



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Consideration of reports submitted by States
parties under article 18 of the Convention on the
Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

Initial reports of States parties

Qatar*

[28 November 2011]

* In accordance with the information transmitted to the States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document was not formally edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

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Initial report of Qatar on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

I. Introduction

1. The State of Qatar accords considerable importance to the promotion of gender equality, the advancement of men and women and empowerment efforts aimed at ensuring their participation in national development. Accordingly, and in keeping with the constitutional provisions that establish that all citizens, regardless of sex, have equal public rights and duties, Qatar acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 24 March 2009. The Convention was adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 34/180 and entered into force on 3 September 1981, pursuant to article 27, paragraph 1, thereof. The State acceded to the Convention by Decree No. 28 of 2009, issued on 23 June 2009. Article 1 of the Decree states that, in accordance with article 68 of the Constitution, the Convention carries the force of law, due regard being had to the reservations and declarations set out in the instrument of accession. The Convention was published in issue No. 8 of the Official Gazette on 23 June 2009.

2. Upon accession, Qatar entered reservations to the following articles:

- Article 2 (a), in connection with the rules of hereditary transmission of authority, as it is inconsistent with the provisions of article 8 of the Constitution
- Article 9, paragraph 2, as it is inconsistent with the Qatari law on citizenship
- Article 15, paragraph 1, in connection with matters of inheritance and testimony, as it is inconsistent with the provisions of Islamic law
- Article 15, paragraph 4, as it is inconsistent with the provisions of family law and with established practice
- Article 16, paragraphs 1 (a) and (c), as they are inconsistent with the provisions of Islamic law
- Article 16, paragraph 1 (f), as it is inconsistent with the provisions of Islamic law and family law

3. The State of Qatar declares that all of its relevant national legislation is conducive to the promotion of social solidarity. The grounds for entering these reservations will be discussed in part III of this report.

4. The State included the following declarations in the instrument of accession to the Convention:

(a) “The Government of the State of Qatar accepts the text of article 1 of the Convention provided that, in accordance with the provisions of Islamic law and Qatari legislation, the phrase ‘irrespective of their marital status’ is not intended to encourage family relationships outside legitimate marriage. It reserves the right to implement the Convention in accordance with this understanding.

(b) “The State of Qatar declares that the question of the modification of ‘patterns’ referred to in article 5 (a) must not be understood as encouraging women to abandon their role as mothers and their role in child-rearing, thereby undermining the structure of the family.

(c) “In accordance with article 29, paragraph 2, of the Convention, the State of Qatar declares, under the terms of that text, that it does not consider itself bound by paragraph 1 of that article.”

5. As Qatar is committed to implementing the provisions of the Convention, the State took care to limit the number of reservations that it entered to the Convention and to avoid entering any general reservations or reservations to entire articles. The reservations that it did enter will be discussed in detail in part III of this report. Qatar is determined to implement the Convention so as to achieve the goal of eliminating discrimination against women.

6. The Government of Qatar is submitting its initial report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women under article 18 of the Convention, which provides: “States Parties undertake to submit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for consideration by the Committee, a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention and on the progress made in this respect:

“(a) Within one year after the entry into force for the State concerned;

“(b) Thereafter at least every four years and further whenever the Committee so requests.”

Drafting methodology and process

7. A national drafting committee was established pursuant to a decision taken by the Council of Ministers at its thirty-ninth ordinary meeting held on 30 December 2009. The committee was chaired by a representative of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and members included representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Supreme Health Council, the Supreme Council for Education, the Secretariat for Development Planning, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking, the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women, the Family Investment Centre, and the National Human Rights Committee.

8. The document, entitled “Compilation of guidelines on the form and content of reports to be submitted by States parties to the international human rights treaties” (HRI/GEN/Rev.6), was used as a reference in the preparation of the report. The general recommendations of the Committee were taken into account, particularly: general recommendation No. 9 (1989), concerning statistical data; general recommendation No. 13 (1989), concerning equal remuneration for work of equal value; general recommendation No. 18 (1991), concerning women with disabilities; general recommendation No. 19 (1992), concerning violence against women; general recommendation No. 21 (1994), concerning equality in marriage and family relations; general recommendation No. 23 (1997), concerning political and public life; general recommendation No. 24 (1999), concerning women and health; and the Committee’s comments on particular articles of the Convention.

9. From 1 to 4 March 2010, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs ran a special course, for members of the committee on the methodology for preparing reports on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Representatives of the committee took part in the regional workshop organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on 28 and 29 April 2010 on the role of national mechanisms for women in promoting the implementation of the Convention in the ESCWA region.

10. This report was drawn up just after the State had prepared and submitted its national report on the human rights situation in accordance with article 5 (j) of United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/251, concerning the Human Rights Council, and with the guidelines set forth in Human Rights Council resolution 5/1, concerning the structures and institutions of the Council. In that report, Qatar seeks to provide a clear and transparent account of the human rights situation in the country and of the measures that have been taken to promote human rights in practice. The State draws attention to the difficulties and challenges of delivering rights in the manner required and details the steps that it intends to take in the future, including plans to consider ratifying treaties to which it is not yet a party.

11. Qatar replied to a questionnaire on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action (1995) and on the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) that had been sent to Governments as part of the preparations for a regional review and assessment to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action in 2010. It also took part in the fifty-fourth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

12. The drafting committee reviewed reports and studies on women's rights in Qatar as issued by various State entities, notably the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, the Statistics Authority, the Secretariat for Development Planning and the Standing Committee for Population Affairs. It also looked at reports by the National Human Rights Committee and civil society institutions. The committee reviewed the reports submitted by Qatar to United Nations bodies, particularly the national report on the human rights situation that the State submitted to the Human Rights Council in the framework of the universal periodic review. The State replied to the questionnaire that was sent to Governments on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action (1995) and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) as part of the preparations for a regional review and assessment to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Programme of Action. It also reviewed the comments of the Human Rights Council and the treaty bodies on the subject of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

II. Common core document

A. Land and population

Geographical location and topography

13. Qatar is a peninsula that lies midway along the western shoreline of the Arabian Gulf, between latitudes 24° 27' and 26° 10' north and longitudes 50° 45' and 51° 40' east. The peninsula extends northwards and has a total area of 11,521 km². The territory comprises several islands and rocky hills and the shallow waters along the shores of the country's best-known islands: Halul, Shira`ouh, Al-Ashat, Al-Bashiriya, Al-Aliyah and Al-Safiliyah. The peninsula is 185 km long and 85 km wide. It is almost completely surrounded by the waters of the Arabian Gulf and its land border with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is approximately 60 km long. The United Arab Emirates lies to the east of Qatar. Qatari territorial waters extend around 95 miles eastwards and 51 miles northwards into the Arabian Gulf.

14. The terrain is rocky and flat with some low-rising outcrops in the Dukhan area in the west and in the Jabal Fiwairit area in the north. It features numerous inlets, coves, depressions and rainwater-draining basins, known as *rawdāt*, which are found mainly in the north and centre of the peninsula. These areas have the most fertile soil and a rich vegetation.

Population

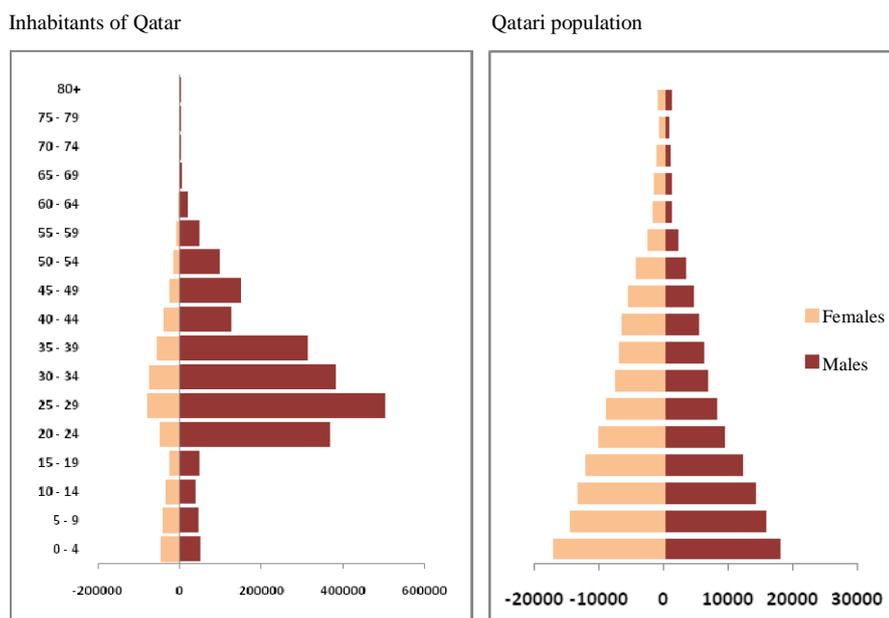
15. According to the 2010 census, Qatar has a population of 1,699,563: 1,284,867 males (76 per cent) and 411,696 females (24 per cent). That males account for such a high proportion of the population can be explained by the fact that the majority of the inhabitants of Qatar are migrant workers, most of whom are males. Table 1 provides figures, disaggregated by sex, and age group (5–13 and up to 65+) on the population of Qatar between 1986 and 2010. Figure 1 shows the population pyramid for Qatar.

Table 1
Change in size of the population of Qatar, by sex and broad age group

Year	Males			Total males	Females			Total females	Total
	0–14	15–64	65+		0–14	15–64	65+		
1986	53 038	194 850	2 207	250 095	50 248	70 493	1 595	122 336	372 431
1997	71 753	224 846	4 911	301 510	68 011	111 413	2 889	182 313	483 823
2004	67 912	478 354	6 550	552 816	64 716	139 085	4 329	208 130	760 946
2009	115 485	1 139 986	9 675	1 265 146	108 281	259 173	6 026	373 480	1 638 626

Source: Statistics Authority, Annual Abstract, various editions.

Figure 1
Population pyramid, 2009

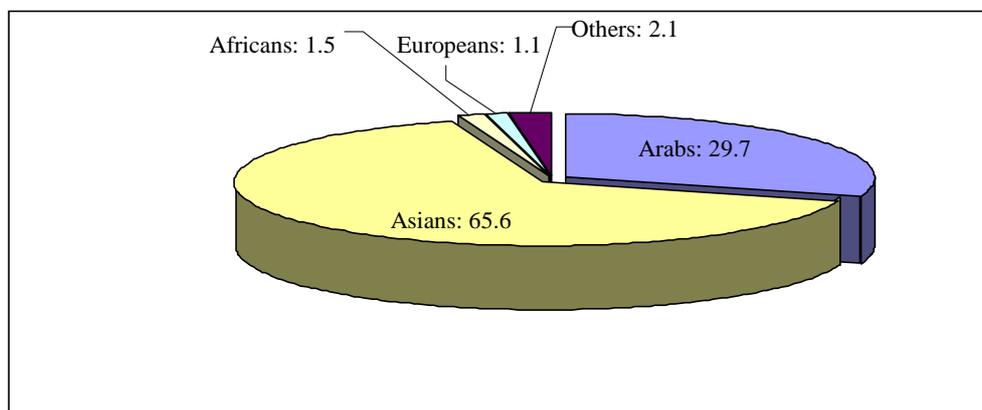


Source: Qatar Statistics Authority, 2009 census.

16. Qataris profess the Islamic faith and the overwhelming majority of them are Sunni Muslims. There are also other faith groups in Qatar, since the country receives large numbers of migrant workers every year, whom it employs to meet the requirements of its ambitious development plans at various levels and in various areas. Indeed, migrant workers account for more than four fifths of the population of Qatar. These workers come from the four corners of the earth and live side by side with people with different religious beliefs, cultures and lifestyles. Experience has shown that the presence in Qatar of a large

number of migrant workers and of a highly diverse range of nationalities, faith groups and cultures is no impediment to harmonious coexistence among different members of society. Indeed, Qatari society has become a model for coexistence between people of different faiths and cultures.

Figure 2
Ethnic diversity in Qatar, 2009



Source: State of Qatar, 2010: State Plan for the Alliance of Civilizations, Qatari Committee for the Alliance of Civilizations, 2010.

Historical overview

17. The Al-Thani family has ruled Qatar since the beginning of the eighteenth century. Sheikh Jasim bin Mohammed Al-Thani, who ruled the country from 1878 to 1913, was the founder of the modern State of Qatar. Every year on 18 December, the date on which Sheikh Jasim acceded to power, Qatar celebrates its national day. The outbreak and effects of the First World War prompted the State to sign a treaty with Great Britain in 1916, providing for the protection of Qatari territory and Qatari nationals. British influence over Qatar was limited however to oversight of certain administrative issues and the arrangement came to an end when Qatar gained independence in 1971.

18. The State entered the modern era only in the middle of the twentieth century. In the educational domain, for example, the first school for boys was opened in the 1950/51 academic year. The first school to be run according to modern pedagogical standards, it had 4 classes offering primary education and 190 students. The first primary school for girls was opened at the beginning of the 1953/54 academic year. The “Ministry for Learning” was established at the beginning of the 1957/58 academic year and was the country’s first ever ministry. It paved the way for the dissemination and development of free education at all levels and the establishment of compulsory primary education. Higher education institutions were established for the first time in 1973, with the creation of colleges of education for males and females that took up to 150 students. Then, in 1977, Qatar University was founded (the national State university). The University now has seven faculties, namely, the faculties of: arts and sciences; engineering; management and economics; Islamic law and Islamic studies; law; education; and pharmacy.

19. As for the health sector, the first hospital was opened in 1945. Then, in 1951, the Department of Medicine was established and free public health care became available from that date. In 1953, the Department of Public Health was set up to oversee all aspects of health care provision. In 1954, three government clinics were established and all citizens and non-Qatari civil servants were granted the right to seek treatment abroad, at the State’s expense, if it was not available in Qatar. A succession of specialist government hospitals

were established, followed lastly by, the Ministry of Health, which was only established in 1970.

20. Qatari women lived in a social system where docility was the watchword and family life was based on the extended-family model and closely knit family relations. Before the discovery of oil, women took part in many traditional economic activities, particularly when men were absent for months at a time on pearl-hunting trips. With the prosperity that came from the production and sale of oil, and with the decline in demand for traditional products made by women, the economic role of women diminished and their responsibilities were confined to child-rearing and housework. With the new social circumstances came restrictions on women's work outside the home and these restrictions became part of a set of social values. The changes that have taken place in society over the past two decades and the spread of education, particularly among women, have done a great deal to eliminate these restrictions and their effects on women's contributions in various areas of life.

21. Since 1995, when His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani took up the reins of government, Qatar has experienced comprehensive development in all sectors. His Highness the Amir of Qatar took steps to complete the work of constructing a modern State based on strengthened consultative and democratic processes and the involvement of citizens in decisions that affect them and in national policymaking. By Amiral Decree No. 11 of 1999, a committee was established to draft the text of the Permanent Constitution, which was finalized in 2002. In April 2003, Qatari men and women took part in a referendum on the Constitution, which was approved by 96.64 per cent of Qatari citizens with the right to vote.

22. In keeping with the Constitution and with an enlightened political vision, the State has promoted gender equality using a step-by-step approach in which account is taken of the noble purposes of Islam and of the exigencies of an open development policy. The inclusion of women as participants in and beneficiaries of development has become a matter of national priority. As a consequence, the female workforce participation rate has risen to over 36 per cent — one of the highest rates in the Arab world — and Qatari women have gained access to the highest decision-making positions; Her Excellency Sheikha Al-Mahmoud was appointed Minister of Education in 2003 — the first woman to hold a ministerial position in a Gulf State — and served in that position until 2009. Moreover, Her Excellency Sheikha Ghaliya Al-Thani served as Minister of Health from 2008 to 2009, having chaired the National Health Authority from 2005 until she moved to the Ministry in 2008.

23. Through the different positions that she has occupied in the national arena, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad, the wife of His Highness the Amir, has played a major role promoting the advancement of women and women's participation. Her Highness chairs the governing board of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (a non-governmental foundation established by the Amir in 1995 which does a great deal for the development of Qatari society by investing in education and the promotion of scientific research and social development) and is the vice-chair of the Supreme Council for Education and the Supreme Health Council. She was also the President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs from 1998 until April 2009. She plays an important role at the regional and international levels in her capacity as Special Envoy for Basic and Higher Education for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as a member of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and of the international high-level advocacy group established by the United Nations to promote the Millennium Development Goals and combat poverty in the world, and as chair of the board of the international Silatech initiative.

24. His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the beloved Amir of Qatar, issued Decree No. 44 of 2008, adopting the “Qatar National Vision 2030” document which offers a comprehensive vision of development. The Decree calls for the implementation of the measures set out in the document and its publication in the Official Gazette. The vision focuses on turning Qatar into a forward-looking State that is capable of achieving sustainable development. In the national vision document account is taken of the principles enunciated in the Constitution and the directives of the political leadership on the development of a society founded on justice, benevolence, equality, the protection of general freedoms, moral and religious values and traditions, the realization of equality of opportunity, and the strengthening of security and stability.

25. The national vision focuses on four thematic areas: (a) human development that will enable the inhabitants of Qatar to build a prosperous society; (b) social development with a view to the creation of a just and safe society that is founded on positive moral values and social welfare principles and is capable of interacting with other societies; (c) economic development directed towards the creation of a diversified and competitive national economy that is able to meet the needs of Qatari citizens; and (d) environmental development in which a balance is struck between socioeconomic development and the exigencies of environmental protection. Included in the vision, which provides a framework for future action, are implementation strategies and plans.

26. The most important subjects taken up under these themes are: increasing employment opportunities for women; supporting women’s careers; giving women an active role in all areas of life in Qatari society, particularly in political and economic decision-making; building women’s capacities; promoting women’s participation in political and economic life; providing ongoing political support for women’s empowerment; and strengthening women’s participation in all domains.

Socioeconomic indicators

27. Qatar provides updated, documented statistics. The Statistics Authority was established in June 2007 as an independent institution that took the place of the Department of Statistics of the Ministry of Planning. The Statistics Authority is an official provider of statistical information. Governmental institutions such as the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank of Qatar also provide official statistics. The national statistics system includes all the official statistical programmes of Qatar. The Statistics Authority has devised a statistical development strategy to strengthen the capacity of the national statistics system as a whole. The goals of the strategy are consistent with national development objectives and policy, which in turn are based on international standards. All aspects of statistics, including data collection, analysis, dissemination and utilization are included with a special focus on the development of gender statistics.

28. In June 2008, Qatar launched the Qatar Information Exchange project (QALAM) and established a website (www.qix.gov.qa) that draws on multiple sources of synchronized and harmonized data to make parallel comparisons and develop interactive information in time series for the period from 1984 to 2010. The database has three broad demographic notations: population, family life and the labour market. The population data describe the individual in terms of social setting, education and production. The data on family life concern the statistical aspects of changes, relations and the interaction between family members. The information on the labour market consists of data on the population, its economic status and the interplay between members of the population. All this data comes from general surveys such as censuses or from targeted surveys or key integrated indicators taken from cross surveys or parallel surveys with demographic information.

29. The latest statistics show that Qatar is going through a remarkable phase in its history and making rapid strides towards the achievement of full and comprehensive development. Indeed, Qatar has attained unparalleled levels of economic growth and prosperity; Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased by between 7.6 per cent and 26.8 per cent per annum over the period from 2004 to 2009 (at constant 2004 prices). In addition, overall Government spending has increased: the State budget grew from around 95 billion Qatari rials (QR) in 2009–2010 to QR 127.5 billion in 2010–2011. Qatar is one of the few countries in the world to enjoy a high level of human development. In the 2009 Human Development Report, issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Qatar was ranked thirty-third in the world. This new ranking reflects the considerable and sustained progress that Qatar has scored in the human development domain. The report showed that the ranking for Qatar in the human development index has improved sharply, rising from 0.875 to 0.910. This was the result of advances made in the areas of education, health and GDP growth. The report also showed that the illiteracy rate in Qatar had fallen to 6.9 per cent, while the school enrolment ratio has risen to 80.4 per cent, as compared with 77.7 per cent the previous year. In the area of health, the survival rate had risen from 75 years on average the previous year to 75.5 years for the reporting year. Per capita income had also increased sharply, reaching US\$ 74,882 in 2009.

30. Qatar is committed to assessing progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It has issued three reports on the subject, the most recent one in August 2010. That report showed that Qatar has met most of the Goals and has made tangible progress on those that have yet to be achieved. The following are the main findings of the third report.

Absence of cases of poverty (population with an income of less than US\$ 1 per day)

- The share of the population in work was 76 per cent in 2009, as compared with not more than 60 per cent in 2004
- Between 2005 and 2009, the net enrolment ratio in primary education ranged from between 88 per cent and 92 per cent for boys and between 93 per cent and 95 per cent for girls
- In 2009, the literacy rate among males and females between the ages of 15 and 24 was 98 per cent
- Qatari women accounted for 82 per cent of all students enrolled in Qatar University in the 2008/09 academic year
- In 2009, the ratio of literate females to males in the 15-to-24 age group was 100.2 per cent
- The female workforce participation rate increased from 30.3 per cent in 2004 to 36.4 per cent in 2009
- The infant mortality rate fell from 5.5 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 4.8 in 2009
- The under-5 mortality rate dropped from 10.4 per 1,000 live births in 2008 to 8.8 in 2009
- One hundred per cent of children aged 1 year and over were vaccinated against measles in 2009
- One hundred per cent of births now take place under medical supervision
- The total fertility ratio for Qatari women fell from 3.9 children per woman in 2008 to 3.8 in 2009

- The number of births among Qatari women aged between 15 and 19 years was 12 per 1,000 in 2009, as compared with 43 per 1,000 in 1986, 21 per 1,000 in 1997 and 13 per 1,000 in 2004
- No cases of AIDS were recorded among persons between 15 and 24 years of age in 2009
- The incidence of malaria fell from 2.1 per 10,000 population in 2005 to 1.5 in 2008, and the incidence of pulmonary tuberculosis was 2.1 per 10,000 population in 2008, as compared with 2 per 10,000 in 2005
- One hundred per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water
- One hundred per cent of the population has access to safe sanitation facilities
- There are no deprived districts, marginalized population areas or shanty towns
- Over the period 2005–2009, approximately US\$ 2.01 billion was provided in development assistance, accounting for 0.49 per cent of total GDP averaged out over the period

B. Constitutional, political and legal structure of the State

Permanent Constitution of Qatar

31. In order to build on efforts to enhance democratic governance, strengthen the foundation of Qatari society and increase popular participation in decision-making, in 2004, following the holding of a popular referendum, His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani promulgated the Permanent Constitution of Qatar. The Constitution, which comprises 150 articles, establishes the principles that guide State policy and underpin the exercise of power, including those of: the separation of powers; the primacy of the rule of law; the independence of the judiciary; and the sanctity of fundamental rights and freedoms.

