonstrates the importance the Ministry accords to persons with disabilities – takes place annually to coincide with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Cultural rights (art. 15)

Paragraph 27

119. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education has taken several significant measures, including the following, to integrate cultural diversity and tolerance into the country’s education system:

- School curricula in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education have been drafted within a framework of principles, values, goals and general skills. The philosophy and focus underpinning the General Framework for National Education seeks to promote a culture of coexistence, tolerance and dialogue and to combat hatred and racial discrimination in schools and teaching resources. The General Framework for National Education for the twenty-first century also aims to enhance interaction with people from different parts of the world and peaceful and constructive coexistence.
- Other basic objectives include building self-confidence and self-esteem, and encouraging respect for others. The General Framework also lays emphasis on students working together as global citizens in an interconnected world in which they are increasingly inter-reliant. Emphasis has been placed on tolerance and on respecting different points of view when living and working with others. In the same way, outcome No. 5 of the expected learning outcomes within the Qatari educational system explicitly refers to “students who understand, appreciate and practice the meaning of active citizenship”.

This outcome includes the following detailed indicators:

- Valuing diversity by showing tolerance and respect;
- Understanding the elements and bonds shared with others;
- Adopting human rights values and principles and combating intolerance and discrimination of all kinds.
- As is well known, the General Framework for National Education is the reference document for all the processes involved in planning and designing curricula. It constitutes the guiding philosophy behind the preparation of teaching materials and the compilation of textbooks and other school resources. Thus, introducing a culture of coexistence has served to perfect the philosophy behind the General Framework.
- This approach has been reflected in standard educational texts; in particular, as regards topics that have a bearing on identity and social studies. The texts, each in their various fields, focus on the principles of coexistence and on the common denominators shared by all people such as tolerance, peace, love and non-hatred. This is included under the following educational standards and outcomes:
 - Demonstrating respect for the cultural diversity and difference of different societies;
 - Demonstrating the role of cultural diversity in building progressive civilizations;

- Respecting pluralism, diversity and difference;
 - Preserving the Earth as a global citizen;
 - Demonstrating the effect of cultural and social diversity on recent advancement in the State of Qatar;
 - Identifying components of global culture and understanding how to benefit from them;
 - Clarifying the importance of dialogue between civilizations as a way of disseminating a culture of peace and accepting difference.
- These standards and outcomes have been reflected in the form that lessons and educational activities take and in the learning resources made available to students, all of which seek to promote, protect and encourage cultural diversity. The aim is that students should acquire a particular set of knowledge, skills and attitudes to help them understand and respect other nations, peoples and cultures, and to accept and empathize with them, despite their differences, thus forming positive relationships and partnerships and avoiding intolerance and misunderstanding.
 - Students are trained to think critically and creatively, and they are taught skills of communication, participation, cooperation, research, investigation and problem-solving through being exposed to different points of view. They are imbued with a culture of dialogue and of listening to and accepting the opinions of others, with an emphasis on the need to work together to resolve conflicts and find shared solutions while underlining values of tolerance, justice and peaceful coexistence.
 - Students' principal learning resources include a large body of scenarios and texts covering the civilizations, customs, narratives, cultures and literature of different nations and peoples, as well as geographical and natural features and human achievements (historical, scientific, mathematical etc.).
 - Attention is also given to sporting, social and artistic celebrations, events and activities, as well as to different lifestyles, which helps students to understand, appreciate and respect the ideas, interests and achievements of other peoples, and to build bridges of communication and cooperation.
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