32. In part I of the Constitution, concerning the State and the principles of government, it is affirmed that the State religion is Islam and that the sharia is the main source of law. The interpretative note attached to the Constitution affirms that no law may be enacted in Qatar if it conflicts with binding principles and if it manifestly deviates from the sharia.

33. Article 8 of the Constitution states that the system of rule is hereditary in the line of the Al-Thani family and the male successors of Hamad bin Khalifa bin Hamad bin Abdullah bin Jasim.

34. In part II of the Constitution, entitled “The guiding principles of society”, it is stated that Qatari society is founded on justice, benevolence, freedom, equality and high moral values and that the State has responsibility for preserving these foundations and ensuring security, stability, equality of opportunity, solidarity and harmony among citizens. The Constitution stresses the importance of the family, sustained by religion, morality and patriotism as the foundation of society. It spells out the responsibilities of the State towards family and its duty to care for young persons, whom it must protect from corruption, exploitation and the evils of physical, mental and spiritual neglect, to provide the right conditions for the fulfilment of their potential.

35. Part III of the Constitution is devoted to the subject of fundamental rights and freedoms. It establishes that citizens have equal general rights and duties under the law and that there can be no discrimination between them on grounds of sex, origin, language or religion.

36. The Constitution states that the guiding principles behind the foreign policy of Qatar centre around the consolidation of international peace and security; the observance of human rights; the rejection of violence and the use of force; the promotion of the peaceful settlement of international disputes; and cooperation with peaceloving nations.

Organization of powers

37. The main principle behind the organization of State powers in Qatar is that power is derived from the people and exercised by them in accordance with the Constitution. The system of government is founded on the separation of the State powers, which cooperate fully with one another. The *Shura* (Advisory) Council is responsible for law-making, while the Amir exercises executive power in conjunction with the Council of Ministers, and judicial power is exercised by the courts. The courts issue judgements in the name of the Amir. Part IV of the Constitution is devoted to the subject of the organization of powers. A summary of its contents is provided hereunder.

The Amir

38. The Amir of Qatar is the Head of State. His person is inviolable and he is owed every respect. He is the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and represents the State at home and abroad and in all aspects of international relations. He also endorses treaties and conventions by decree and transmits them to the Advisory Council. These instruments acquire the force of law after being ratified and published in the Official Gazette. The Amir formulates the general policy of the State in cooperation with the Council of Ministers and ratifies and promulgates laws. No law can be issued without the endorsement of the Amir. The Amir approves the establishment and organization of ministries and other Government bodies and their terms of reference. He also approves the establishment and organization of the consultative bodies that he appoints to assist him in guiding and overseeing State policies and carries out other functions that are regulated under the Constitution and the law.

The legislature

39. The Constitution vests law-making authority in the Advisory Council, which approves the general budget and scrutinizes the decisions of the executive. The idea of having two chambers, one with elected members and the other with appointees, was not taken up in article 77 of the Permanent Constitution. Instead, the choice was made of setting up a single chamber consisting of both elected members and appointees, but with a clear majority of elected members. Article 77 of the Constitution states that the Advisory Council consists of 45 members, two thirds of whom are elected by direct, secret, universal suffrage. The other third are appointed by the Amir. The system for holding elections is defined in laws that specify the conditions for nominating and voting for candidates.

The executive

40. The Council of Ministers assists the Amir in exercising his powers in accordance with the Constitution and the law. In its capacity as a high executive body, the Council of Ministers manages all internal and external affairs for which it has constitutional and legal responsibility. It makes proposals on laws and decrees that are submitted to the Advisory Council for its consideration. If these instruments are approved, they are transmitted to the Amir for ratification and promulgation in accordance with the Constitution. The Council of Ministers adopts regulations and decisions drawn up by ministries, oversees the enforcement of laws, scrutinizes the management of public finances and public administration and performs various other functions.

The judiciary

41. The primacy of the rule of law is recognized in the Constitution. Article 129 of the Constitution states: “The rule of law is the foundation of government in the State. The honour, impartiality and fairness of judges serve to guarantee rights and freedoms.” Article 130 provides: “The judiciary is independent. Judicial power is exercised by courts of various kinds and levels.” Article 131 states: “Judges are independent and are subject to no authority other than the law. No party may interfere in legal cases or in the administration of justice.” Article 137 states: “The judiciary shall have a higher council to oversee the work of the courts and of the bodies that assist them. The composition, functions and powers of the council shall be determined by law.”

42. As stated in Act No. 10 of 2003, concerning the judiciary, the national courts consist of the Court of Cassation, the Court of Appeal and the Court of First Instance. The Supreme Judicial Council was established under article 22 of the Act to safeguard the independence of the judiciary. As stated in article 23 of the Act, in addition to the other functions specified therein, the Council is tasked with: providing comments on matters that affect the judiciary; studying and proposing legislation on the development of the judicial system; commenting on judicial appointments, promotions, transfers, secondments and retirements; and hearing complaints about judicial matters. The Council’s decisions on these issues are final.

43. Under the Qatari Constitution, the task of verifying the constitutionality of laws is defined as a centralized function. Most modern constitutions take this same approach, as it ensures that a balance is struck between the different branches of government. Hence, the Constitutional Court, acting on its own motion or in response to a request from a party at law, adjudicates in disputes over the constitutionality of laws and regulations. The Court’s rulings and decisions are final, are not subject to appeal and are binding on all State authorities. The independence of the judiciary was strengthened with the enactment of Act No. 7 of 2007, on the adjudication of administrative disputes, which recognizes abuse of power as grounds for revoking an administrative decision or for seeking reparation in respect thereof.

44. The Office of the Public Prosecutor is an independent judicial body with responsibility for bringing prosecutions on behalf of society. It oversees law enforcement issues and the application of laws. It has sole competence for opening criminal investigations, bringing cases to court and instituting all related procedures provided for by law. It has investigative powers and the authority to charge accused persons.

Laws on recognition of non-governmental organizations

45. Organized civil society activities are a new phenomenon in Qatar, the Qatar Red Crescent Society was established in 1978 and the Qatar Charitable Society in 1980, followed by the establishment of private associations and foundations that contribute to public welfare. To date, however, no women’s association has been formed in Qatar. Qatari society has long been open to the idea of voluntary charitable work, since Islamic culture supports charitable activities as the most desirable work in which a Muslim can engage.

46. The right to form private associations and foundations is regulated under Act No. 12 of 2004, which limits the activities in which such organizations may engage to the humanitarian, social, cultural, scientific and charitable spheres. The Act states that such organizations must not be set up in order to make profits or pursue political activities. The Ministry of Social Affairs is responsible for registering and monitoring private associations and foundations. The Act states that the Council of Ministers, on the recommendation of the competent minister, may grant an association financial assistance or a loan and allow it

to benefit from exemptions on customs duty, taxes and other levies in order to help it to achieve its objectives.

47. The establishment of private institutions that contribute to public welfare is regulated under Decree-Law No. 21 of 2006, in which the Ministry of Justice Department of Real Property Registration and Documentation is assigned responsibility for issuing licences to such institutions. The Act defines these institutions as entities founded by one or more natural or legal persons to pursue one or more charitable objectives. The Council of Ministers has the power to extend all or some of the following privileges to these institutions: financial assistance and privileges, including allocations of land for the pursuit of their activities; exemptions from all or some taxes and levies; and protection from confiscation of their assets or property.

48. A number of private institutions that contribute to public welfare have been established under Amiral decrees, including, for example, Decree No. 51 of 2007, approving the establishment of the Arab Democracy Foundation; Decree No. 86 of 2007, approving the establishment of the Doha Centre for Media Freedom; Decree No. 3 of 2008, approving the establishment of the Silatech Foundation; and Decree No. 20 of 2010, approving the establishment of the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue. Several organizations have been set up under the auspices of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, including Reach Out to Asia (ROTA) and the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development, both of which have been given consultative status by the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The Social Development Center and the Qatar Diabetes Association are just some of the organizations devoted to the development of Qatari society.

C. General framework for the promotion and protection of human rights

Constitutional protection of human rights

49. Since acceding to power and adopting a comprehensive policy of reform, His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani has striven to ensure that human rights are placed at the centre of constitutional, political, economic, social and cultural reforms. This is reflected in the care that has been taken to develop and strengthen the country's legislative and institutional human rights machinery. Part III of the Constitution of 2004 (arts. 34–58) is devoted to the subject of fundamental rights and freedoms. The Constitution recognizes that these rights are interrelated, interdependent and indivisible and thus grants economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights on the basis of equality. The fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution include but are not limited to: the right to equality before the law; the prohibition of discrimination; personal freedom; criminalization of torture; press freedom and freedom of expression; the right to freedom of association; freedom of worship; the right to work; and the right to education. The Constitution states that these rights must not be regulated or modified in such a way as to limit or diminish them. Article 146 affirms that the provisions on public rights and freedoms may only be amended for the purpose of affording additional safeguards to citizens.

Legal safeguards for human rights

50. The fundamental human rights and freedoms recognized in the Constitution have been further strengthened through the enactment of a number of laws, including the following:

- Act No. 1 of 1994 on young persons
- Act No. 38 of 1995 on social security

- Act No. 7 of 1996, regulating medical treatment and health services in Qatar
- Act No. 25 of 2001 on compulsory education
- Act No. 24 of 2002 on retirement and pensions
- Act No. 10 of 2003, promulgating the Judicial Authority Act
- Act No. 2 of 2004 on persons with special needs
- Act No. 12 of 2004 on private associations and institutions
- Act No. 14 of 2004, promulgating the Labour Code
- Act No. 18 of 2004 on public gatherings and marches
- Act No. 22 of 2004, promulgating the Civil Code
- Act No. 23 of 2004, promulgating the Code of Criminal Procedure
- Act No. 40 on the administration of minors' assets: the Act contains a series of provisions on the protection of children's assets and scrutiny of transactions by guardians
- Minister for Civil Service Affairs and Housing Decision No. 15 of 2005 on work in which minors may not be employed
- Act No. 22 of 2005, prohibiting the recruitment, employment, training and participation of children in camel racing
- Act No. 38 of 2005 on Qatari nationality
- Act No. 21 of 2006 on private associations that contribute to public welfare
- Act No. 22 of 2006, promulgating the Family Act
- Act No. 2 of 2007 on housing
- Act No. 17 of 2007 on priorities and the regulations on access to housing
- Act No. 18 of 2007 on priorities and the regulations on access to housing for persons with disabilities (free housing)
- Act No. 12 of 2008, establishing the Supreme Constitutional Court
- Act No. 19 of 2008, specifying the amounts of blood money (*diyah*) due in cases of accidental killing
- Act No. 3 of 2009, regulating penitentiaries and correctional institutions
- Act No. 4 of 2009, regulating the entry, exit, stay and sponsorship of migrant workers
- Act No. 8 of 2009, promulgating the Human Resources Administration Act

Accession to international human rights treaties

51. With a view to strengthening the legislative machinery for the realization of human rights, Qatar has acceded to and ratified numerous international and regional human rights treaties and conventions, as detailed below:

- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1976)
- The International Labour Organization (ILO) Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) (1976)

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1995)
- The ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) (1998)
- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2001)
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (2001)
- The ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) (2000)
- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2002)
- The ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) (2005)
- The ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105) (2007)
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008)
- The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2008)
- The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (the Rio Protocol) (2009)
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2009)
- The State looks forward to acceding to the two international covenants (the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)
- At the regional level, Qatar has ratified the Arab Charter on Human Rights (2009)

52. Article 68 of the Constitution provides that the Amir concludes treaties and conventions by decree and transmits them to the Advisory Council together with an appropriate statement. A treaty or convention will have the force of law once it has been ratified and published in the Official Gazette. The human rights treaties to which the State has acceded have all been published in the Official Gazette.

53. There is political support for accession by the State to numerous international treaties, given their importance in protecting and promoting human rights. However, a shortage of qualified technical personnel prevents the State from acceding to additional international treaties at the present time. The steps taken by the State to accede to a number of international treaties in a short space of time have put a heavy strain on the country's law-making institutions, as the State does not have enough qualified technical staff.

Reservations and declarations in connection with international treaties

54. In recent years, the State has embarked on a strategic policy towards general reservations to international treaties that have led it to review its general reservations to the human rights treaties to which it is a party. The State withdrew its general reservation to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and part of its general reservation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning any provisions that conflict with the sharia as applied to articles 2 and 14 of the Convention.

55. The State is considering withdrawing its general reservation to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment and replacing it with a partial reservation. The State decided to renounce its option of entering

general reservations when it acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to enter reservations only to specific paragraphs of the text. It provided an explanation of its reasons for entering the reservations in question.

D. Framework for the promotion of human rights at the national level

Institutional machinery for the promotion of human rights

56. The level of attention that Qatar pays to human rights can be gauged from the number of governmental and non-governmental institutions established to promote and protect human rights as an interrelated, interdependent and indivisible whole. These institutions include those listed below.

Independent mechanisms

National Human Rights Committee

57. The National Human Rights Committee was established by Amiral Decree No. 38 of 2002 as an independent national body for the promotion and protection of human rights. On 19 August 2010, Decree-Law No. 17 of 2010 was issued establishing additional safeguards and functions for the Committee in line with the Paris Principles, which relate to the status of national human rights institutions across the world. The Committee's goals are to:

- Propose ways and means of promoting and monitoring the realization of the aims of the international human rights treaties to which the State is a party and make recommendations on accession to other treaties
- Provide advice and suggestions to relevant authorities on human rights issues
- Investigate breaches or infringements of human rights; take steps to deal with complaints about such breaches; liaise with the competent authorities on follow-up action; and suggest procedures for dealing with and preventing such incidents
- Submit recommendations to the relevant authorities regarding existing legislation and bills and on how far they meet the requirements of the international human rights treaties to which the State is a party
- Monitor the human rights situation in the State, prepare reports on the subject, and submit them, together with the Committee's views, to the Council of Ministers
- Monitor issues that could have an impact on the human rights situation in the State and liaise with the authorities responsible for addressing them
- Contribute to the preparation of national reports that the State submits to international bodies that deal with the human rights treaties to which Qatar is a party
- Work with international, regional and national organizations concerned with human rights and freedoms and participate in international human rights forums
- Raise awareness of and provide education on human rights and freedoms and promote knowledge of and the application of human rights principles
- Organize visits by the Chair and the members of the Committee to verify human rights conditions in penal and correctional facilities, detention centres, workplaces and health and educational institutions
- Liaise and work with State human rights institutions in their respective areas of expertise

- Organize and run, if necessary in conjunction with relevant organizations, conferences, talks, courses and debates on human rights and human freedoms
- Help design programmes relating to human rights education and research

58. The Committee comprises no fewer than seven representatives of civil society selected based on their expert knowledge of human rights issues. It also has one member each from: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. These institutions nominate representatives to sit on the Committee, but these persons do not have voting rights. An Amiral decree is issued confirming the names of the Committee members. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee are selected from among the representatives of civil society.

60. The Committee submits a six-monthly report to the Council of Ministers reviewing legislation, the human rights situation and the Committee's activities and providing recommendations. In the interests of transparency and of raising awareness of human rights, it publishes its annual report on its website (www.nhrc-qa.org).

61. The Committee has received complaints about abuses of human rights in general, including women's rights, and has addressed most of them. It reviews domestic legislation to determine whether it is consistent with international treaties, encourages the State to accede to or to ratify international and regional treaties on women's rights, and contributes to the reports that the State is required to submit to United Nations bodies and committees and regional institutions that deal with women's rights. It institutes legal proceedings in order to protect women and offers women legal advice on matters within its legal remit. Before or after a case is sent to court, it carries out mediation and conciliation efforts with a view to resolving cases involving women's rights amicably.

62. The Committee works closely with international organizations, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). A joint conference was held with OHCHR in March 2009, in Doha, on the dissemination of a human rights culture in the Arab world.

Government mechanisms

Supreme Council for Family Affairs

63. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs was established by Amiral Decree No. 53 of 1998 as a high-level, independent institution with a mandate to support the role of families in society and to formulate and follow up on the implementation of strategies, policies and plans. The Council reports directly to His Highness the Amir. It was presided over by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad, the wife of the Amir, from its inception up until March 2009. It was restructured pursuant to Amiral Decree No. 15 of 2009 and its current President is Sheikha Hassah Bint Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani.

64. Since it was founded, the Council has done a great deal, particularly in the area of legislation, to promote the advancement of women. It was behind the enactment of several laws and the amendment of others that safeguard the rights of children, women and persons with disabilities. It succeeded in securing the State's accession to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has completed numerous programmes, studies and research projects that have helped to focus attention on women's issues and the problems of persons with disabilities.

65. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs is the first institution to take a rights-based approach to issues affecting children, women, persons with disabilities and older persons.

Its establishment pre-dated that of the National Human Rights Committee. The Council has helped raise awareness of human rights in Qatar through media campaigns such as the “Yes to children” campaign and a programme to publicize the Convention on the Rights of the Child in schools. It has organized numerous conferences and talks that have had an impact on the national, regional and international levels, such as a seminar on women and politics and the role of women in development (2002); the Doha International Conference for the Family (2004); the regional meeting of States of the Arabian Gulf and Yemen to follow up on the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2005), held in cooperation with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF); and the Forum on Satellite Channels and Ethical and Moral Challenges Facing Gulf Youth (2008).

66. During her time as President of the Council, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad founded several public institutions whose object is to protect and promote the rights of the groups that they serve, namely:

- The Shafallah Centre for Children with Special Needs (2001)
- The Cultural Centre for Childhood (2002)
- The Family Counselling Centre (2002)
- The Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women (2002)
- The Qatar Foundation for the Welfare of Orphans (2002)
- The Qatar Foundation for the Welfare of Older Persons (2002)
- The Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking (2008)
- The Social Rehabilitation Centre (2008)

67. The Council is the institutional mechanism that is responsible for promoting the advancement of women and for protecting the interests of families. It offers women capacity-building support and enables them to participate in economic and political life, particularly in decision-making. It opens up employment opportunities for Qatari women and provides them with career support. It also follows up on the implementation of the treaties on women’s rights to which the State is a party.

Relevant ministerial departments

68. Several departments have been established in ministries and government bodies, including the following.

Human Rights Department of the Ministry of the Interior

69. In accordance with the Permanent Constitution of Qatar, which recognizes various freedoms and rights, and in line with the commitment that the Ministry of the Interior has made to promoting human rights in all areas of its work, the Minister of State for Internal Affairs, by Decision No. 26 of 2005, established the Human Rights Department as the main interface between the National Human Rights Committee and the Ministry of the Interior on the one hand and between the public and the Ministry on the other.

70. The Department’s responsibilities include taking steps, in conjunction with the relevant ministerial bodies, to achieve the aims set out in international human rights instruments as they relate to the work of the Ministry. The Department receives, studies and investigates complaints submitted to the Ministry of the Interior by individuals or through the National Human Rights Committee. It examines the background issues and makes recommendations on cases. It organizes visits to penal institutions, deportation centres and security facilities to check that the laws and regulations in effect in Qatar are being applied properly and that no rights are being infringed. It submits regular reports to the Minister,

issues publications and circulars to raise awareness in Ministry departments that deal with human rights issues, and organizes seminars and talks. It represents the Ministry at international, regional and local conferences and seminars on human rights. In August 2010, the Human Rights Department received an ISO certificate of excellence (2008–2009), having been found to meet all the requirements for ISO certification.

Human Rights Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

71. The Human Rights Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established pursuant to Minister for Foreign Affairs Decision No. 16 of 2003. It comments and offers advice on the human rights questions that are brought to its attention and, working in conjunction with the Ministry's Department of Legal Affairs, helps in the preparation of human rights reports that the State prepares under international treaties and submits to international monitoring bodies working in conjunction with relevant organizations, it prepares replies to reports by international organizations and NGOs on the human rights situation in Qatar and submits them to those organizations. It also drafts replies, in coordination with relevant bodies, to reports by foreign Governments on the situation of human rights in Qatar. It informs the Governments concerned about these reports. It briefs diplomatic and consular missions abroad on new developments in the human rights situation in Qatar. It follows up on local and international human rights issues and on human rights conferences and activities run by regional and international organizations. It involves departments in the Ministry and elsewhere in these activities. It forwards complaints about human rights violations that it receives from abroad to the authorities concerned and follows up on them. It also formulates plans and proposals on ways of using the advisory and technical assistance services offered by international organizations in the human rights domain. It represents the Ministry in the human rights bodies set up by the State.

The National Committee for Integrity and Transparency

72. The National Committee for Integrity and Transparency was established by Amiral Decree No. 84 of 2007 following on from the State's ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption in 2007. It reports directly to His Highness the Crown Prince and is chaired by a member of the State Audit Bureau. The members are drawn from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, Qatar Central Bank, the Office of the Public Prosecutor and Qatar Petroleum.

73. The Committee oversees compliance with the State's obligations under the United Nations Convention against Corruption and is responsible for developing a national strategy to promote integrity and transparency and for proposing legislation to prevent and combat corruption in accordance with the standards and requirements set out in the Convention. It also develops education and training programmes for civil servants, in particular employees of financial institutions, to familiarize them with advanced techniques for uncovering corruption. The Committee submits an annual report to His Highness the Crown Prince in which it outlines its activities and achievements and makes whatever recommendations it views as relevant on how its goals can be met. Qatar hosted the third session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which was held in November 2009 to review progress in the fight against corruption. It also hosted the Global Forum VI on Fighting Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity, which was held in November 2009 and had as its theme "Strength in unity: working together against corruption". The participants discussed the roles of the public and private sectors in combating corruption.

Non-governmental mechanisms

Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking

74. The Qatar Foundation (formerly the National Office) for Combating Human Trafficking was set up in 2005 to suggest policies, establish national plans of action, and help implement the laws on human trafficking. In addition, it oversees the Qatar Home for Shelter and Humanitarian Care, established in 2003 by a decision of the Council of Ministers to provide victims of trafficking with support and protection and with social rehabilitation and reintegration assistance.

75. The Foundation has run information campaigns to alert all groups across society to human trafficking issues and cases. It produces numerous publications and organizes many meetings and discussions. In the area of capacity-building, it has organized a great many training courses and workshops, in cooperation with relevant organizations, on what human trafficking involves and how to identify victims. These activities are targeted mainly at law enforcement personnel. In cooperation and coordination with the Department of Labour, the Foundation has run awareness campaigns for migrant workers in Qatar and has published a multilingual handbook for them.

Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women

76. The Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women is a private foundation that was established under the Private Associations and Institutions Act No. 8 of 1998. Its status was subsequently changed to that of a private institution that serves the public good pursuant to Supreme Council for Family Affairs Decision No. 4 of 2007. Its overall goal is to protect target groups from violence in the home and in society and to deal with this problem. The particular objectives of the Foundation are to:

- Assist in providing accommodation and integrated care to target groups
- Protect target groups from deviant practices in the family setting and in society
- Raise awareness among target groups, families and communities of the social and legal aspects of human rights
- Provide legal assistance to indigent persons in target groups
- Assist and rehabilitate victims of violence in target groups and reintegrate them into society

77. The Foundation offers social services such as individual counselling and advice and a full range of reintegration and rehabilitation services and programmes for victims of abuse and violence. It offers legal services, such as assistance in court and legal advice, and mental health services such as examinations and group behavioural/support/cognitive psychotherapy both for victims and for the other parties involved, where appropriate. A special office was set up in the Doha Police Department to make it easier for women and children to file reports, lodge complaints and ask the police to protect them from violence, abuse or threats. The Foundation assumed responsibility for the office on 19 July 2009. A social worker from the Foundation receives persons in need at the office and provides all the services of the Foundation mentioned above.

78. The Foundation has set up a number of facilities such as *Dar al-Aman*, a shelter offering women and children who are victims of abuse and violence and have nowhere to go a temporary refuge until their case is resolved. It also provides psychological and social rehabilitation assistance. Between October 2007 and August 2010, the Foundation received 69 children and 85 women at the shelter. In addition, the Foundation opened up an office in the Accident and Emergency Department of Hamad General Hospital to provide support,

care and protection to women and child victims of abuse and violence who come into the hospital. In 2008, the office received visits from 17 children and 180 women.

79. With regard to training, the Foundation has organized many seminars, workshops and courses for education, health and security sector personnel. It has developed and run several awareness and education campaigns to promote a culture of protection in society and disseminate information about the Foundation and its hotlines. It has produced numerous booklets, pamphlets and publications such as the *Aman* magazine.

Arab Democracy Foundation

80. The Arab Democracy Foundation was established by Amiral Decree No. 51 of 2007 following the holding, in May 2007, in Qatar, of the Second Forum on Democracy and Political Reform in the Arab World. The Foundation is headquartered in Doha and is the first institution of its kind in the Arab world. Its goal is to promote a culture of democracy in the region. Qatar has donated US\$ 10 million to support the Foundation, which issued its first report in 2008 on democracy in the Arab world. The report was based on information drawn from 17 national reports. More information can be found on the website (www.adf.org.qa).

Doha Centre for Media Freedom

81. The media play a vital role in the State's plans, given that the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which the Constitution recognizes, is one of the pillars of a modern democracy. The media also play a key role in promoting dialogue, mutual understanding, tolerance and coexistence and in creating an environment that militates against incitement of terrorism and hatred. In December 2007, His Highness the Amir issued Decree No. 86 of 2007, endorsing the establishment of the Doha Centre for Media Freedom as a private institution that serves the public good. Freedom, credibility, independence, accountability and transparency are the strategic principles that underpin the Centre's goals of protecting the media in line with international standards, conducting media research and building a database that will be useful to different sectors of the media. The Centre erected a virtual international monument to commemorate leading proponents of, and those who have lost their lives fighting for, press freedom. It assists journalists whose rights have been infringed while carrying out their work, particularly in crisis situations. The Centre signed a cooperation protocol with the organization "Reporters without Borders" in January 2008. More information can be found at the following website address: www.dohacentre.org.

Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue

82. The Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue was established on the recommendation of the Fifth Doha Interfaith Dialogue Conference, which was held in May 2007. It was inaugurated in May 2008 to coincide with the holding of the Sixth Interfaith Dialogue Conference. The Centre was established to promote and support the establishment of a culture conducive to dialogue and peaceful coexistence. More information can be found at the following website address: www.dicid.org.

Dissemination of human rights instruments

83. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs printed and published the Arabic and English texts of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2000. The texts were widely disseminated. The Council also printed a simplified version of the Convention for children and printed, published and distributed the Arabic text of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The National Human Rights Committee has printed, published and distributed the Arabic and English texts of all the international treaties to which the State is a party and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Measures to raise awareness of international human rights treaties

84. Human rights institutions, chiefly the National Human Rights Committee, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior Human Rights Department, the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women and the Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking, have held dozens of seminars, workshops and special training courses on, among other things, the rights of children, women, persons with disabilities and workers for large groups of public employees, including staff of the Ministry of the Interior, the Office of the Public Prosecutor and doctors. A non-exhaustive list of examples is provided below.

85. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs has run training courses for people who work with children on the principles and provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and how to apply them in practice. In 2004, the Council and OHCHR ran a programme that drew on the assistance of Arab experts who were members of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. In 2004, training was provided to 35 members of the judiciary and 50 paediatricians. In 2005, training was given to 30 employees from the police service, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the juvenile courts and the Labour Inspectorate. Thirty-five educators were trained in 2006, and training was given to a group of mosque imams in 2008. In 2009, a group from the Armed Forces and from the Ministry of the Interior was given training organized jointly with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The Supreme Council for Family Affairs held a conference entitled "Violence against women and its impact on the family" in November 2008. Several training courses on the Convention have been run for members of the press and staff of State ministries.

86. The Qatari Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking, working in coordination with the Ministry of the Interior, has trained a number of police officers, particularly those working in immigration, passports and border-control services. The participants were nominated by their units to undergo training to improve their knowledge of: human trafficking, the root causes and how to combat the phenomenon; laws and protocols on human trafficking and the protection of victims; the techniques for identifying victims; the need to treat victims as victims and not as suspects or criminals; and the special needs of women and children. The Foundation has run training courses to familiarize men and women who are members of the internal security forces with international treaties and laws on protecting victims of human trafficking. In 2007, the Foundation ran a training course for 25 police officers whose job is to collect criminal evidence and conduct criminal investigations. The officers were drawn from Ministry of the Interior police departments in various parts of Qatar. The Foundation also organized a training course for police personnel on dealing with children and women who are victims of abuse and violence. The course was held on 15 October 2008 and attended by 43 persons (adjutants, sergeant majors, corporals and sergeants) from different departments in Qatar.

87. The Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women organized 11 training courses, 10 in Qatar and 1 abroad. Seven of the courses were for personnel of educational institutions and were attended by 315 people. Five courses were run for personnel of security institutions and attended by 190 people. Five courses were held for health workers and attended by 213 people. These people were given training on how to identify cases of abuse and violence and on the skills needed to deal with victims. In addition, information was provided to raise awareness of relevant laws, legislation and international treaties. The course held abroad was attended by 37 people from a comprehensive range of ministries, centres and governmental and non-governmental institutions. It was delivered in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, by the Foundation, which launched a psychotherapy and psychological rehabilitation programme ("Change

your life”). As part of this programme, a campaign against sexual violence (“Stop the silence”) was carried out in April 2010.

88. The Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women ran a training course for health workers on dealing with abuse and violence. The course was run from 8 to 10 June 2008 for nurses in the primary health-care department and was attended by 48 nurses. The Foundation also held a workshop entitled “Abuse and mental health” on 15 October 2008. That event was attended by 63 persons representing governmental and semi-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and other institutions.

89. The State has run many programmes on mainstreaming human and women’s rights. Several research projects and studies on women’s rights have been published and a number of seminars, workshops and local training courses held.

90. The National Human Rights Committee has held human rights training and awareness courses, including, among others a course entitled “The fundamentals of international human rights law”, which was held in February 2009, and a course entitled “Relevant international human rights treaties” that was held the same month for law enforcement personnel. In March 2009, a course entitled “Human rights under international treaties” was held for mosque preachers and prayer leaders. In May 2009, a publicity campaign entitled “Uncover the truth” was run to raise awareness of women’s and children’s rights. In July 2009, another campaign was run to raise awareness of human rights principles among all sectors of society. Modern awareness-raising techniques and all the media were enlisted for the campaign. A training course was run on the Convention in January 2010. It was attended by the national team responsible for drafting the report of Qatar. In 2010, talks were held in more than 16 schools to raise awareness of political, religious, cultural, social and economic rights.

Promotion of human rights awareness through educational programmes and the State media

91. Human rights concepts have been incorporated into curricula in various forms and are presented as separate subjects in curricular and extracurricular activities and in drawings and diagrams. School curricula and textbooks include material on a range of rights such as political, civil and economic rights, the rights of children and women, social and cultural rights and the rights of older persons and persons with disabilities. The curriculum on education about values is designed to promote cooperation, empathy, equality, love, peace, tolerance and other values that are bound up with social and civil responsibilities such as respect for the law, good citizenship, civic participation, honesty, integrity and trustworthiness. The curriculum also promotes the values of respect for and the preservation of the cultural heritage and environment of Qatar.

92. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education launched a programme to spread a culture of children’s rights in schools in the context of an initiative to disseminate the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to make it better known to students. A higher committee was established to oversee the programme. Its members were drawn from various State institutions, namely, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In cooperation with UNESCO, the committee formulated a national plan of action on the design of teaching manuals that contain simplified explanations of the rights and principles set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Inserts that illustrate children’s rights and violations of children’s rights using true stories and coloured pictures are included in these manuals. Under the programme workshops are held to train teaching staff how to use these manuals in classroom and extracurricular activities.

93. In 2008–2009, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, the Qatari Armed Forces and UNICEF jointly launched an initiative to include the topic of children's rights in the curricula of the Military College and Training Institute of the Qatar Armed Forces.

E. Development assistance provided by the State

94. Qatar accords considerable importance to the delivery of development assistance, as can be gauged from the directives that His Highness the Amir has issued on supporting all charitable efforts and initiatives focused on human development. On this basis, the State has provided development assistance to developing countries around the world and contributed to the achievement of several of the development goals of those countries. Qatari development assistance is provided on an impartial basis and without any political conditions being imposed on the receiving country. The assistance is flexible and the process for obtaining it from governmental and non-governmental organizations is straightforward.

95. Over the period 2005–2009, Qatar provided approximately US\$ 2.01 billion in development assistance, accounting for 0.49 per cent of GDP on average over the period. The fact that this assistance was given to countries in different parts of the world shows that Qatari donors work with different regions of the world with diverse circumstances, belief systems and affinities.

Table 2

Geographical distribution of assistance provided by the State of Qatar (in United States dollars) in the period 2004–2008

<i>Beneficiary</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>Total</i>
Arab States	54 070 359	100 898 280	449 763 622	284 828 766	262 692 874	1 153 253 900
The Americas	351 360	4 530 000	62 797 026	37 819 540	9 247 121	114 745 047
Africa	6 006 251	242 122	14 694 232	13 387 555	20 217 875	54 548 034
Asia	8 882 727	4 142 196	18 874 792	421 285	3 694 885	36 015 886
Europe	4 931 987	1 985 456	7 466 262	6 268 975	3 679 543	24 332 223
Oceania		1 530 688			30 000	1 560 688
Not specified	15 849 985	8 033 586	9 440 779	20 732 757	17 632 621	71 689 728
Total	90 092 669	121 362 328	563 036 712	363 458 878	318 194 316	1 456 145 506

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, development assistance provided by the State of Qatar, 2009.

96. Approximately US\$ 508 million was provided by non-governmental organizations that are actively involved in humanitarian work. This was given to cover the development, educational and humanitarian needs of developing countries.

Table 3

Qatari non-governmental donors that provided development assistance (in United States dollars) in 2004–2008

<i>Provider</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>
Qatar Charity	5 420 233	13 534 375	21 372 543	30 383 078	47 762 002	38 646 656
Eid Charity Foundation	6 628 352	4 689 957	24 941 939	25 989 012	44 019 505	52 656 625

<i>Provider</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>
Qatar Red Crescent	910 039	3 307 579	11 791 130	10 230 145	16 685 727	115 835 078
Zakat Fund	49 938	265 005	846 563	2 569 840	3 435 984	5 462 106
Reach Out to Asia Fund			1 286 064	3 024 665	1 651 927	7 011 349
Islamic Da`wah Organization	620 280	401 186	1 093 693	370 821	1 252 229	1 997 641
Sheikh Jasim Charitable Foundation	32 875	80 861	6 000	547 915	49 942	671 280
Sheikh Thani Bin Abdullah Foundation						533 577
Total	13 661 716	22 278 964	61 337 931	73 115 476	114 857 316	313 814 222

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, development assistance provided by Qatar, 2009 and 2010.

F. Reporting process at the national level

97. Qatar is committed to meeting its obligations under all the international treaties to which it is a party. The Council of Ministers establishes joint committees to draft international reports on the implementation of these treaties. The Committee members represent the main Government bodies concerned with the implementation of each treaty, namely, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Council for Education, the Supreme Health Council and the Statistics Authority. Also included are representatives of relevant non-governmental organizations, namely, the National Human Rights Committee, the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women and the Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking. The committees are normally chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although those which draft the reports on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women are all chaired by the Supreme Council for the Family Affairs.

98. The Council of Ministers forms the delegations that present and discuss the State's reports with the human rights treaty bodies. The State makes sure that the delegations are made up of high-level representatives and that all the bodies that took part in the drafting process are represented. It also follows up on the concluding observations issued by the treaty bodies. As the main entity involved in this area, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs liaises with all other bodies in discussions on the concluding observations. It encourages ministries and other organizations to take account of the observations when drawing up annual plans and programmes.

99. As the leading institution with responsibility for addressing children's issues, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs follows up on the concluding observations issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and takes steps to ensure that they are adequately reflected in national strategies and plans on children. The Council publishes the State's reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee's concluding observations on its website so as to make sure that they are widely known.

III. Information on the provisions of the Convention and substantive discussion of the articles

100. This part of the report discusses the contents of the Convention, article by article, and describes the constitutional and legislative framework applicable to each article, together with the difficulties and challenges of implementing certain provisions in practice and future plans for the advancement of women in all domains. In the discussion of each article every care has been taken to avoid repetition, to the extent possible, with detracting from the clarity of the report. This section of the report draws on official data produced by the Statistics Authority and other institutions.

Article 1 Discrimination against women

The Constitution

101. The Qatari Constitution affirms that all citizens, regardless of their sex, have equal rights and duties under the law. Thus women are afforded protection from all forms of discrimination, inasmuch as they enjoy equality of opportunity which enables them to build their capacities, protects and promotes their rights and fosters their constructive participation in the development of society. The principle of non-discrimination is presented as a general and binding principle in the Constitution, article 34 of which states: “Citizens have equal public rights and obligations”. All groups in Qatari society — men, women and children — are referred to as “citizens”, a general term which applies both to males and females, who have equal rights and duties without any distinction. What follows is a list of the fundamental principles enshrined in the Constitution recognizing equality of the sexes and the right to equal opportunities.

- Article 18: Qatari society is founded on justice, benevolence, freedom, equality and high moral values.
- Article 19: The State shall preserve the foundations of society and shall ensure to citizens security, stability and equality of opportunity.
- Article 34: Citizens have equal public rights and duties.
- Article 35: All persons are equal before the law. There shall be no discrimination between them on grounds of sex, origin, language or religion.
- Article 42: The State shall afford citizens the right to vote and to stand for election in accordance with the law.
- Article 44: The right of citizens to freedom of assembly is established by law.
- Article 46: Every person has the right to communicate with the public authorities.
- Article 49: All citizens have the right to education. The State shall endeavour to provide free compulsory general education in accordance with the laws and regulations in effect in the State.
- Article 135: The right of legal recourse is assured and is afforded to all. The law shall establish the procedures and conditions under which this right may be exercised.
- Article 146: The provisions on public rights and freedoms may only be amended for the purpose of affording additional safeguards to citizens.

Legislation

102. As a rule, the principle of gender equality is recognized in Qatari law. However, there are a limited number of exceptions to the rule for reasons that have to do with ensuring consistency with the sharia law provisions on inheritance and testimony, certain legal provisions on the family and the provisions of the Nationality Act concerning the higher interests of the State. Details will be provided in the sections on the relevant articles of the Convention. Since the sharia establishes rules on gender equality, these rights and responsibilities may not be the same in all circumstances. However, they do complement each other as this is in the interests of the family and society.

Declaration concerning article 1 of the Convention

103. “The State of Qatar accepts the text of article 1 of the Convention provided that, in accordance with the provisions of Islamic law and Qatari legislation, the phrase “irrespective of their marital status” is not intended to encourage family relationships outside legitimate marriage. It reserves the right to implement the Convention in accordance with this understanding.” Extramarital relations are forbidden under general law. This rule does not just apply to women; it also applies to men. It is upheld by the Qatari legislature in keeping with the sharia, which is the main source of Qatari law. Thus, the Qatari legislature recognizes that family relationships between men and women are regulated by a legally valid marriage contract established under family law, which is derived from the sharia.

104. This declaration should not be construed to mean that Qatar discriminates between married and unmarried women with regard to the exercise of public rights and duties. The Qatari legislature takes full account of the situation of divorcees, widows and unmarried women and seeks to provide them with everything that they need to enjoy a decent life and to be able to contribute effectively in all areas of life. The following is just one example of the efforts that have been made.

- The State has made sure that divorcees, widows and unmarried women (and Qatari women married to foreigners) can benefit from the regulations on State housing for Qatari nationals, subject to the conditions that the legislature has established to control public expenditure. Among other things, these conditions rule out duplicate payouts. The main purpose of the regulations is to ensure that housing is provided for married couples in application of Act No. 2 of 2007 and its implementing decree.

Challenges and future outlook

105. Notwithstanding the progress that Qatari women have made towards achieving equality with men in all domains, there are still a number of challenges that need to be met in order to implement this article fully. First, women are not sufficiently sensitized to their constitutional and legal rights. Then, certain inappropriate customs and traditions continue to hold sway in society. Sometimes certain religious texts are misunderstood and, on other issues, there needs to be greater social awareness for change to come about. This may take some time to achieve, however.

106. The efforts of the governmental and private sectors to promote women’s advancement are continuing and steps are being taken to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. Governmental and private institutions work together to implement the laws and narrow the gap between the letter of the law and how it is applied in practice. The comprehensive vision of development set out in the Qatar National Vision 2030 report was adopted with a view to building the capacities of Qatari nationals in the framework of human development – the first thematic area of the Vision. The aim here is to support the development of the people of Qatar so that they in their turn will be able to

build a prosperous society. As for social development, the second thematic area, the aim is to develop, based on high moral standards and social welfare principles, a just and caring society that is capable of interacting with other societies and playing a significant role in the global partnership for development and in related implementation measures, namely the formulation of a strategic development plan for Qatar and the translation of the political commitment to the promotion of women's participation in all aspects of life in society into meaningful action, particularly with respect to participation in economic and political decision-making.

Article 2

Commitment of States parties to the elimination of discrimination

107. The fact that the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution of Qatar provides a safeguard against discrimination between men and women in any area. This is made clear in article 34 of the Constitution, which states: "Citizens have equal public rights and obligations." Article 35 provides: "All persons are equal before the law. There shall be no discrimination between them on grounds of sex, origin, language or religion."

108. The domestic laws enacted in recent years, particularly since the promulgation of the Permanent Constitution in 2004, promote women's rights, the elimination of discrimination between women and men and the realization of gender equality in all domains. All Qatari laws use generic terminology in the definitions that they provide of the rights and duties of those to whom they are addressed. Thus they preclude the possibility of discrimination being practised between men and women. Language that refers to men naturally applies to women as well, unless otherwise stated explicitly in the law.

109. The following are examples of legal provisions that have been repealed or amended because they discriminated against women:

- Act No. 19 of 2008, which establishes that women have the right to receive the same amount of blood money (*diyyah*) as men in cases of manslaughter; women used to receive half as much as men.
- Act No. 8 of 2009, concerning human resources management; the provision that meant women could not receive the same housing allowance as men was repealed.
- Act No. 5 of 2009, amending the Passports Act No. 14 of 1993; the condition whereby a woman could only be issued with a passport with her guardian's consent was revoked, while the condition requiring a guardian's consent to be provided before a passport could be issued to a person with diminished or no legal capacity was retained.
- Act No. 2 of 2007, concerning the housing scheme, the provisions limiting access to the scheme to men were repealed and the scheme was extended to include members of both sexes. Under Council of Ministers Decision No. 17 of 2007, concerning priorities and regulations on access to the housing scheme, unmarried citizens, both men and women, have been given the right to benefit from the scheme, provided that they are over 35 or are under 35 but the main breadwinner in the family. The right was previously accorded solely to men.
- Decree-Law No. 19 of 2007, issuing the Traffic Act, under which the same conditions for obtaining a driver's licence are applied both to men and women.

Executive and institutional measures

110. The Supreme Constitutional Court was established in 2008 and has sole jurisdiction in disputes over the constitutionality of laws and regulations. It decides which body is competent to issue decisions in cases, whether it be a court or a body with judicial powers, when a matter has been referred to two different bodies and neither of them relinquishes the right to hear it or they both do. It rules in disputes over the enforcement of conflicting final court judgements issued by judicial bodies or bodies with judicial powers.

111. On 19 March 2009, the Public Prosecutor instructed members of the prosecution service to accept complaints from the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women, particularly about the threat or use of violence and abuse against children and women, and to take appropriate legal action to deal with them. The Minister of the Interior issued an order on accepting complaints from the Foundation about violence against women and children and taking action as necessary. The police have responsibility for preventing, uncovering and investigating violent crimes against women that are punishable under the Criminal Code, namely, lethal physical assault and assault causing a permanent disability, illness, debilitation, a miscarriage, etc.

112. The *Dar al-Aman* shelter, which is run by the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women, was established on 1 October 2007. It is the only shelter in Qatar for victims of violence and people facing the threat of violence who need to be removed from the source of violence for their own protection. It offers rehabilitation services to help these people to return to their home community and provides practical, social, legal, medical and psychological services for women. It helps women who are students or have jobs to manage their dealings with the community outside the shelter under conditions designed to avoid any conflict with the aims of protection and rehabilitation programmes.

113. In addition to the above-mentioned security procedures efforts to combat violence against women also have a social and educational dimension, as reflected in the place that the issue occupies in the community policing strategy adopted recently by the Ministry of the Interior. The purpose of the policy is for the police to work together with the public, civil society, families and a range of social control institutions to address the root causes of crime, to monitor delinquency in society and to protect families from those factors that lead to family breakdowns, including violence against women.

114. The Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women, the National Human Rights Committee, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Supreme Council for Women's Affairs carry out awareness programmes on women's rights and discrimination issues. They also run training courses and legal information programmes, which are presented in schools and in television and radio programmes, and write articles for the local press and the Foundation's *Aman* magazine.

Challenges and future outlook

115. Although there is political support for women's rights, the State has adopted decisions and procedures to eliminate discrimination against women and women have been able to take up key positions in the State, there is a gap between what the law says and what is done in practice. This is largely due to a lack of awareness among women of their legal rights or of how to secure them. Moreover, long-standing cultural traditions tend to curb women's enjoyment of certain rights.

116. Making the changes needed to close the gap between the law and practice is a major challenge. The prevailing view is that the advancement of women is exclusively a State responsibility. Civil society organizations have limited involvement in this area, compared with the major work that they do in other areas. Moreover, there are no specialized

women's associations and few personnel with technical expertise in human rights in general and women's rights in particular.

117. Amiral Decree No. 44 of 2008, endorsing the Qatar National Vision 2030 document on comprehensive development, provides a road map for the future of Qatar in which justice, benevolence and equality among all citizens without any discrimination on the grounds of sex are presented as the foundations of society and a guarantee that all forms of gender-based discrimination will be eliminated. The Council of Ministers, at its twentieth ordinary meeting of 2010, adopted a general strategy on the family, whereby all national strategies and plans on the realization of the Vision must promote the advancement of Qatari women in all areas, building on achievements made in the elimination of discrimination against women and the establishment of gender equality.

Reservation of Qatar to article 2 (a) of the Convention

118. Qatar entered a reservation to article 2 (a) of the Convention, because it is incompatible with article 8 of the Constitution, which provides: "The system of government is one of hereditary rule in the line of the Al-Thani family and the male successors of Hamad bin Khalifa bin Hamad bin Abdullah bin Jasim. The son whom the Amir names as Crown Prince shall inherit the power to rule. Should there be no such son, the reins of rule shall pass to whichever family member the Amir designates as Crown Prince. In this case, succession shall lie in the line of the Amir's male descendants." Article 145 of the Constitution states: "Provisions on State rule and succession shall not be amended."

Article 3

Fundamental rights and freedoms (development and advancement of women)

Constitutional and legal framework

119. The Qatari Constitution provides for the protection of the fundamental human rights and freedoms of both men and women. This is affirmed in the relevant articles. The main articles are discussed in the section on article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

120. As for legislation relating to the principles enshrined in this article, more details will be provided in the sections on particular subjects. We have already discussed the main Qatari legislation in which the principles of women's equality, development and advancement and the importance of women's participation in economic, educational, health and social spheres are recognized. Thus, in order to avoid repetition, we shall merely refer to it here.

Executive and institutional measures

121. Qatar has taken specific steps to ensure the advancement of Qatari women and to promote women's participation in all spheres. The main steps taken are described below.

Establishment of an institutional mechanism for women

122. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs was established by Amiral Decree No. 53 of 1998 as a high-level, independent institution with responsibility for safeguarding the interests of families in society. The Council formulates strategies, policies and plans, follows up on their implementation and reports directly to the Amir. It was presided over by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad, the wife of the Amir, from its inception until March 2009. It was recently restructured, pursuant to Amiral Decree No. 15

of 2009, and is now presided over by Her Excellency Sheikha Hasah Bint Hamad Bin Kalifa Al-Thani.

123. The Council is the institutional mechanism with responsibility for the advancement of women in Qatar. Its establishment effected a qualitative shift in the approach taken to women's issues at the national level. With its creation, responsibility for dealing with women's issues was transferred from the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs to the Council. The Ministry had drawn up a preliminary 10-point plan for the advancement of women in Qatar in the light of the Beijing Declaration and Programme for Action. The plan and the political support provided for its implementation helped to open the way for a great many achievements in the areas of education, health and work. One objective of the plan was to establish governmental bodies and private institutions for the advancement of women, and assign women responsibility for running them.

124. The establishment of the Council was a major shift in the provision made for families in general and women in particular. Women's issues had previously been addressed in a traditional framework where the focus was only on welfare and protection. With the creation of the Council, the ideas of empowerment and participation were taken up for the first time in connection with women's issues in Qatari society. Thus, the Council, working in cooperation with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), drew up a new strategy for the advancement of Qatari women based on the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and a comprehensive analysis of the situation of women. The strategy document was made public on International Women's Day, 2003, and the strategy provided a framework for the work of the Council and other relevant institutions. The result was that most of the goals and objectives in the strategy were met, particularly in the legislative and institutional domains. The Council drew up a general strategy for the family in Qatar for 2008–2011, one component of which is the strategy on the advancement of women that was endorsed by the Council of Ministers in 2010. In addition, a programme plan is included that ministries and governmental and non-governmental organizations used as a guide when designing programmes for families and women.

125. At various stages the Council has established mechanisms for the advancement of women. These mechanisms include the Women's Committee (1998–2009), the Women's Department (2003–2009) and the Standing Electoral Committee (2003–2009), which have carried out dozens of programmes and studies, organized seminars and training courses on all subjects relating to women and sought to develop and update legislation relevant to women.

126. The Council has made a vital contribution to the development of legislation on women, as illustrated *inter alia* by the following examples. Regarding its contribution to the Family Act, the Council played a key role in efforts to establish a minimum age for marriage, introduce a policy on premarital medical testing, set the age up to which young children can remain in a woman's care at 13 for boys and 15 for girls, draft the Housing Act, establish the right of women to benefit from the housing scheme and devise regulations on access for women to the housing scheme and to the housing scheme for people in need.

127. The Council was instrumental in securing the State's accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Council follows up on the implementation of these instruments in conjunction with governmental and non-governmental organizations.

128. The Council takes a rights-based approach to issues concerning women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons. It was established before the National Human

Rights Committee was created and has helped to raise awareness of women's rights and issues through dozens of training courses, workshops, discussion groups and seminars that it has organized. In this way, it has not only raised awareness, it has also mobilized public support for the promotion of women's rights.

129. The Council has helped to develop academic research into women's issues through the many important studies that it has conducted and disseminated and through the discussions that it has held on the findings. The subjects of these studies include:

- Violence against women in Qatari society
- The obstacles to women's attainment of high-level positions
- Qatari women and the Internet
- Qatari women and the media
- Spousal violence (the case of Qatar)

130. The Council reaches out to Qatari women in all urban areas in Qatar, raises awareness of the needs of women in each area and promotes their participation. It ran a pioneering, three-year project in the municipality of Al-Khawr (in the north of Qatar) in which support was provided for social activities in the region, networking between women and relevant institutions and capacity-building for women through specially designed training programmes and workshops. The Ministry of Social Affairs continues to run this programme, which has been extended to include all areas of the country.

131. During her time as President of the Council, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad set up the following public welfare institutions to protect and promote the rights of women in all stages of life:

- The Shafallah Centre for Children with Special Needs, 2001
- The Cultural Centre for Childhood, 2002
- The Family Counselling Centre, 2002
- The Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women, 2002
- The Qatar Foundation for the Welfare of Orphans, 2002
- The Qatar Foundation for the Welfare of Older Persons, 2002
- The Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking, 2008
- The Social Rehabilitation Centre, 2008

Gender mainstreaming in all national strategies, policies and plans

132. In the context of its efforts to promote social development, the State endeavours to preserve strong family ties and provide support and social welfare for families. What is distinctive about the Qatari experience with respect to the advancement of women is the holistic approach taken to women's issues based on a firmly held belief that to separate women's issues from those of the family and society is counterproductive. Women are members of families and if their situation is to improve then so too must the educational, health, economic and cultural situation of all family members. Since women's advancement is also contingent upon progress being made in the health, educational and economic sectors, all the development plans for these sectors include explicit objectives on improving services for women and involving women at all levels in these sectors.

133. Provision is made in the "Qatar National Vision 2030" document, which was adopted pursuant to Amiral Decree No. 44 of 2008, for women's capacity-building and the

promotion of women's participation in economic and political life, particularly in decision-making. A general development strategy is being formulated for 2011 to 2016 to help realize the Vision. Policies and programmes have been designed on the advancement of women in all domains.

134. The State's housing policy includes a specific target on women's empowerment and the promotion of gender equity. The plan for the implementation of the policy includes programmes specifically designed to meet this target.

Challenges and future outlook

135. State institutions are working to overcome the obstacles to women's participation in certain areas, in particular social customs that take a long time to change and that could be preventing women from exercising some of their constitutional and legal rights, compounded by a lack of awareness among women of their acquired rights and a lack of awareness in society at large of women's rights. The State is taking steps to mitigate the impact of these obstacles, raising awareness of women's rights among women and society generally and working to create an enabling environment that supports women and offers all groups of women adequate access to services and opportunities for participation in all areas suited to their needs. This it does through, for example, special education institutions and services facilities for women (women's branches of national banks and women's sports centres).

136. Qatar intends to do more to empower Qatari women in various areas of life. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs, as the organization responsible for dealing with women's issues in the State, signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Human Rights Committee on the organization of courses, workshops and information campaigns to raise awareness of women's political and civil rights under the Constitution and the law. Civil society organizations play an active role in the area of women's rights.

Article 4

Special measures

Temporary special measures

137. The State has adopted a clearly defined policy of investing in the development of Qatari men and women. The focus of the policy is on providing all Qataris with a high-quality general education and a diversified university education that meets international standards. Under the equal opportunities policy, Qatari women are given the assistance that they need to obtain an education in Qatar that meets their aspirations and is paid for by the State. Women may also be sent to the best universities abroad. The State offers working women the opportunity to study and undergo training abroad. Women can represent the State in international forums and, if they so wish, may have their husband, father or brother accompany them, at the State's expense.

138. Governmental and non-governmental organizations are committed to creating an environment that fosters participation by all groups of women and ensures women access to all services. Moreover, from the time they were established, Qatari banks have had women's branches to help women clients manage their money and investments on their own without needing an agent to act on their behalf. If women so wish, they can go to general branches of banks and utilize the services provided to customers of both sexes.

139. In preparation for the first municipal elections to be held in Qatari history (in 1999), Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad, the wife of the Amir, established a preparatory committee to support women's participation in the elections. The committee

included a group of women who were actively involved in raising awareness among women of the importance of participation and in educating society about women's right to political participation and the importance of this right. As a result of these efforts, four women stood as candidates in the election and a large number of women took part in the voting. Then, in 2003, Her Highness (in her capacity as President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs) set up a standing electoral committee which continued to raise awareness among men and women of the importance of women's participation and to provide Qatari professionals with education about electoral processes. The committee ended its work in mid-2009 to allow an evaluation of its performance to be undertaken. Several independent organizations were set up that took on some of its functions.

Protection of mothers

140. Qatar is committed to protecting mothers in accordance with article 21 of the Constitution, which states: "The family, sustained by religion, morality and patriotism, is the foundation of society. The law shall establish means for protecting the family, supporting family cohesion, strengthening family ties, and protecting mothers, children and older persons."

141. Qatari law contains provisions on the protection of mothers that confirm the great importance that the State accords to families. Examples include:

- The Labour Code (which applies to private sector employees) affords women who have worked for an employer for a full year the right to take 50 days' maternity leave on full pay and a one-hour break each day for up to one year after the end of maternity leave for breastfeeding. This time is taken out of the working day without any reduction in salary.
- The Human Resources Management Act, which applies to State employees, contains the following provisions:
 - (a) The 60 days' maternity leave on full pay given to a female employee may not be deducted from other types of leave. Moreover, the balance of the employee's regular leave may be added to maternity leave;
 - (b) Female employees may take two hours for breastfeeding each day for up to one year, beginning immediately after the end of maternity leave. It is for them to decide when they will breastfeed;
 - (c) The manager may grant a Qatari woman leave to look after a disabled child below the age of 6 twice during her period of service and for up to three years in each case. Having due regard to the exigencies of the public interest, the Prime Minister may grant a Qatari female employee leave to care for her children at his discretion. In any event, leave will be given on full pay during the first three-year period and on half pay thereafter.

Article 5

Social patterns (stereotyped roles based on a person's sex)

Constitutional and legal situation

142. Islam rejects the idea of discrimination on the grounds of sex and endorses the principle of equality among people. Almighty God said: "O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from them twain hath spread abroad a multitude of men and women" (Koran, Surah *Al-Nisa'*, verse 1). So, all people are equal, without discrimination on the grounds of sex, colour,

language, nationality, race or economic status. This principle is affirmed in article 1 of the Qatari Constitution, which states that the sharia is the main source of law, and is echoed in numerous articles, particularly article 34, which provides that citizens have equal general rights and duties, and article 35, which states that all people are equal before the law without any distinction as to sex, origin, language or religion.

143. The way that roles are assigned in families is based on the sharia. The husband is the head of household and is responsible for protecting and maintaining the family, while both parents are jointly responsible for rearing their children. This system for organizing the family's private life is not intended to detract from the status of women; it is more akin to an internal system of management designed to safeguard the family's interests. In public life, men and women have equal rights and duties and are subject to the same laws without any discrimination.

Current situation, challenges and future outlook

144. It is true, however, that there are certain negative ideas in the local culture about the status and role of women. These ideas are held both by men and women. Some families view men's and women's roles as rigidly stereotyped, going beyond the proper construction established in the sharia. Some women help to perpetuate these stereotypes, including through the messages that they transmit to their children.

145. It is no easy matter to change these ideas, as cultural change is a time-consuming and lengthy process. The State is trying to effect change through: long-term national strategies and plans; policies on women's empowerment and advancement; campaigns and programmes to raise awareness of women's rights; and initiatives inspired by Islamic culture and its tradition of honouring women. These efforts are carried out with the participation of State institutions, notably the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, and non-governmental organizations like the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women and the National Human Rights Committee.

146. While the State cannot interfere directly in family life or family relationships, it does try to guide the behaviour of family members by creating a partnership culture within the family through educational curricula, programmes (run at family counselling centres) for people who are about to marry, and awareness-raising programmes run by institutions dedicated to families. In addition, it has taken steps to protect women from all forms of violence and discrimination by, for example, establishing the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women and the Dar al-Aman shelter.

147. Looking at the current situation of women in education, employment and related areas of public life, one can see that there has been a qualitative shift in the role of women in Qatari society, beyond the traditional stereotypes. In particular, women have gained access to leadership positions (for example, ministerial positions) or are working in professions that used to be a male preserve (such as in the judiciary, medicine and engineering).

148. Women exercised their right to political participation by voting in the referendum on the Permanent Constitution (2003) and by standing for and voting in municipal elections (1999, 2003 and 2007).

Role of the media in eliminating women's stereotypes

149. The coercive power of the media in effecting change and influencing behaviour and attitudes vis-à-vis important social issues is considerable. The State enlists the help of all media channels to support its development policies, especially those focused on the development of Qataris and thus on combating discrimination against women and raising

awareness of the need to empower women to play an active part in society and of the equal rights and duties of women and men. Some satellite channels broadcasting from different countries help to reinforce women's stereotypes through programmes, songs, films and advertisements in which women are portrayed as objects of pleasure and gratification, as superficial people with limited intelligence or as being interested only in housework. Like other States, Qatar is critical of these negative messages, since, in an open broadcasting environment, there is still no way to control these channels.

150. This issue has been taken up by the State. In 2008, it organized a forum — “For a free and responsible press” — on the ethical challenges that satellite television channels pose for young people in Gulf States. The purpose of the forum, which was attended by over 300 people, including ministers, experts, university lecturers and intellectuals, was to: devise a media strategy for the Gulf States to make young people aware of the dangers associated with certain satellite channels, without curbing media freedom; explore opportunities for media cooperation through the harmonization of the media regulations and policies of Gulf Cooperation Council States; mitigate the negative impact of certain satellite channels; and secure compliance with media codes of conduct and the principles of press freedom without impinging on the law, offending against public decency or having young people's ideas and values exploited for material gain.

151. Institutions that deal with women's issues, in particular the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, are working with the Ministry of Culture, Arts and the Heritage and the Qatar Media Foundation to formulate a media policy that supports women and promotes the full and constructive participation of Qatari women in various areas in the future.

152. The State has opened up a media department at Qatar University to encourage women to work in the media. Recently, a branch of the Northwestern University was set up in Education City in Qatar to offer advanced training programmes for media specialists. The most recent data show that more Qatari women are graduating from the media department at Qatar University than men: 439 female graduates, as compared with 261 male graduates.

Table 4

Graduates of the Media Department, by year and sex, 1999–2010

	1999–2000	2000–2001	2001–2002	2002–2003	2003–2004	2004–2005	2005–2006	2006–2007	2007–2008	2008–2009	2009–2010*	Total
Females	7	11	18	23	27	53	76	83	83	34	24	439
Males	12	11	14	10	22	50	35	39	38	25	5	261
Total	19	22	32	33	49	103	111	122	121	59	29	700

Source: Qatar University, 2010, *Book of Trends, 2008–2009*.

* Registered before end of 2009/10 academic year.

Violence against women

153. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs has adopted a bold policy on violence against women. It supports research and studies to identify the scale of the problem and established the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women pursuant to a decision that it took in November 2002.

154. In 2006, the Council and Qatar University jointly prepared the first scientific survey of violence against women in Qatari society. A sample of 2,787 female students took part in

the survey, representing 49 per cent of all female students and 4.4 per cent of women in society. This is the largest survey to have been conducted in the region, although it only looked at women aged between 18 and 25. The results show that social status does not determine whether or not a person is likely to be subjected to violence. Twenty-three per cent of those in the sample had been subjected to violence, mostly in the home, and the perpetrator was always a male relative i.e. a brother, a father or a husband. Beating was the most common form of violence; most of the victims had been beaten in childhood. Those questioned did not know how to ask for help, and there was a lack of information about institutions that support and protect women. The Council published the survey and organized a public debate on the findings. The debate was held in November 2007 on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

155. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs carried out another survey, entitled “Violence against married women: the case of Qatar”, which threw light on important aspects of family life in Qatar. The survey found that 4 per cent of the married women in the sample were subjected to violence on a continuous basis, 10 per cent to violence from time to time and 14 per cent to violence on rare occasions.

Table 5

Qatari married women, by nature of violence committed, 2008

<i>Responses given</i>	<i>No. of cases</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Constantly	48	40
Sometimes	108	10
Rarely	154	14
Never	797	71
No answer	10	1
Total	1 117	100

Source: Survey on violence against married women: the case of Qatar, Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 2008.

156. In the context of the national strategy for the advancement of women, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and other institutions work together to eliminate domestic violence. To this end, dozens of training courses and workshops have been run to raise awareness among employees and exchange experiences and information about different kinds of domestic violence. Notably, in 2008, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and the Doha Institute for Family Studies and Development organized an international symposium on violence against women and its impact on the family. They also organized a workshop on the quality of services provided to protect women in Qatari society. At the end of these conferences and seminars, important recommendations were produced on ways to strengthen policies and improve the quality of services for the protection of women.

157. Qatar has no separate legislation on violence against women or domestic violence. However, related offences are dealt with fully in a section of the Criminal Code on offences against the person. The section covers the offences of physical assault, indecent assault and rape, for which the maximum penalty is death. These provisions serve as something of a deterrent in regard to violence against women.

158. A package of measures has been introduced to combat violence against women. Recently, the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women established a hotline — “Aman 919” — to make it easier to establish contact with target groups and protect them from violence and abuse. Eight women specialists are on hand at the call

centre, which operates around the clock, to provide legal, psychological and social counselling and liaise with health and security institutions to assist vulnerable groups in society.

Declaration by the State on article 5 of the Convention

159. “The State of Qatar declares that the question of the modification of ‘patterns’ referred to in article 5 (a) must not be understood as encouraging women to abandon their role as mothers and their role in child-rearing, thereby undermining the structure of the family.”

160. Under paragraph (a) of this article States parties are required to take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women. The family is one of the pillars of Qatari society; indeed, it is the foundation of society. As stated in article 21 of the Constitution, the State must protect the family, support and strengthen family cohesion and protect mothers, children and older persons in the family setting. The State is committed to ensuring that the role of mothers continues to be honoured, together with the contribution of women to family care, and this in keeping with the sharia. Hence, the process of modifying female stereotypes must not be such as to downplay the role of women as wives and mothers.

Article 6 Trafficking in women

Constitutional and legal framework

161. As stated above, the importance of the dignity of men and women and of protecting human rights and preventing abuses of human freedoms is affirmed in many articles of the Qatari Constitution. In addition to those already mentioned, these articles include article 36 of the Constitution, which provides: “Personal freedom is assured. No one shall be arrested, imprisoned, searched, confined to a given place of residence or deprived of freedom of residence or movement except as provided for by law. No one shall be subjected to torture or humiliating treatment. Torture is an offence that is punishable by law.” Article 37 states: “Personal privacy is inviolable. There shall be no intrusion in a person’s privacy, family life, home or correspondence nor shall any interference injurious to a person’s honour or reputation be allowed, except as provided for by law and in conformity with the procedures established therein.” Article 52 states: “All persons legally residing in the State are entitled by law to protection of their person and property.”

162. Guided by the sharia, which prohibits human trafficking, prostitution and other forbidden practices, the Qatari legislature has enacted laws to suppress human trafficking. Examples of these laws include: the Qatari Criminal Code (Act No. 11 of 2004); the Qatari Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004); Act No. 22 of 2005, prohibiting the recruitment, employment, training and participation of children in camel racing; and Act No. 21 of 1997, regulating human organ transplants.

163. Qatar has ratified several international treaties on human trafficking, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime of 2002.

164. Qatari law prescribes tough penalties for sexual exploitation (particularly of women and children) of any kind. Article 296, part VI, of the Criminal Code (Act No. 11 of 2004),

prescribes a penalty of from 1 to 5 years in prison for incitement of vice, debauchery and prostitution. This penalty applies to anyone who leads, entices, lures, coaxes or cajoles a female into working as a prostitute or who keeps or frequents a brothel in Qatar or abroad.

165. The offence of selling children is very rarely committed in Qatar, although the law does prescribe penalties to prevent it from occurring and to punish the perpetrators, if it is committed. Article 321 of the amended Criminal Code states: "A term of up to 7 years' imprisonment shall be imposed on any person who brings a person into or out of Qatar for the purpose of disposing of that person as a slave or any person who buys, sells, offers for sale, makes a gift of, or otherwise disposes of, a person as a slave".

166. Act No. 21 of 1997, regulating human organ transplants, prohibits the sale of human organs and prescribes penalties for this offence. Article 9 provides: "It is prohibited to sell or buy, by any means whatever, or to receive any form of remuneration in exchange for human organs. Medical specialists shall not knowingly perform surgical operations to remove human organs for these purposes." Article 12 provides: "Without prejudice to any higher penalty prescribed under any other law, a term of from 2 to 10 years' imprisonment and/or a fine of from 10,000 to 40,000 rials shall be imposed on any person who infringes the present Act and the regulations on its implementation. A term of from 7 to 14 years' imprisonment shall be imposed on any person who removes a live organ from a person without that person's knowledge. The penalty shall be doubled if the offence is repeated. A repeat offender is a person who commits a similar offence less than 3 years from the date on which he or she completed his or her sentence. When handing down a conviction, a court may decide to revoke the guilty party's professional licence."

Current situation and future challenges and outlook

167. The State adopted a national strategy to combat human trafficking in 2003, which gave rise to numerous initiatives. Notably, in April 2003, a Qatari shelter was established by a decision of the Council of Ministers to provide victims of human trafficking with protection and assistance that meets international and local standards. The services provided include:

- Accommodation and legal advice for victims
- Access for women victims to lawyers
- Health, psychological and social services
- Assistance in gaining access to new employment opportunities
- Voluntary repatriation for victims who have recovered and have received rehabilitation assistance
- Assistance in settling victims' affairs and in finding a new sponsor, in conjunction with the authorities

168. The Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking was established by Supreme Council for Family Affairs Decision No. 1 of 2008 to alert society to the dangers of human trafficking in all its forms and to enable it to tackle the phenomenon with a view to the creation of a world free from trafficking. The mission of the Foundation is to prevent human trafficking and provide protection, care and rehabilitation assistance to victims. Its main goal is to combat human trafficking in all its forms with a view to its elimination.

169. The State provides psychological rehabilitation and medical services to females who are vulnerable to trafficking in accordance with international instruments on human trafficking, in particular the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which urges all States parties, insofar as their

legislation allows, to provide medical, psychological and material assistance to victims of human trafficking or those vulnerable to trafficking.

170. The Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking liaises with law enforcement bodies (Ministry of the Interior departments, the Office of the Public Prosecutor and the Supreme Judicial Council) when following up on cases of human trafficking. It also collects data every year on the number and types of cases, the perpetrators, the victims and their ages. The database on human trafficking is developed each year and the Foundation's regular report is included in it.

171. The Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking ran a training workshop on the social, legal and security dimensions of combating human trafficking. The event was attended by police officers from the passports, immigration and nationality services and the border guard and members of the Department of International Cooperation, the Human Rights Department and all sections of the Department of Public Security. The objective was to inform the participants about what human trafficking entails, who the victims are, how to identify and assist them and how to avoid treating them as criminals. The special needs of women and children were also discussed. The Foundation has run a number of joint activities with other organizations. The main ones are listed below.

- Publication of a multilingual booklet (a guide for migrant workers) to provide migrant workers with information on violations that are defined as human trafficking offences and the hotlines available to call the Foundation
- Delivery of talks in secondary schools (for boys and girls) on combating human trafficking and protecting victims
- Delivery of talks to alert students at Qatar Education City universities and Qatar University to human trafficking and its effects and to the services provided by the Foundation
- Organization of the first academic conference on human trafficking, entitled "Human trafficking: between theory and practice"
- Organization of a seminar entitled "Human trafficking: twentieth century slavery"
- Organization, in March 2010, of the Doha Foundation Forum on the declaration of the Arab Initiative for Building National Capacities to Combat Human Trafficking, which was held under the auspices of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad

172. The Forum highlighted the importance of ensuring that the names of trafficking victims are not disclosed to the press or the public, of preserving the confidentiality of investigations and trial proceedings and of establishing effective procedures to protect witnesses in such cases. The participants called for laws to be enacted to absolve victims of criminal liability for participating in the sex trade, working without a permit and living illegally in Qatar, where they commit these offences because of being trafficked. States were called upon to step up measures to bring their laws into line with international treaties prohibiting human trafficking and Arab States that had not already done so were called upon to enact laws on combating human trafficking.

173. Qatar makes every effort to eliminate all forms of human trafficking, particularly those forms to which women tend to fall prey. The relevant institutions take action to tackle this problem and laws have been put in place to address it. Since the adoption of the national strategy to combat human trafficking, which led to the establishment, in 2003, of a shelter which offers victims of human trafficking, particularly domestic workers, a full range of rehabilitation services, as many as 86 women have been provided with shelter (between 2006 and 2009). Most of the services provided consist in psychological

rehabilitation and medical assistance (36 per cent), followed by social reintegration assistance (30.2 per cent) and help with finding other jobs (11.6 per cent).

Table 6
Number of women offered shelter, by services provided, 2006–2009

<i>Services provided</i>	<i>No. of cases</i>
Psychological rehabilitation and medical services	31
Assistance with finding other jobs	10
Social reintegration	26
Monetary compensation	7
Payment of entitlements due and help with departure from Qatar	7
Appointment of a lawyer to represent them in compensation cases	3
Total	86

Source: State of Qatar, Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking, 2010.

174. Those institutions involved in countering human trafficking consider how to address the root causes of the problem and how to deal with and eliminate it. Between 2006 and 2009, 23 training courses were run for a total of 1,555 participants on subjects including the following:

- What human trafficking entails and how to deal with the victims
- Protecting children and women who are trafficked in times of war or natural disasters
- Migrant workers: between empowerment and protection from human trafficking

175. Like many States, Qatar is facing the challenges that preventing this crime poses: international cooperation is needed to tackle the root causes by reducing regional and international conflicts, addressing sources of tension and supporting the economies of and development projects in impoverished countries. The task of combating human trafficking is further complicated by the fact that some victims and witnesses are reluctant to cooperate with law enforcement agencies for fear of reprisals against them or of harm being done to their families. This makes it extremely difficult to launch investigations and prosecutions.

176. The State is determined to do more to curb this phenomenon, which is alien to Qatari society, with a view to its complete eradication. It will make proposals on additional legislation, policies and plans to: combat human trafficking; strengthen technical cooperation and coordination with governmental and non-governmental organizations in Qatar; broaden cooperation with international and regional organizations and research centres in order to benefit from their expertise and experience in this domain; and improve the quality of protection and welfare services for target groups based on studies and research. In addition, it will continue to conduct media and information campaigns to raise public awareness of the decisive and meaningful action being taken to combat human trafficking in all its forms.

Article 7

Political life

The Constitution

177. The Constitution recognizes that women and men have an equal right to participate in the political life of the State. In particular, women have the right to stand for and vote in all elections and referendums, to take part in policymaking, to have access to public office at all levels and to participate in organizations and associations devoted to public and political affairs in Qatar. These rights are affirmed in articles 34, 35, 42–46, 54, 77, 80, 83, 92–95 and 100 of the Qatari Constitution.

Participation in referendums

178. Given the importance of popular participation in the endorsement of the Qatari Constitution and also the commitment of the State to ensuring national progress and development, the public was invited to participate in a constitutional referendum further to Decree No. 38 of 2003. Article 1 of the Decree provides: “In accordance with articles 1 and 7 of Act No. 2 of 1961 (concerning Qatari nationality), Qatari men and women are hereby invited to participate in the ratification of the Constitution by expressing their opinion on the draft Constitution in a general referendum to be held on Tuesday, 29 May 2003.” As this text shows, the legislature issued the invitation to participate in the endorsement of the Permanent Constitution without discriminating between men and women. Indeed, it explicitly invited women to participate, without exhibiting any discrimination.

Participation in municipal elections

179. Under Act No. 12 of 1998, concerning the organization of municipal councils, Qatari women were afforded the right to stand and vote for the first central municipal council to be elected in Qatar. This was a turning point for Qatari women, in terms of their right to take an active and key role in the development of Qatari society. It was a major step forward in the process of strengthening public participation in the work of the executive.

180. In the first round of elections for the municipal council (1999), six women stood, but none were returned. In the second round (2003), one woman stood and won a seat in the 29-member Council, while in the third round (2007), three women stood and one was elected. The number of women returned to the council in 2011 is expected to rise, as Qatari women become more and more aware of the importance of participation in political life and in public decision-making.

181. Large numbers of Qatari women participated in the voting for the central municipal council, accounting for 42 per cent of all voters in 1999. That figure dipped slightly in 2003 (to 38 per cent), before climbing once more to reach 50 per cent in 2007 – a record for women’s participation in voting.

Participation in non-governmental organizations and the private sector

182. Article 45 of the Constitution provides: “Freedom of association is assured under the conditions specified by law”.

183. Neither Act No. 8 of 1998, concerning private associations and foundations, nor Act No. 21 of 2006, concerning private associations that contribute to public welfare, discriminates between men and women who apply to establish associations and foundations and to take up positions therein. Indeed, several foundations, associations and centres are presided over by women — around 43 per cent of them — and women make up 30 per cent of their board members.

184. No distinction is made between men and women in the provisions of articles 94–121 of the Commercial Companies Act promulgated in Act No. 5 of 2002 that establish the procedures for electing board members of joint-stock companies, the eligibility criteria for membership of a governing board and the regulations on voting. The same conditions apply to both sexes without any discrimination. Recently, there has been a marked shift in the number of women joining the boards of joint-stock companies. Indeed, some women have become chairpersons of the board. In that connection, Act No. 11 of 1990 on the establishment of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as amended by Act No. 11 of 1996, outlines the procedure which the general assembly must follow when electing members of the board. The process is one of election by direct ballot and the voting is open to both men and women without discrimination. The elections have boosted participation by women in the board of the Chamber; for the first time in the Chamber's history, the candidate list included four businesswomen.

Public employment

185. Article 54 of the Qatari Constitution provides: "Public employment is undertaken in the service of the nation. Public servants shall carry out their duties solely in the public interest." This article is addressed both at men and women alike.

186. The laws on public employment do not discriminate between women and men. They grant them the right to equal pay and afford women heads of household the right to receive family benefit in full. The special circumstances of women as wives and mothers are taken into account in the allocation of leave (the Human Resources Management Act promulgated in Act No. 8 of 2009; the Military Service Act No. 31 of 2006; and the Labour Act No. 14 of 2004).

187. Qatari women participate in the formulation and implementation of Government policy. They have gained access to some of the top positions in the State, although there are no women currently in the Cabinet. The first woman to take up a ministerial post in a Gulf State was Her Excellency Sheikha Al-Mahmoud, who served as Minister of Education from 2003 to 2009. Moreover, Her Excellency Sheikha Ghaliya Al-Thani was Minister of Health from 2008 to 2009 and had chaired the National Health Authority from 2005 until 2008 when she moved to the Ministry. Qatari women currently in leadership positions include: the Presidents of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development and the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Qatar Museums Authority; the Deputy Presidents of the Supreme Health Council and the Supreme Council for Education; the President of Qatar University; the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Communication and Information; and the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. Several women are members of the board of higher councils and governmental institutions and bodies. There are also women who are members of standing committees responsible for policymaking and strategy development, such as the Standing Committee on Population, and of temporary committees set up to draft laws.

Executive and institutional measures to build women's political capacities

188. The Standing Committee on Elections was set up pursuant to President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs Decision No. 2 of 2003 to promote participation in elections and encourage Qataris, particularly women, to acquire the skills associated with participation in democratic elections in Qatar. The Committee has organized numerous training activities and schemes and taken part in international programmes to meet its objectives of promoting political participation in Qatar. In a partnership between governmental, non-governmental and civil society institutions, the Committee has worked with the National Human Rights Committee, the human rights departments of the Ministry

of the Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and civil society institutions to provide Qatari women with training, empower them politically and acquaint them with their rights. Examples of training programmes on women's political empowerment that the Standing Committee on elections has run in conjunction with local and international governmental and non-governmental institutions over the past five years include: "Running election campaigns for Gulf women leaders"; "Leadership skills in the electoral process"; "How to run election campaigns"; "Women and political participation"; "Importance of voter participation in municipal council elections".

189. The Committee organized 47 training courses between 2004 and 2009 to disseminate information about elections and encourage participants to acquire the skills associated with the conduct of democratic elections in Qatar. Women were actively involved in these programmes. For example, females accounted for 245 of the 350 people who took part in a democratic leaders' programme that the Standing Committee rolled out in 10 schools between 15 and 25 March 2009. The Committee's work came to an end in 2009 after its goals had been achieved. Other mechanisms, such as the National Human Rights Committee, were set up in Qatar to perform its functions.

Future challenges and outlook

190. In a 2007 study entitled "Participation by Qataris in political life: obstacles and pathways to empowerment", which was conducted by the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 62 per cent of those questioned in the sample reported that they preferred male candidates. Whether the respondents were males or females, they tended to prefer male candidates over female candidates. This means that society continues to view women's participation in politics in a negative light. This is a general trend among both sexes and it becomes apparent when it comes to selecting women candidates and rating women's capacities as leaders.

191. A 2007 study by the Supreme Council for Family Affairs on the obstacles that prevent women from gaining access to leadership positions in Qatari society concluded that attitudes towards women are ambivalent. While society recognizes the capacities of women as workers, it does not recognize their capacities as leaders. This clearly emerged from the attitudes expressed by the sample towards women leaders: 32 per cent agreed that women were capable of performing a leadership role.

192. Although there has been significant progress in regard to political participation by Qatari women, thanks to the efforts of governmental and non-governmental actors to give women a more active role in political life, social obstacles continue to hamper women's participation in this area. For instance, Qatari society is organized along tribal lines and the political experiment introduced by the State is quite new.

193. Qatar is determined to take all appropriate measures, bearing in mind the specificities of Qatari society, to eliminate discrimination against women in politics and Qatari public life so as to ensure to women the right to vote, to stand for election, to participate in decision-making, to have access to public office and to join non-governmental organizations and associations. In this connection, under Decision No. 15 of 2009, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs was assigned the task of fostering women's social, political and economic empowerment in public life.

Article 8

International representation

The constitutional and legislative framework

194. The Qatari Constitution grants women the full right to represent the State in international forums; it makes no distinction between men and women with regard to rights and obligations of all kinds. This is clear from the articles that we have cited (arts. 18, 19 and 34), which prohibit gender-based discrimination.

195. There is nothing in the law to prevent Qatari women from representing the State abroad. For example, nowhere in Decree-Law No. 13 of 2009, concerning the diplomatic and consular corps, is there a provision that discriminates between men and women.

Current situation

196. There are some women diplomats at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In early 2010 Qatar appointed its first Qatari woman ambassador. Some Qatari women hold senior positions in Qatari missions abroad. Through their work there, they represent the State vis-à-vis international organizations, notably those that work on human rights and social development issues.

197. Female Qatari public servants who work in ministries and Government bodies participate in State delegations that engage in dialogue with international and regional intergovernmental committees and in conferences, seminars and other activities involving State delegations. Several women head these delegations in their capacity as leaders in their profession and all domains.

198. University departments that teach courses in international affairs and political science encourage women to enrol in their programmes.

199. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs took 40 male and female graduates from Qatar University and the Qatar branch of Georgetown University and trained them over a period of two years to prepare them for work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or in Qatari embassies in various countries.

200. Under its annual plan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has run about 15 programmes for its staff on diplomacy and international affairs. The Ministry offers its male and female staff the chance to pursue postgraduate studies or training in the work of the diplomatic service.

201. Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad, the wife of His Highness the Amir, carries out a great many activities in the international domain, mainly in her capacity as:

- UNESCO Special Envoy for Basic and Higher Education
- A member of the High-Level Group of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations
- A member of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Personalities on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

202. Qatari women experts sit on numerous international committees, including:

- The Board of the Global Alliance for Information and Communications Technology and Development (GAID)
- The international Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- The Chemical Review Committee for the Rotterdam Convention

- The Organizing Committee for Follow-up on the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
- The Committee on the Best Available Techniques and Best Environmental Practices with regard to the Release of Persistent Organic Pollutants in Factories of (Gulf Cooperation Council Member States

203. At various times in the past, Qatari women have held positions in regional and international forums, notably those of:

- Assistant Secretary-General for the Promotion of Industrial Investment, the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting (GOIC), 2008–2012
- Member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001–2009
- United Nations Special Rapporteur on Disability, 2004–2009

Challenges and future outlook

204. Although Qatari women have acceded to diplomatic positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, their participation in international forums is not yet at a level that truly reflects their capacities and abilities. This is because women are new to this area of work and it is difficult for Qatari women to live abroad for long periods of time without a family member being there with them.

205. The State is expected to reap the benefits from the establishment of a department of international affairs at Qatar University and of the Qatar branch of Georgetown University and from the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has sent several Qatari women abroad to take special courses on diplomacy. Courses are also run in Qatar to improve the skills of Ministry employees, including women, and increase the number of Qatari women diplomats in the near future.

206. In addition, a major drive is under way to remove the obstacles that Qatari women face in various areas of life and establish programmes to promote respect for women's rights, improve the situation of women, change how women are viewed for the better and enhance their status overall so to make it more socially acceptable for them to work in diplomacy.

Article 9 Nationality

Gender equality in the acquisition of nationality

207. Article 41 of the Permanent Constitution states: "The law defines Qatari nationality and the rules relating thereto. These rules have constitutional authority."

208. The Nationality Act No. 38 of 2005 establishes the procedures for acquiring, granting, revoking and restoring Qatari nationality without making any distinction between women and men, except for cases where a Qatari woman is married to a foreigner. Nationality is not granted to foreign husbands and children of Qatari women in such cases, as this is a sovereign matter over which the State has discretionary authority. The Nationality Act has constitutional authority. The Qatari Constitution cannot be amended until 10 years have elapsed from the date of its entry into force. The procedures for amending the Constitution are the same as those for amending the Act. The Nationality Act contains no provisions that discriminate on the grounds of sex when it comes to the granting, acquisition, revocation or restoration of Qatari nationality. Article 1 of the Act states that Qatari nationals are:

- Persons who were domiciled in Qatar before 1930, maintained their habitual place of residence there, and still had Qatari nationality on the date of the entry into force of the above-mentioned Act No. 2 of 1961
- Persons who do not meet the above criteria but nevertheless can show that they have Qatari ascendants, as confirmed in an Amiral decree
- Persons who acquire Qatari nationality in accordance with the Act
- A child born in Qatar or abroad whose father is recognized as a Qatari national according to the criteria set out above

209. In this context, article 2 of the Nationality Act states that Qatari nationality can be granted to a non-Qatari who meets the following conditions:

- The person has had a legal, habitual place of residence in Qatar for at least 25 consecutive years prior to the date when the application for naturalization is submitted
- If an applicant is absent from Qatar for more than six months after submitting a naturalization application, the Minister of the Interior may decide to disregard the previous period of residence
- The person has a legitimate source of income that is sufficient for his needs
- The person is of good character, has a good reputation and has never been convicted further to a final court judgement delivered in Qatar or abroad of committing an indecent offence or a breach of trust
- The person must have sufficient knowledge of Arabic

210. The rules on granting Qatari nationality under this article are applied in such a way as to give priority to children of Qatari mothers. A naturalized Qatari is someone who was born in Qatar or abroad to a father who is a naturalized Qatari national. A child of unknown parentage who is born in Qatar has the same status as a naturalized citizen. Foundlings are deemed to have been born in Qatar, unless there is evidence to the contrary.

211. Qatari women do not forfeit Qatari nationality if they marry a non-Qatari but only if they acquire the husband's nationality. In such cases, they can reacquire Qatari nationality if they relinquish the other nationality.

212. The figures show that more women than men were naturalized in Qatar in 2007: 117 women, as compared with 41 men.

Table 7

Number of foreigners who were granted Qatari nationality in 2006 and 2007

<i>Year</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
2006	500	454	954
2007*	41	117	158

Source: State of Qatar, Ministry of the Interior, 2008.

* Data for five months only (up until May).

Reservation entered by Qatar to article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention

213. Qatar entered a reservation to article 9, paragraph 2, of the Convention, which provides: "States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children." Under the Qatari Nationality Act, nationality is granted on the

basis of blood ties, i.e. based on the nationality of the father. Qatari women with foreign husbands do not have the right to transmit their nationality to their children. This is to prevent people from holding dual citizenship. The exigencies of the public interest inform the approach taken to this issue, given that nationality is bound up with the discretionary power and sovereignty of the State. There are measures, however, to ensure that the children of Qatari women with foreign husbands receive the same treatment as children of Qatari nationals in the areas of education, health, employment, etc.

Article 10

Education

Constitutional and legal framework

214. Article 25 of the Constitution of Qatar provides: “Education is one of the keystones of social progress, and the State shall provide, promote and endeavour to disseminate it.” Article 49 furthermore provides: “All citizens have the right to education. The State shall establish free and compulsory education in accordance with the regulations and laws in effect in the State.”

215. Article 6 of Decree-Law No. 37 of 2002, concerning the establishment of the Supreme Council for Education, provides for the delivery of a quality education that meets the requirements of the State. This is to be achieved through the creation of diverse, alternative education systems that foster innovation and educational excellence, namely, independent schools devoted to achieving world-class educational results. These schools are for boys and girls. The section of the Qatar National Vision document that focuses on human development (section 1) and the goal of training an educated and skilled population underscores the importance of building a modern, world-class educational system that provides students with a first-rate education comparable to that offered anywhere in the world, of offering citizens excellent training and opportunities to realize their potential and of preparing them for success in a changing world with increasingly complex technical requirements.

216. Act No. 25 of 2001 stipulates that education is compulsory and must be provided free of charge to all children from the beginning of the primary stage up to the end of the secondary stage or the age of 18, whichever comes first. The Ministry provides the Council with the means to achieve this goal.

217. The Constitution and the domestic laws and regulations on education establish the right to education for all at all stages and assign responsibility to the State for providing public education.

218. Act No. 25 of 2001 contains 13 articles on the institutional arrangements for implementing the legislation on compulsory education. It stipulates the procedures for enrolling in education, the parties responsible for implementing the Act and the penalties and sanctions for breaching its provisions. Amendments were made to the articles on penalties and sanctions such that the amounts of fines were increased to from 5,000 to 10,000 Qatari rials (QR). By Ministerial Decision No. 10 of 2010, a committee was established to follow up on cases where parents breach the Compulsory Education Act, and, in September 2009, a policy on assessing students’ behaviour in independent schools was adopted. Under the policy (on a mechanism for monitoring students who skip classes or are excluded from school), absences and exclusions must be referred to the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Mothers so that action can be taken to ensure that the Compulsory Education Act is applied and the causes of truancy are addressed.

Women and education: overview

219. A system of formal education for girls was launched in 1953 with the opening of the first primary school for girls. Since then, the number of girls' schools has increased; there are now girls' schools in every population centre in Qatar. This has helped to improve standards of educational achievement among women and opened up opportunities for women to find decent work.

220. The education system in Qatar has succeeded in raising levels of educational attainment among different segments of society thanks to State-led literacy promotion measures, adult literacy programmes and the strict implementation of the Compulsory (Primary) Education Act. In that connection, as the figures in Table 8 show, the literacy rate among adults in Qatar (aged 15 years and above) rose from 93.47 per cent for males and 84.99 per cent for females in 2004 to 96.35 per cent and 90.02 per cent respectively in 2009. Although these figures do not show that the gender gap has been closed, they do make it abundantly clear that the educational status of Qatari women is constantly improving. The literacy rates for males and females in the 15-to-24 age group are almost exactly the same: 99.82 per cent for males and 99.50 per cent for females in 2009.

Table 8
Literacy rates among Qataris, by sex and year (%)

Years	15 years and above			15–24 years		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
2004	84.99	93.47	89.17	99.06	98.17	98.61
2006	87.96	94.05	90.98	99.45	98.64	99.05
2007	89.03	95.21	92.08	99.38	99.14	99.26
2008	89.1	95.67	92.34	99.5	99.32	99.41
2009	90.02	96.35	93.19	99.5	99.82	99.65

Source: State of Qatar, the "Qalam" project 2010.

221. As the above figures show, the illiteracy rate among Qatari males aged 15 and over was 6.8 per cent in 2009, down from 10.8 per cent in 2004, while among females it fell from 15 per cent in 2004 to around 10 per cent in 2009. Illiteracy has virtually disappeared among males and females in the 15-to-24 age group. The fact that, in 2009, the illiteracy rate stood at 0.35 per cent is evidence of the effectiveness of measures taken by the State to eradicate the phenomenon among young people in particular.

222. The percentage of students who remain in compulsory education in public schools has increased among girls and is now even higher than it is among Qatari boys (79 per cent in 2008). This low figure can largely be ascribed to public school students moving to independent or private schools, students dropping out of school, and other factors.

223. In the context of efforts to develop education, as of the 2010/11 academic year, all public schools were turned into independent schools that are funded by the Government but free to develop their own mission and educational goals, taking due account of the terms of the contracts that they conclude with the education authority, namely, the Supreme Council for Education.

Table 9
Attendance rates among Qatari girls in compulsory education in public schools

Grade	Girls (2000)	Retention rate for girls up to 2008	Total retention rate up to 2008
1	2 145	100.0	100.0
2	2 087	97.3	96.6
3	2 038	95.0	94.1
4	1 986	92.6	89.5
5	1 973	92.0	88.1
6	1 916	89.3	83.2
7	1 899	88.5	80.9
8	1 888	88.0	79.6
0	1 879	87.6	79.0

Source: State of Qatar, the “Qalam” project, Qatar/Ministry of Education, Educational Affairs Section, Department of Educational Statistics, 2006 and beyond (Annual statistical report, Qatar, Doha, p. 418).

224. The effectiveness of measures taken to implement the Compulsory Education Act has led to a fall in dropout rates in compulsory education among Qataris of both sexes in the 6-to-14 age group of from 24.5 per cent in 2000/01 to 9.9 per cent in 2008/09. Nevertheless, the rate is still quite high for this educational stage. This is due to some non-Qatari students leaving Qatar with their families — which is classified as dropping out of school, although this is not exactly accurate — and is borne out by the statistics on dropout rates in compulsory education among Qatari students, which do not rise above 0.7 per cent. In any case, the dropout rate among males is higher than among females, as shown by the figures in Table 10.

Table 10
Dropout rates in compulsory and secondary education, by sex and year

Academic year	Sex	Compulsory education		Secondary education
		Qataris and non-Qataris	Qataris only	Qataris and non-Qataris
2003/04	Males	25.1	4.6	33.9
	Females	11.6	0.9	14.6
2004/05	Males	21.0	1.5	33.9
	Females	8.9	-	10.0
2005/06	Males	25.3	5.3	31.6
	Females	12.9	1.0	7.8
2006/07	Males	22.9	3.2	27.1
	Females	13.5	0.3	9.7
2007/08	Males	18.1	1.6	17.9
	Females	11.6	-	8.5
2008/09	Males	12.1	0.9	16.3
	Females	7.6	0.6	12.1

Source: State of Qatar, the “Qalam” project 2010, unpublished data.

225. Thanks to measures taken by the State to address the problem of students dropping out of education at different stages, the dropout rate in secondary education fell from 23.3 per cent in 2000/01 to 14.3 per cent in 2008/09. This figure takes account of non-Qatari students who left the country with their families.

226. Female students do not tend to study at vocational schools in Qatar. Indeed, they all take academic subjects; none take vocational subjects. Overall, a higher percentage of female students remained in secondary education in 2005/06 compared to male students. This percentage decreased very slightly in 2008/09 — to 49.8 per cent — as shown in Table 11.

Table 11

Percentage of students in secondary education, by sex, subject area and year

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Percentage of students taking academic subjects</i>	<i>Percentage of students taking vocational subjects</i>	<i>Female students as a proportion of all students in secondary education</i>
2003/04	Males	97.9	2.1	
	Females	100.0	0.0	51.0
2004/05	Males	97.8	2.2	
	Females	100.0	0.0	51.2
2005/06	Males	97.5	2.5	
	Females	100.0	0.0	50.4
2006/07	Males	97.2	2.8	
	Females	100.0	0.0	49.6
2007/08	Males	97.1	2.9	
	Females	100.0	0.0	49.4
2008/09	Males	97.8	2.2	
	Females	100.0	0.0	49.8

Source: State of Qatar, the “Qalam” project 2010, unpublished data.

227. The State is doing a great deal to eradicate illiteracy among the population through plans and programmes targeted at both sexes. The take-up rates for these programmes, particularly among Qatari and non-Qatari women, have increased. As the figures in Table 12 show, the enrolment rate for females in literacy programmes increased from 21.7 per cent in 2004 to 27.0 per cent in 2007.

Table 12

Percentage of girls attending night classes and literacy centres

<i>Year</i>	<i>Qatari girls</i>	<i>Non-Qataris</i>	<i>Total</i>
2004	9.1	10.0	21.7
2005	33.7	53.1	36.0
2006	21.5	48.3	24.2
2007	24.7	51.2	27.0

Source: State of Qatar, annual statistics 2010, consecutive years.

228. The State is committed to providing all children living in Qatar with an education, whether delivered at public or private schools, schools run by expatriate communities or foreign schools. It offers children a varied education and their parents the choice of what school they want their children to attend. The State provides material support for private schools and schools run by expatriate communities. For example, it provides land on which to build schools, school buildings and textbooks for Islamic education and the teaching of Arabic and social studies.

229. A total of 74,323 non-Qatari students are enrolled in education in Qatar, 36,863 of them girls. There are 10,888 female students attending public schools.

230. There has been no significant change over the half decade in the percentage of girls with disabilities attending schools and other institutions: 41.4 per cent in 2004, as against 40.6 per cent in 2009.

Table 13

Percentage of girls (below 14) with disabilities attending schools and other institutions, by nationality and year

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Qatari (%)</i>	<i>Non-Qatari (%)</i>	<i>Total (%)</i>	<i>Total number of children with disabilities (boys and girls)</i>
2004	41.5	41.2	41.4	3 577
2005	40.9	43.4	42.0	2 427
2006	38.3	42.0	39.8	1 886
2007	43.4	39.7	41.4	2 064
2008	43.3	41.1	42.3	1 916
2009	42.7	38.3	40.6	1 764

Source: State of Qatar, Statistics Authority, Statistical Yearbook 2010, various issues.

231. Measures to empower Qatari women have been taken into all areas of the education sector, including in university education. As Table 14 shows, since 2005, no fewer than 74 per cent of Qatar University graduates across all subjects have been women. In other words, around three quarters of the graduates of the University are women. The overwhelming majority of women graduates gain degrees in literature and the humanities.

Table 14

Percentage of Qatar University graduates in different subject areas who are women

<i>Subject area</i>	<i>Year</i>				
	<i>2004/05</i>	<i>2005/06</i>	<i>2006/07</i>	<i>2007/08</i>	<i>2008/09</i>
Arts and sciences	86.0	86.4	84.1	86.6	85.4
Business and economics	61.7	63.5	48.8	56.6	63.4
Education	93.3	87.3	81.6	85.7	58.8
Engineering	44.5	57.4	49.7	53.2	54.4
Law	22.7	36.5	39.5	59.8	50.0
Shariah studies	80.5	80.0	75.0	70.0	61.5
Technology	62.5	-	-	-	-
Total	76.0	76.0	70.0	76.0	74.0

Source: State of Qatar, Qatar University, 2009.

232. With a view to eradicating all forms of discrimination against women in education, the State has opened up opportunities for qualified women to manage schools. There are now more women than men in this function. The figures in Table 15 show that the proportion of directors of public day schools who were women was at an all-time high in 2003/04 — 69.6 per cent — and stood at 67.5 per cent in 2007/08.

Table 15
Number of women and men directors of schools, by year

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Directors of public day school</i>	<i>Ratio of female to male directors</i>
2003/04	Males	55	69.61
	Females	126	
2004/05	Males	55	67.84
	Females	116	
2005/06	Males	50	66.89
	Females	101	
2006/07	Males	43	68.61
	Females	94	
2007/08	Males	37	67.54
	Females	77	

Source: State of Qatar, Ministry of Education, Educational Affairs Section, Educational Statistics Department, 2008; statistical report, 1999/2000 to 2007/08, Doha, Qatar.

233. As with the management of schools, so too do Qatari women play an important role in the management of universities. For example, the President of Qatar University is a woman. The figures in Table 16 show that, in 2008/09, 43 per cent of deans of faculty and 25 per cent of vice-deans at Qatar University (the only national university) were women. Moreover, 13.4 per cent of the members of the University's board of trustees are women.

Table 16
Women deans and vice-deans at Qatar University in 2008/09

<i>Position</i>	<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Dean	4	57	3	43
Vice-Dean	6	75	2	25

Source: State of Qatar, Qatar University, 2009.

234. In 2007/08, close to 39 per cent of teaching staff at Qatar University were women (Qataris and non-Qataris). Some 55 per cent of the Qatari teaching staff are women, accounting for 53 per cent of all the female teaching staff.

Table 17
Number of teaching staff at Qatar University, by sex and nationality, 2007/08

	<i>Qataris</i>	<i>Non-Qataris</i>	<i>Total</i>
Males	108	282	390
Females	130	117	247
Total	238	399	637

Source: State of Qatar, Qatar University, 2009.

Equality with regard to academic curricula, assessments, grants and missions

Academic curricula

235. The State has established standard curricula that do not change depending on the sex of the learner. Some of the curricula taught at all stages of education, particularly social sciences curricula, present information on women's socioeconomic roles in a way that is designed to eliminate existing gender stereotypes. The Supreme Council for Education recently developed sets of standards for the curricula for all stages. Women's issues were included in this work to highlight the role of women in social development and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

236. A general framework was established for a values-based education curriculum for all stages from kindergarten to the end of secondary school. The goal is to encourage students to: think about values and how they apply in practice to them, others, their communities and the world in general; improve their understanding of what responsibility entails; adopt a healthy lifestyle; build good relationships with and care for others; and gain self-confidence. This curriculum seeks to foster values based inter alia on: developing good relations with others; showing people respect and consideration; cooperation, empathy, equality, love, peace and tolerance; and other values linked to social and civil responsibilities such as respect for the law, good citizenship, civic participation, honesty, integrity and trustworthiness. Emphasis is also placed on respect for the cultural and historical heritage of Qatar and values linked to the preservation of the country's heritage and environment.

237. In the general framework for family education the focus is on making students better informed, more skilled and more confident in their own abilities so that they can engage actively in social relationships. The family education curriculum covers a variety of ethical, social, cultural, physical, spiritual, sexual and emotional issues. The curriculum framework has three main components: educational content; teaching techniques; and assessment methodologies.

238. While there are still no technical or vocational schools for women in Qatar, an educational development initiative has been launched primarily to provide students with a world-class training that will enable them to enrol in Qatari and foreign universities or to enter the labour market upon completion of their secondary school studies. This initiative was developed on the basis of a set of principles, such as diversification of school programmes to open the way for the establishment of a diverse range of schools. In fact, there are various types of secondary vocational and technical schools, including the Industrial Technology School and the Business School. The Supreme Council for Education is finalizing a study on the establishment of an advanced business school, in cooperation and coordination with the Central Bank of Qatar (two schools will be opened in 2010–2011, one for males and the other for females). Comprehensive plans have also been drawn up on the establishment of a technical secondary school for girls specializing in

medical laboratory science, general industrial subjects, office management and secretarial work.

239. The State is planning to set up schools and colleges offering programmes to train women in specific skill sets. The expectation is that a business school will be established, followed by a technical secondary school.

240. At present there are no special women's studies programmes for university students, although students do study subjects relating to women at the Qatar University Sociology Department (Sociology Programme and Social Services Programme). All the students currently enrolled in the Department are women.

241. Women's studies are taught at Qatar University Social Sciences Department as part of various curricula, for example, the curricula on: gender issues, human rights, the family and family relations, ethnic studies, contemporary Arab society, independent study, and so on. Many students also undertake graduate projects with a women's studies' component.

Assessment

242. There is no gender-based discrimination in Qatar with respect to examinations and failure and pass rates. Examinations are the same for all students in all stages of education.

243. The same applies to teaching staff. The State supplies teaching staff with the resources that they need for their work and contributes to the development of their capacities without differentiating between them on the grounds of sex. The State has built schools to international standards for all stages of education without making any distinction between male and female student populations.

Co-education

244. There are co-educational schools in Qatar and schools where boys and girls study separate curricula. Male and female students follow separate curricula in public schools and Qatar University, while they can study together in private schools, schools for expatriates and branches of foreign universities in Qatar. There is no legal obstacle to co-education. The State prefers to maintain a policy of single sex education at present based on the wishes of the majority of the population and a desire to encourage Qataris to enrol their daughters in education at all stages.

Grants and missions

245. The State encourages female students to complete their higher studies. It offers study grants in all areas of specialization, depending on the needs of the local job market. These grants are provided on the basis of academic achievement.

246. Before 2005/06, around 46 per cent of all higher education students who were sent abroad to study were women. That figure rose to 56.1 per cent in 2009/10. This is a step forward for Qatari women, signalling as it does a marked shift in the way that the idea, which the Government welcomes and supports, of sending women to study abroad, is viewed in the sociocultural environment.

Table 18

Higher education students sent abroad, by sex and academic year

Year	Sex	Category				Total	Grand total
		Doctorate	Master's degree	Bachelor's degree	Other		
Before	Males	46	70	376	183	675	
2005/06	Females	48	56	321	149	574	1 249

Year	Sex	Category				Total	Grand total
		Doctorate	Master's degree	Bachelor's degree	Other		
2005/06	Males	12	21	82	142	257	489
	Females	3	15	104	110	232	
2006/07	Males	8	4	73	48	133	305
	Females	3	8	91	70	172	
2007/08	Males	1	9	111	45	166	391
	Females	6	8	137	74	225	
2008/09	Males	4	10	83	76	173	462
	Females	3	10	90	186	289	
2009/10	Males	3	24	117	87	231	526
	Females	0	18	124	153	295	

Source: State of Qatar, Supreme Council for Education, 2010, unpublished figures.

247. The State encourages students to pursue excellence. To this end it has: established the Academic Excellence Day Award; promoted a culture of innovation in Qatari society; adopted international standards of excellence; instituted quality programmes; supported individual and institutional initiatives to improve educational outcomes, including through recognition of those who achieve academic excellence; developed the definition of excellence; encouraged individuals and institutions to improve their performance; fostered positive attitudes towards knowledge and scientific research; fostered a creative spirit in students; built the capacities of students in the areas of research, innovative thinking and use of intelligence; and fostered a competitive spirit among students in the context of an ambitious initiative aimed at encouraging innovators and improving quality and performance standards in all fields. The following table contains figures on awards presented and those who received them between 2006 and 2009.

Table 19
Awards categories and recipients in 2006/09

Category/year	2006		2007		2008		2009			
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females		
Doctorate			7	1	0	1	0	2		
Bachelor's degree	6	10	6	2	2	2	1	1		
General secondary school certificate										
		Platinum medal	4	10	1	8	2	7	0	5
Outstanding student			0	2	0	2	0	1		
Outstanding teacher	3	5	1	0	1	0	1	0		
Most improved school			0	1						
	Total	13	25	15	14	5	12	2	9	
Bachelor's degree	6	28	8	20	1	9	0	2		
Secondary school certificate										
		Gold medal	17	60	9	66	1	8	2	3
Secondary school scientific research			0	1	0	1	0	0		
	Total	23	88	17	87	2	18	2	5	

Category/year	2006		2007		2008		2009	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
	Grand total	36	113	32	101	7	30	4

Equal participation in sports

248. An interest began to be taken in women's sports in Qatar with the introduction of formal schooling in the 1950s. Physical education became a core subject on the school syllabus and sports facilities were set up in all girls' schools.

249. Qatar University set up a department to teach sports sciences to male and female students. The programme was established in cooperation with the Academy for Sports Excellence (ASPIRE), which is the first institution of its kind in the Middle East. It brings together world experts in sports science and professional sports who teach the subject based on scientific methods rather than the old view of sports as just a hobby. It seeks to promote healthy living in Qatar as a whole and offer a science-based sports education that meets the latest international standards.

250. In 2000, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs formed the Qatari Women's Sports Committee, which joined the Qatari National Olympic Committee in 2001. The Committee seeks to promote women's sports, improve performance levels among sportswomen, support women's sports, encourage women's participation in sports, raise public awareness of the importance of women's sports, involve Qatari women in sports seminars, studies and conferences held at home and abroad, and improve the way that women's sporting activities are handled from a technical and administrative point of view.

251. Three women's sports centres have been established and are frequented by 600 women. There are also 26 Qatari women who provide training in different kinds of sports, in addition to a number of women trainers of other nationalities.

252. Women have taken part in 36 sports/games championships held in Qatar, the region and elsewhere (Asia and the rest of the world). Between 2001 and 2008, 20 Qatari women were placed in the top three in these events: 8 Gulf championships; 4 Arab championships; and 8 Asian championships.

253. Qatari women play a role in the Girl Guides movement. A Girl Guides organization was set up in 1995 and takes part in most activities organized by its Arab and international counterparts.

Challenges and future outlook

254. Notwithstanding the achievements that Qatari women have scored in the field of education, they still face certain obstacles: some Qatari women are reluctant to take up the education and training opportunities abroad that are offered to them by the State, where the chaperone's travel costs can be covered by the sending institution. This problem can be ascribed to social factors, as women still need their family's permission to travel abroad.

255. A related challenge is the negative construction that society puts upon women's participation in sports. This hampers women from joining women's sports centres in Qatar. Moreover, the nature of some sports and the conditions attached to participation in certain international sports competitions cannot be reconciled with the customs and traditions of Qatari society.

256. Notwithstanding the challenges posed to the educational empowerment of Qatari women, the fact that the political will is there and that constant efforts are being made to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in this vitally important area and to

raise awareness in society at large of the importance of education cannot but lead to additional qualitative and quantitative gains that could turn Qatar into a world player in the educational domain.

257. Thus, intensive efforts will probably continue to be made in the future to have women study a more diverse range of subjects; to encourage women to enrol in vocational and technical programmes; to develop educational and careers advice services; to encourage women to travel abroad to pursue their studies and receive training; and to institute additional measures to eradicate illiteracy among Qatari women completely.

258. Qatari women are furthermore expected to benefit from the future expansion of educational opportunities provided by the Education City of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, where specialized programmes tailored to the requirements of social development in Qatar in general and the labour market in particular will be offered. These programmes will be available at the branches of the international universities that are present in Education City.

Article 11 Employment

Right to work and equal opportunities in employment

259. Qatar is committed to ensuring that Qatari citizens enjoy the right to work and to equal treatment in all areas, including employment, without discrimination on the grounds of race, colour or sex. Article 35 of the Constitution states: "All persons are equal before the law. There shall be no discrimination between them on grounds of sex, origin, language or religion." Article 28 provides: "The State shall ensure freedom of economic enterprise on the basis of social equity and balanced cooperation between the public and private sectors with a view to achieving socioeconomic development, increasing output, giving citizens prosperity, raising their living standards and providing them with employment opportunities, in accordance with the law." The right to work is thus a fundamental constitutional right afforded to all members of the population without discrimination on the grounds of sex.

260. These constitutional articles provide a key foundation for a set of employment laws enacted in Qatar. The Human Resources Management Act (which applies to public sector employees) defines an employee as: "Any individual who works under the direction or supervision of an employer for pay". This definition refers both to men and women, not just men.

261. The Human Resources Management Act contains provisions on maternity leave and establishes that women have the right to take breastfeeding breaks of two hours a day in the year following the birth of their child. It is left to the employee to decide when to take these breaks (art. 109). The Act also grants Qatari women employees the right to take leave to look after a disabled child under the age of 6. A woman can take up to three years' leave on two separate occasions during the period of service. Having due regard to the exigencies of the public interest, the Prime Minister can use his discretionary authority to grant a Qatari woman leave to look after her children. In any case, leave is offered on full pay in the first three years and on half pay thereafter (art. 110). The Act contains provisions that allow Muslim women employees who become widowed to take 4 months and 10 days' leave on full pay following a husband's death in order to cover the waiting period following the end of marriage (*iddah*) or until such time as they give birth, if they are expecting a child. The time taken up by this type of leave is not deducted from other types of leave (art. 113).

262. Section 9 of the Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004, arts. 93–98), concerning employment of women, states that women have the right to equal pay for equal work, equal access to training and promotion opportunities and the right to maternity leave and to take one-hour breaks for breastfeeding every day for one year. Women may not be dismissed for marrying or for taking maternity leave, nor may their contracts be terminated while they are on leave.

263. The Judicial Authority Act No. 10 of 2003 contains no provisions that discriminate between men and women with regard to employment in judicial functions. In June 2010, the Amir issued a decree appointing the first ever Qatari woman to preside over a first instance court. In March that same year, a woman had been appointed as an assistant judge.

264. In 2010, for the first time ever, a Qatari woman was appointed to an ambassadorial position – as Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations in New York.

265. The State of Qatar has ratified numerous international conventions on the choice of employment. It ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) in 1976, the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) in 2006, and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105) in 2007. Thus, the State is committed to prohibiting forced labour and affording men and women the full freedom to choose the work that they do. Although the legislation and regulations contain no discriminatory provisions requiring women to work in given occupations, women tend to prefer to work in the public sector as working conditions, i.e. working hours, pay and work safety, are better suited to their needs.

Right to equal pay and equal benefits

266. In Qatar, the right to equal pay and equal benefits is afforded without discrimination on grounds of sex. Article 93 of the Labour Code states that women are entitled to the same pay as men for doing the same work and to the same training and promotion opportunities. Article 79 provides that employees (of both sexes) who have worked for an employer for one full year are entitled to paid annual leave. Article 83 provides that Muslim employees may take unpaid leave once during their time of service to fulfil their obligation to make the pilgrimage to Mecca (the hajj). Section 10 of the Labour Code, which bears the title “Occupational safety and health and social welfare”, provides that employers or their representatives have a duty to inform all employees, upon commencement of employment, of occupational hazards and how to avoid them and to take precautions to protect employees from sustaining injuries or illnesses in the workplace. Employers also have a duty to organize regular check-ups for employees to protect them from contracting occupational diseases.

267. The Human Resources Management Act No. 8 of 2009 does not provide for any discrimination between men and women with regard to pay and access to training and promotion opportunities. The Act states that priority in recruitment must first be given to Qatari men and women, followed by the children of Qatari women married to foreigners. Moreover, leave to cover the waiting period following the termination of marriage is granted to all Muslim women employees, regardless of their nationality, who become widowed. The Act also provides for housing grants to be given to Qatari women employees.

268. There used to be a wage gap between Qatari women and men; single women were paid less than married men, as the presumption in law was that working fathers were the family breadwinners. Thus, working mothers had to prove that they were the breadwinner or head of household in order to be able to receive a married person’s wage. The Human Resources Management Act of 2009 remedied that inequity. Under the Act, the wage payable to a married person or head of household must be paid to whichever spouse is

entitled to a higher wage. The other spouse will receive the single person's wage. This rule is applied without any discrimination. Moreover, a married working woman is entitled to the married person's salary or benefit, if the husband is retired or is in prison and is not being paid his salary.

Right to social security

269. Under Act No. 38 of 1995, as amended, women have the right to receive social security on the same basis as men. The Act defines the term "beneficiaries" as applying to: widows, divorcees, impoverished women, persons with disabilities (under the age of 18), orphans, adults who are unfit to work (aged 18 and over), older persons (over 60), prisoners' families, abandoned wives, and families of missing persons. Qatari women married to non-Qataris are given the right to receive an allowance "if they are divorced, widowed or abandoned by their spouse". Social security benefit was increased by 50 per cent in 1996 and doubled again in 2006.

270. Women and men have the same right to a retirement pension (100 per cent of the basic salary, social benefit and a housing allowance) under Act No. 24 of 2002, concerning retirements and pensions, as amended by Act No. 33 of 2004. The Act applies to the public and the private sectors. The law states that pensionable age is 60 years for men and 55 years for women. To be eligible for a pension, a person must have paid contributions for at least 15 years and the reason for termination of employment must be resignation, cancellation of a post, death or lack of medical fitness.

271. Act No. 24 of 2002 applies to Qatari employees in full-time employment who are subject to the Human Resources Management Act, Qatari civil servants, and employees of public organizations and institutions, joint-stock companies and other institutions listed in a decision of the Council of Ministers. All employees, both males and females, pay in 5 per cent of their salary (basic pay plus social benefit), while the employer pays twice that amount.

272. According to article 6 of Act No. 24 of 2002, concerning retirements and pensions as amended, civil servants and employees (of both sexes) are entitled to receive a pension after leaving their employment, if they have worked for at least 15 years and are at least 40 years old.

Vocational studies

273. There are no vocational training centres in Qatar, for males or females. The Administrative Development Centre offers training programmes for members of both sexes without any discrimination or restrictions. The programmes cover areas such as administration, finance and information technology.

274. The figures on participation in programmes run by the Administrative Development Centre in recent years show a higher uptake among females: 54 per cent of participants in 2007, around 58 per cent in 2008 and 55 per cent in 2009, still higher than males. This is evidence of the determination of Qatari women to acquire new skills and knowledge and to make progress in their careers.

Table 20

Participants in training programmes between April 2006 and March 2009

<i>Participants</i>	<i>2006/07</i>	<i>2007/08</i>	<i>2008/09</i>
Men	1 056	1 115	2 583

<i>Participants</i>	<i>2006/07</i>	<i>2007/08</i>	<i>2008/09</i>
Women	1 277	1 553	3 225
Total	2 333	2 668	5 808

Source: State of Qatar, 2010. Administrative Development Centre, annual report, 2008–2009.

275. Other organizations train men and women for work in different specialized areas. For example, doctors receive training at the Cornell University in Doha, pharmacists are trained by Qatar University and workers in oil and gas fields are trained by the Qatar Petroleum Institute.

276. In January 2010, the Higher Council for Communications and Information Technology announced the launch of the Qatar National e-Learning Portal, which offers more than 2,500 free online courses for Government employees (men and women) in a range of subject areas, namely: business; information technology; computing; human resources; marketing; personal development; and management.

277. The State instituted the “Productive Families” project, which is being implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Several private organizations support the project by providing: funding for an arts fair to display products made by families participating in the project; exhibition space; a full range of training equipment and tools for Ministry of Social Affairs training centres; gifts of land on which to build a permanent sales outlet for productive families; input for a feasibility study on the permanent sales outlet for productive families; and support to train a complete team on the products and prepare them to set up and develop small businesses.

278. Some non-governmental organizations run training courses and programmes for women on self-employment. Charities in particular run programmes, including nursing programmes, at the Qatari Red Crescent, and humanitarian assistance programmes are delivered by Qatar Charity, and so on. The Social Development Center (a para-governmental organization) runs training programmes for self-employed women.

Protection of women in employment

Prohibition on the employment of women in hazardous occupations in the private sector

279. Measures have been taken to protect working women in all sectors in Qatar from work-related hazards. Article 94 of the Labour Code (Act No. 14 of 2004) states: “Women shall not be employed in work that is hazardous, heavy or harmful to their health or moral welfare or in other occupations defined in a decision of the Minister.” The Code provides for the protection of working women, with due regard being given to their physiological make-up and family role. It states that women may not be employed in such industries and hazardous occupations as are defined by the Minister of Labour in consultation with the authorities. The object of this provision is to protect the moral welfare and health of working women by ensuring that they are not employed in occupations and industries where their well-being would be in jeopardy. Article 94 of the Code is worded in general terms and leaves it to the Minister to decide, in consultation with the authorities, which industries and occupations pose a risk to women’s physical and moral welfare, health and psychological well-being. The form of legal protection provided for in this article clearly applies to any work that is likely to jeopardize a woman’s physical and psychological welfare or health.

Prohibition of night work

280. The Qatari legislature has given consideration to the issue of working hours for women; article 95 of the Labour Code states that it is forbidden for women to work beyond the hours specified in a decision of the Minister. By having working hours for women established in a decision of the Minister of Labour, the legislature is trying to ensure greater flexibility. Provision is made for changes, additions or deletions to be made whenever the need arises: the procedure for issuing or amending a ministerial decision is less time-consuming and less complicated than the one for enacting or amending a law.

Prohibition on termination of employment on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity

281. Qatar takes account of the situation of women who are pregnant or raising children. Article 96 of the Labour Code states that working women with a full year's service with an employer have the right to 50 days' maternity leave with full pay. Under article 97, working women have the right to take a one-hour break each day for breastfeeding for up to a year from the end of maternity leave. The break is taken out of the working day and does not entail any reduction in salary.

282. Under no circumstances may a woman be dismissed for getting married or while she is pregnant or giving birth. Article 98 of the Labour Code states that it is prohibited to dismiss a working woman on account of her getting married or taking maternity leave.

Right of working women to file complaints about administrative decisions

283. The Qatari legislature safeguards the rights of both male and female employees and has established a procedure for filing complaints about administrative decisions. The procedures for filing complaints about final administrative and disciplinary decisions are spelled out in Prime Ministerial Decision No. 5 of 2008. An employee may submit the complaint to the administrative authority that took the decision or to a higher authority, depending on the circumstances. He or she may submit in person or send a written complaint by registered mail with a return receipt or use any modern means of communication. The competent authority must decide within 60 days of submission whether to accept or to dismiss the complaint. If it dismisses it, it must provide an explanation of its decision. The complainant must be informed of the decision within three days of it being taken. The complainant has the right to then lodge the complaint with the administrative division of a first instance court.

Reconciling family duties and work responsibilities and participating in public life

284. The need for women to be able to reconcile their family duties with their work responsibilities is a subject that is attracting growing interest in Qatar. Under article 107 of the Labour Code, an employer of 50 or more persons must offer women suitable kinds of work and services that enable them to combine their work with their family responsibilities. Moreover, the country's demographic policy identifies the need for more nurseries and kindergartens in the workplace to help achieve this goal.

285. A major initiative in this area was the strategic plan for early education adopted by the Supreme Council for Education to make kindergarten education compulsory from the age of 3 by 2010/11. This opens the way for all children in the 3-to-6 age group to enrol in kindergarten and puts the onus on the State to provide them with a quality education.

286. There are currently 13 State-run kindergartens attached to independent schools in various parts of Qatar. Two of them have their own premises and the rest are housed in primary schools. These kindergartens offer an excellent education according to a set of established standards. They are divided into two sections; one for children aged from 9 months to 3 years and another for children aged from 9 months to 4 years.

287. In 2009, the Qatar University College of Education launched an undergraduate primary education programme to provide qualified teachers with a high standard of training and prepared them for work in independent schools. Of the four specialized subject areas in the programme, one focuses on early childhood and preparing students to work as kindergarten teachers and teach students in the lower grades at primary schools (grades 1 to 3).

288. In addition, we recall the legal measures described above, particularly those that: prohibit the employment of women beyond the hours specified in a ministerial decision; grant working women who have worked for an employer for one full year the right to 50 days' maternity leave on full pay; and give women the right, for a period of up to one year from the end of maternity leave, to take a daily one-hour break at work for the purposes of breastfeeding without their incurring any reduction in pay.

289. In a groundbreaking initiative, the Supreme Council for Communications and Information Technology (ictQatar) and Qatar Telecom (QTel) announced that they had agreed to launch, in April 2010, a pilot project entitled: "Women working from home". The purpose of the project is to support women who work from home and enable them to deal with the challenges of reconciling their family commitments with their active participation as members of the workforce. The project, in which the latest information and communications technology is employed, is intended to benefit both women and employers.

Workforce participation rate among Qatari women

290. Workforce participation rates have risen in Qatar for both men and women and the unemployment rate has fallen. The participation rate increased from 91.7 per cent for men and 40.6 per cent for women in 2004 to 96 per cent and 49.1 per cent respectively in 2009. As is to be expected, the sharpest rise in the female workforce participation rate was seen among those in the 25-to-39 age group. By contrast, the participation rates for non-Qatari males in the main age groups are all high.

Table 21

Participation rates for different age groups, male and female, by year

Age group	2004		2006		2007		2008		2009	
	Male	Female								
15-19	12.4	2.8	22	4.4	27.8	5.4	28.6	6.4	24.9	4.3
20-24	85.7	27.7	90.9	37.7	93.8	54.7	94.5	53.7	95	52.3
25-29	98.1	53	98.4	60.2	99.2	66.7	99.3	70.6	99.4	70.3
30-34	99	56.8	99.3	60.3	99.7	63.1	99.6	64.3	99.6	59.2
35-39	99.2	56.4	99.5	58.8	99.7	56.9	99.6	59.3	99.8	52.4
40-44	99	48.9	98.9	56.2	99.4	52.2	99.4	48.3	99.4	49.2
45-49	98.4	44.5	98.3	51.4	98.4	46.1	99.1	46.5	98.7	46.4
50-54	97.4	34	96.9	34.4	96.9	42	98.3	37.8	97.4	39.8
55-59	94.5	19.8	91.6	21	94.4	14.4	95.3	26.2	95.2	27.4

Age group	2004		2006		2007		2008		2009	
	Male	Female								
60–64	84.5	10.5	76.6	15.3	83.7	14.8	86.3	14.7	90	19.3
65+	52.2	3.1	47.3	5.8	59.1	6.9	54.8	4.7	50.9	5.2
15 and above	91.7	40.6	93	45.4	94.9	49.3	95.8	50.4	96	49.1

Source: State of Qatar, “Qalam” project, www.qix.gov.qa, unpublished data.

291. The positive indicator here is the increasing contribution that Qatari women are making to the workforce. As shown in Table 22, the female workforce participation rate topped 36 per cent in 2009, as against around 30 per cent in 2004.

Table 22
Female workforce participation rate, by year

Year	Percentage
2004	30.30
2006	34.50
2007	35.50
2008	37.20
2009	36.40

Source: State of Qatar, “Qalam” project, www.qix.gov.qa.

292. In this connection, the wide-ranging economic growth that Qatar continues to experience has generated new jobs, thus allowing for the absorption of large numbers of workers. Consequently, unemployment has fallen sharply — from 1.44 per cent in 2004 to 0.31 per cent in 2009 — as the figures in Table 23 show. The unemployment rate is higher among women than men, as more women are looking for work, particularly with large numbers of women graduating from university. This also suggests that the tradition of discouraging women from working outside the home or having them work only in a limited number of occupations is losing ground in the prevailing culture.

Table 23
Unemployment among men and women, by nationality and year

Year	Qataris			Non-Qataris			Total		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
2004	3.9	4.91	4.21	0.7	3.48	1.07	1.02	3.83	1.44
2006	2.17	6.6	3.7	0.25	2.37	0.51	0.42	3.47	0.87
2007	1.71	5.97	3.22	0.13	1.71	0.29	0.22	2.64	0.52
2008	1.6	3.66	2.36	0.08	1.17	0.18	0.14	1.69	0.31
2009	1.61	3.44	2.27	0.07	1.51	0.19	0.14	1.92	0.31

Source: State of Qatar, “Qalam” project, www.qix.gov.qa, unpublished data.

293. As the figures in Table 23 show, the unemployment rate among Qataris was 2.27 per cent in 2009 and not more than 0.19 per cent among non-Qataris. The fact that the unemployment rate among non-Qataris is very low shows that, under the Qatari Labour

Code, migrant workers are entitled to unfettered access to employment without any discrimination.

294. Although self-employed women represent a tiny proportion of the total female workforce, their numbers have begun to grow, albeit slightly, specifically among Qatari women (see Table 24). The increase from 0.16 per cent in 2004 to 0.41 per cent in 2009 in this indicator is evidence of the gains that women in Qatar have made, not just in paid employment but also in work where they can invest in industry, commerce, tourism and banking. This in itself marks the beginning of a substantive shift in traditional investment patterns among Qatari women.

Table 24

Self-employed women as a proportion of the female workforce (%)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Qatari women</i>	<i>Non-Qatari women</i>	<i>Total</i>
2004	0.16	0.11	0.12
2006	0.18	0.13	0.14
2007	0.24	0.01	0.13
2008	0.18	0.01	0.11
2009	0.41	0.01	0.16

Source: State of Qatar, "Qalam" project, www.qix.gov.qa.

295. The education sector is the sector of choice when it comes to women's employment preferences, around 38 per cent of Qatari women were working in this sector in 2009. In second place come the public administration, defence and statutory social security sectors, at around 33 per cent. Overall, the majority of economically active women are concentrated in the domestic services sector (38.8 per cent in 2009). All these women are non-Qataris and provide domestic services (see Table 25).

Table 25

Percentage of women in the workforce, by nationality and economic activity, 2009

<i>Economic activity</i>	<i>Nationality</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Qataris</i>	<i>Non-Qataris</i>	
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	0	0	0
Fishing	0	0	0
Mining and quarrying	2.86	2.65	2.69
Manufacturing	0.31	0.33	0.33
Electricity, gas, steam and water supplies	1.2	0.04	0.28
Construction	0.25	3.45	2.79
Wholesale and retail trade; motor-vehicle and motorcycle repairs; and personal and household goods	0.37	4.35	3.53
Hotels and restaurants	0	4.73	3.76
Transport, storage and communications	2.48	7.32	6.33
Financial services	5.14	2.32	2.9
Real estate, rentals and commerce	0.88	2.1	1.85

<i>Economic activity</i>	<i>Nationality</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Qataris</i>	<i>Non-Qataris</i>	
Public administration, defence and statutory social security	33.08	0.95	7.56
Education	37.83	8.38	14.43
Health and social work	13.44	12.54	12.72
Community services, social services and personal services	2.16	1.68	1.78
Domestic services	0	48.92	38.86
Regional and international organizations and bodies	0	0.24	0.19
Total (%)	100	100	100
Total female workforce	25 463	98 420	123 883

Source: State of Qatar, "Qalam" project, www.qix.gov.qa.

296. Economic activity rates among women rose from around 30 per cent in 1986 to 44 per cent in 2004 and over 52 per cent in 2007. This attests to the increasing contribution that women are making to Gross Domestic Product. There is no reliable data on the size of this contribution in percentage terms, although the 2009 Arab Human Development Report estimates the revenue generated by women in Qatar (purchasing power parity in United States dollars) to be around a quarter of that generated by men (24.4 per cent).

297. The average wage of men and women working in different areas of economic activity in Qatar has jumped sharply, from 5,611 Qatari rials (QR) for men and QR 4,131 for women in 2006 to QR 8,484 and QR 6,106 respectively in 2009. The existence of the gender wage gap is primarily attributable to the fact that women and men work in different areas of activity, not to pay differentials in the same occupation. In that connection, higher salaries are paid to people working in the sectors of financial services, mining, quarrying, public administration, defence and statutory social security services. The gender wage ratio in 2009 was 72 per cent; this was the result of various measures taken by the State to narrow the gender wage gap. The wage gap is expected to narrow further, although it is not considered to be particularly wide, compared to other parts of the world.

Table 26

Average wage of workers, by economic activity (in Qatari rials)

<i>Economic activity</i>	<i>2006</i>		<i>2007</i>		<i>2008</i>		<i>2009</i>	
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	1 740	0	2 048	0	2 708	0	1 895	0
Fishing	1 685	0	2 357	0	3 259	0	2 743	0
Mining and quarrying	11 987	7 637	16 404	11 364	18 575	13 073	17 001	14 902
Manufacturing	3 668	4 092	5 027	7 118	6 094	6 294	7 116	9 457
Electricity, gas, steam and water supplies	8 438	6 264	11 526	8 194	13 848	7 292	15 340	11 425
Construction	3 418	7 365	3 940	7 242	3 904	8 554	4 847	10 087

<i>Economic activity</i>	2006		2007		2008		2009	
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Wholesale and retail trade; motor vehicle and motorcycle repairs; and personal and household goods	3 109	3 659	3 607	5 702	5 425	5 695	5 043	4 882
Hotels and restaurants	2 682	3 820	3 766	5 425	4 656	3 148	4 061	4 091
Transport, storage and communications	7 158	5 638	7 721	6 644	8 331	9 145	9 800	9 436
Financial services	9 994	6 106	13 211	8 929	16 286	12 540	17 035	10 426
Real estate, rentals and commerce	4 934	5 580	6 288	7 246	7 277	7 928	7 079	10 859
Public administration, defence and statutory social security coverage	9 085	6 741	12 258	9 485	14 897	10 421	15 907	12 477
Education	9 205	7 448	11 065	9 300	13 940	11 130	13 449	11 677
Health and social work	8 872	6 684	11 224	8 379	13 066	11 160	13 860	10 764
Community services and other social services	6 936	4 893	9 252	7 128	11 307	8 258	11 833	10 858
Domestic services	1 701	1 610	1 771	1 804	1 825	1 718	1 847	1 718
Regional and international organizations and bodies	16 281	8 750	19 397	11 828	15 787	10 136	15 761	9 857
Total	5 611	4 131	6 884	4 939	8 064	5 819	8 484	6 106
Ratio of women's to men's median earnings (%)	73.6		71.7		72.2		72.0	

Source: State of Qatar, 2010, Workforce survey, successive years, www.qsa.gov.qa.

Participation by women in trade unions

298. The right to form associations and trade unions is granted to both men and women, without any discrimination, under the Qatari Constitution (art. 45) and related legislation.

299. Associations of chartered accountants, lawyers and doctors are among those that mainly attract women members. There are almost as many women as men in the Qatari Medical Association, while there are fewer women than men in the Association of Chartered Accountants and the Bar Association, owing to the small number of Qatari women in the two professions.

Table 27

Number of men and women in professional associations

<i>Professional associations</i>	<i>Number of women</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>	<i>Number of men</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Qatari Association of Chartered Accountants	11	16	56	83
Qatari Bar Association	8	13	53	86
Qatari Medical Association	38	49	39	50
Engineers' Association				

Source: Table compiled based on various sources.

300. There are only two women in decision-making positions on the governing board of the Qatari Bar Association.

Protection of women from sexual harassment

301. The importance of protecting society from acts of public indecency, ensuring respect for women and defending their sense of modesty against all affronts is recognized in the Qatari Criminal Code. Article 291 of the Code prescribes a term of up to 1 year's imprisonment and/or a fine of up to QR 5,000 for any person who deliberately makes offensive remarks or sounds in the hearing of a woman or makes an offensive gesture or displays offensive material in the sight of a woman in order to catch her attention. The same penalty applies to anyone who invades a woman's privacy. Article 293 of the Code prescribes a term of up to 6 months' imprisonment and/or a fine of up to QR 3,000 for making offensive or indecent remarks that others find upsetting or disturbing via wireless, electronic or other means of communications.

302. Victims of sexual harassment are offered social assistance and health and psychological care to mitigate the impact of sexual harassment on them. They are also offered legal advice and judicial assistance provided by volunteer lawyers who will represent them in court. Victims are provided with accommodation, if they need it, to allow them to get away from a source of violence or the threat of violence.

Women migrant workers

303. The State relies heavily on migrant workers because it has a small population and is experiencing major development across all sectors. In 2009, there were 98,420 foreign women working in Qatar, accounting for 7.8 per cent of all workers and 79.4 per cent of working women in the country.

304. Domestic services absorbs the largest proportion of women migrant workers (48.9 per cent), followed by the health and social security sectors (12.5 per cent) and education (8.4 per cent).

305. The employment of women migrant workers is regulated by Qatari labour law, and thus these women receive the same benefits as Qatari women, unless they are in domestic service. At present, the draft of a bill on domestic workers and persons in related occupations is being finalized and reviewed by a committee made up of representatives of several ministries and Government bodies, including the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of the Interior, the National Human Rights Committee and the General Secretariat for Development Planning. That the committee was established is evidence of a desire to speed up the finalization of the bill in the interests of sponsors and of employees, who will be recognized as having legal capacity and legal accountability. Important issues will be addressed and implementing regulations will be issued in explanation of this legislation. As for the main features of the bill, it contains several articles regulating all aspects of domestic workers' rights and obligations, including recruitment, contracts, entitlements, holidays and working hours. Procedures are defined for recruiting domestic workers through recruitment agencies licensed in Qatar. The bill includes provisions that address the need to regulate the employment relationship between sponsors and this large group of employees based on contracts that must be registered in order to safeguard the rights of both parties in the event of a dispute. It establishes that contracts with such employees must include stipulations on pay, annual leave and travel tickets and that domestic workers must be paid a termination-of-service indemnity, just like their counterparts in private institutions and companies, who have this written into their contracts. The Department of Labour will not endorse a contract, unless all these conditions are met. Just as private sector employees are afforded rights under the Labour Code, so too are domestic workers afforded the right to health care under the bill.

Table 28
Economically active population (15 years and over), by nationality, sex and activity

	Qataris			Non-Qataris			Grand total
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Economic activity	0	0	0	16 955	0	16 955	16 955
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	0	0	0	2 822	0	2 822	2 822
Fishing	4 445	727	5 172	54 933	2 609	57 602	62 744
Mining and quarrying	842	78	920	107 538	328	107 866	108 786
Electricity, gas, steam and water supplies	1 754	306	2 060	4 054	44	4 098	6 158
Construction	864	64	928	554 740	3 398	558 138	559 066
Wholesale and retail trade; motor vehicle and motorcycle repairs; and personal and household goods	708	94	802	133 275	4 281	137 556	138 358
Hotels and restaurants	16	0	16	20 272	4 652	24 924	24 940
Transport, storage and communications	1 072	632	1 704	46 988	7 208	54 196	55 900
Financial services	1 437	1 308	2 745	10 389	2 288	12 677	15 422
Real estate, rentals and commerce	813	225	1 038	43 222	2 066	45 288	46 326
Public administration, defence and statutory social security coverage	28 122	8 424	36 546	27 325	937	28 262	64 808
Education	1 809	9 633	11 442	11 420	8 243	19 663	31 105
Health and social work	1 653	3 423	5 076	12 677	12 337	25 014	30 090
Community services and other social services	1 841	549	2 390	12 347	1 650	13 997	16 387
Domestic services	0	0	0	32 195	48 147	80 342	80 342
Regional and international organizations and bodies	34	0	34	1 758	232	1 990	2 024
Total	45 410	25 463	70 873	1 092 970	98 420	1 191 390	1 262 263

Source: State of Qatar, 2010, "Qalam" project, www.qix.gov.qa, and the Statistics Authority.

Initiatives of non-governmental organizations and the private sector in the area of women's economic empowerment

306. The Social Development Center, a non-governmental organization that is an offshoot of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, offers a series of training and financial programmes to encourage young men and women to work for themselves or find suitable employment. Examples include the following:

- In 2007, it established the Tannia (Development) Centre for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, with support from the Qatar telecommunications company Qtel. The Centre provides training and follow-up services and helps to promote small- and medium-sized enterprises in Qatar. It also promotes economic empowerment of men and women in Qatar and runs the "Modern Family" programme, which is designed

to boost household incomes and the role of the family in the production process. Training and development services are offered through workshops designed to build the capacities of participants in the “Modern Family” programme. Some 246 women had enrolled in the programme as of April 2009. The Social Development Center also runs “The First Step” programme, which delivers an integrated package of training to provide young people in the 18-to-30 age group with the psychological support, knowledge and skills that they need to prepare them to enter the labour market. In 2008, a total of 217 men and women completed this programme. Of these, 163 participants, most of them women, found work, as compared with 57 in 2005, 53 per cent of whom found work.

- The Rasameel Fund was established in 2003 to support owners of business start-ups. It is an important mechanism that supports owners of start-ups and encourages them to finance production projects, with the help of the Qatari Insurance Company. A total of 11 persons, 10 women and 1 man, have received assistance from the Fund.
- The Qatar International Beauty Academy was established in 2009 to offer world-class training programmes on beauty services for women.

307. The Qatari Businesswomen’s Forum was founded in 2000. Its name was changed to the Qatar Professional Women’s Network in 2010. The aim of the Network is to support businesswomen and their active contribution to economic growth at all levels in Qatar. In 2007, under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad, the wife of His Highness the Amir, the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Qatar Professional Women’s Network and the Shell corporation launched the Qatari Business Woman of the Year Award. The award is given in two categories: businesswomen and professional women. It was given out for the first time in 2008.

Challenges and future outlook

308. There has been a major improvement in the employment situation of Qatari women across different sectors, as women now have unimpeded access to all kinds of jobs. In the past few years Qatari women have risen to a number of high-level positions and gained access to posts in domains such as the judiciary, the prosecution service and the engineering sector, that use to be the exclusive preserve of men.

309. Notwithstanding the considerable endeavours that the State has made and continues to make to promote gender equality in employment, there are still obstacles and difficulties that hinder the full empowerment of women in this domain. One major obstacle is the fact that there are few women in senior management positions, although there has been a steady improvement in the figures over the past decade. Moreover, the challenge of linking educational outcomes to labour market requirements is one that hampers educated women from gaining access to suitable employment, given the subjects that women specialize in at university. Furthermore, social mores and cultural norms continue to influence women’s employment choices and make women reluctant to take up certain types of work.

310. Workforce forecasts suggest, however, that there will be a steady increase in the number of economically active women as efforts continue to be made to implement a labour market strategy and expand employment opportunities for women in the public and private sectors.

311. Meanwhile, governmental and non-governmental organizations have been stepping up their efforts to address these challenges and overcome the obstacles to women’s empowerment in employment generally and self-employment in particular, by continuing to provide support to small- and medium-sized enterprises and to programmes to assist productive families in Qatar.

Article 12 Health

Constitutional and legislative framework

312. The State is committed to meeting the health-care needs of all its citizens in keeping with the rights accorded to them under article 23 of the Qatari Constitution. The article provides that the State must safeguard “public health and provide the means to prevent and treat diseases and epidemics in accordance with the law”.

313. The State focuses considerable resources on the health sector and has enacted legislation to safeguard the right to health of the entire population without any discrimination. Regulations on medical treatment and health services are set forth in Act. No. 7 of 1996, and, under Amiral Decree No. 13 of 2009, the Supreme Health Council was established. To develop the quantity and quality of services provided by the health-care system and make them accessible to all inhabitants of Qatar, regardless of their sex or nationality.

Equal access for men and women to health services

Public health facilities and services

314. Since the first general hospital was established in Qatar in 1945, the public and private health sectors have expanded considerably, with, for example, the establishment of 23 health centres and of the Gynaecology and Obstetrics Hospital (1991), the Amal Public Hospital (2004), and Al-Shamal (Al-Khor) Public Hospital (2006). The Hamad Medical Corporation is preparing to open Al-Wakra Hospital (in the south of Qatar) and a specialist teaching hospital. Moreover, plans are under way for the establishment of the Dukhan Hospital (in the west of Qatar), a children’s hospital, and several state-of-the-art medical clinics, including a cardiology centre. These hospitals are expected to be up and running by 2010–2011.

Table 29

Public and private hospitals and health clinics, 1990–2008

	<i>Public hospitals</i>	<i>Private hospitals</i>	<i>Health centres</i>
1990	3		22
2000	3	1	25
2004	5	4	23
2005	5	4	23
2006	5	4	23
2007	5	4	23
2008	5	4	23

Source: State of Qatar, 2010, National Health Authority, annual health report, various editions.

315. The expansion and development of health services has gone hand in hand with the development of medical and health training. A branch of the Weill Cornell Medical College was established in Qatar to provide medical training to the highest standards. The College of the North Atlantic and the Calgary Faculty of Nursing offer courses on nursing and ancillary health services. Although the health sector is a young sector, it has scored rapid gains, as reflected in the positive indicators on the population’s health, the ease of access to

health services, the measures taken to deal with infectious diseases and assessments of public health and diseases.

316. The State has taken steps to provide e-health services by establishing an efficient, responsive and results-oriented health system in line with the political, economic and social reform policies being implemented in Qatar. The aim is to develop a world-class system of health service delivery that will allow all inhabitants of all ages to enjoy better health throughout their lives. To develop the health system, advanced programmes and communications and information technology are being used under the supervision of the Supreme Council for Communications and Information Technology, working in partnership with the Supreme Health Council and the Hamad Medical Corporation. The e-health programme will help create the digital infrastructure needed to improve all aspects of health-care provision in the areas of disease prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation. Qatar set 2010 as its target for completing the implementation of the e-health strategy.

Women's health facilities and services

317. The State is committed to providing preventive health services and treatment to women throughout their lives at hospitals and treatment centres in Qatar, under the supervision of qualified doctors and nurses. In 2003, 100 per cent of girls and women (Qataris and non-Qataris) had access to health services.

318. Women can utilize the treatment services provided at hospitals and health centres. The Gynaecology and Obstetrics Hospital, which was opened in 1988, has 334 beds. It has a surgical unit for natural deliveries and caesarean sections and a unit for premature babies.

319. The Sidrah Medical and Research Center will open in 2012. The Center may represent one of the most ambitious projects on which the State has embarked. The Center will provide women and children with specialist medical care and offer adults medical services and selected surgical procedures. Equipped with the very latest technology, it will offer medical students the opportunity to study under the guidance of teaching staff from the Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, which is a branch of the distinguished university based in New York. The Sidrah Center will offer women specialized obstetric and gynaecological care, treatment for childbirth complications, assistance with high-risk deliveries, care for expectant mothers and services in gynaecologic oncology, reproductive endocrinology, including in vitro fertilization (IVF) treatment and other more advanced techniques, urology, and reproductive health. It will also provide paediatric services and programmes, in particular: neurosurgery, ear, nose and throat surgery, plastic/oral maxillofacial surgery, urology, ophthalmology and treatment of allergies/asthma, in addition to support services such as paediatric pharmacy, speech therapy and skills development, clinical pathology, child development services and treatment of respiratory problems.

320. The authorities run information and awareness programmes on health and nutrition for women. Training workshops are held in the framework of the "Promoting healthy lifestyles" project. Examples include a workshop on heart disease and heavy drinking, a workshop on early detection of breast cancer, and so on.

Pre-, peri- and postnatal care for women

Premarital testing and advisory and counselling services

321. The Family Act No. 22 of 2006 states that both Qataris and non-Qataris must undergo medical tests before marrying. Article 18 provides: "The person authorized to officiate at the ceremony shall only marry a couple if the two parties provide a certificate

showing that they have taken the medical test.” The purpose of the test is to ensure that certain diseases are detected early on for the sake of the health of the marriage partners and to reduce the potential risks to both partners after marriage posed by hereditary or serious diseases. The test screens for three categories of diseases: congenital diseases that could be passed on to children; communicable diseases, such as hepatitis, that a husband could transmit to his wife; and chronic diseases such as high blood pressure and diabetes.

322. Health institutions and some women’s non-governmental organizations organize talks and distribute booklets offering advice and raising awareness among the public in general and women in particular of issues relating to marriage, having a family and common diseases.

Women’s health in the pre-, peri- and postnatal stages

323. Women in Qatar are provided with comprehensive prenatal care in the form of tests of various kinds for the mother and the foetus. Prenatal medical services are offered systematically both to Qatari women and resident aliens, particularly in the last few months before delivery. Thus, pregnant women frequently attend prenatal clinics. The fact that, in 2008, around 200,000 women attended the clinic of the Gynaecology and Obstetrics Hospital is evidence of the kind of health care that women receive.

324. Qatar has developed policies that enable men and women to make use of family planning services. Although the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that women should be screened on three separate occasions during pregnancy, Qatar offers monthly screening and the chance to come in for a consultation every 10 days in the final month of pregnancy. In other words, a total of 12 consultations will be carried out during the course of a single pregnancy.

325. The Integrated Programme of Care for Pregnant Women is implemented through regular monitoring of the health of the mother and child in the period up to and following delivery. Thereafter, newborns are automatically immunized and the mother is immunized before being discharged from hospital. Ultrasound equipment is used for prenatal examinations and the mother’s health is monitored under the supervision of qualified doctors. Assisted conception and fertility treatments are offered to men and women.

Vaccination of pregnant women

326. In Qatar, pregnant women are tested regularly for German measles under a specially designed programme and are given injections of tetanus toxoid, one in the fifth month and one in the seventh month of the first pregnancy. Thereafter, they receive one dose for every subsequent pregnancy.

Breastfeeding and immunization of children

327. The Supreme Health Council and the Hamad Medical Corporation encourage and support the practice of breastfeeding. They have endeavoured to involve the Gynaecology and Obstetrics Hospital and health centres that provide maternity and paediatric services in the Baby Friendly Initiative, through the efforts made by the Mother and Child Care Department and the Committee on Breastfeeding, in conjunction with departments such as the Gynaecology and Obstetrics Department, the Paediatrics Department, the Nursing Department and the Primary Health Care Department. One of the first fruits of these efforts was the formulation of the national breastfeeding policy that was adopted by the Committee on Breastfeeding at the end of 2000. The policy is described below:

- All health sector employees, meaning gynaecologists, obstetricians, paediatricians, nurses, health educators and nutritional specialists, are required to adhere to the breastfeeding policy.

- All administrative staff and health sector workers must be trained in the skills needed to implement the policy.
- Prenatal and postnatal tests must include breast examinations, and mothers must be taught how to breastfeed.
- Health sector employees must supply all pregnant women, mothers, women breastfeeding their children and members of their families with comprehensive advice on the benefits of breastfeeding. They must encourage mothers to breastfeed their children during the first six months of life and to continue to breastfeed, even after they introduce supplementary foods, until the child reaches the age of 2.
- Mothers should begin breastfeeding in the first hour after birth, unless their condition or that of the baby precludes it.
- No newborn may be given any food or drinks other than breast milk or artificial milk other than on medical grounds and under medical instructions.
- Mothers and children must be kept in the same room during the day.
- Mothers must be encouraged to breastfeed their children on demand.
- The promotion, using posters, free samples and the like, of artificial milk products and equipment such as feeding bottles is not permitted in hospitals. It is also forbidden to give these items to mothers and family members.
- Breastfeeding support groups must be set up and mothers helped to continue with breastfeeding.

328. The immunization coverage rate among infants below the age of 1 has gone up, compared to what it was over the previous 10 years. For example, the immunization rate for tuberculosis was 98 per cent in 2008, as against 97.1 per cent for the third dose of the polio vaccine, 95.3 per cent for measles and 97.4 per cent for hepatitis. This is a testament to the work that the State does in this domain and to the heightened awareness and commitment of mothers to having their children vaccinated. This, in turn, leads to better health outcomes for infants.

Table 30

Immunization coverage rate for children under the age of 1, 2004–2008

<i>Types of vaccine</i>	<i>Years</i>			
	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>
Tuberculosis (BCG)	100	100	100	96.2
Polio (third dose)	95	98	95	96.7
Triple vaccine (third dose)	96	97	96	94.2
Hepatitis B (third dose)	97	97	96	94.2
Haemophilus influenzae (third dose)	96	97	96	94.2
Measles, German measles and mumps (third dose)	99	100	99	92.3
Smallpox	98	100	98	92.2
Pneumonia		As of 2006	91	90

Source: State of Qatar, 2009: Annual vital statistics; births and deaths; the Statistics Authority.

Ensuring women's access to adequate nutrition

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

329. Medically supervised nutrition programmes are run that include measures to prevent iron deficiency and anaemia for pregnant and lactating women in Qatar in keeping with the guidelines on pregnancy care followed in all health centres countrywide.

330. The most recent statistics show that 32 per cent of Qatari women and men have common risk factors for vascular diseases: obesity, inactivity, diabetes and high levels of animal fat consumption. A study conducted in 2008 by the Children's Cultural Centre, in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), found that 39 per cent of the primary schoolchildren in the study suffered from obesity and overweight, 23 per cent were obese and 16 per cent were overweight. According to this study, a rise in the incidence of certain diseases in Qataris is anticipated in the future, owing to the prevalence of obesity disorders and unhealthy nutritional habits. Effective awareness campaigns must therefore be developed in the interest of curbing such habits.

General indicators of the health status of women in Qatar

Maternal deaths during pregnancy and childbirth

331. As a result of these efforts, the proportion of female deaths represented by maternal deaths had fallen by 2008 to not more than 0.4 per cent for Qatari women and 0.5 per cent for non-Qatari women. This percentage is extremely low by global standards and indicates the great importance attached to maternal health in Qatar.

Table 31

Maternal deaths as a percentage of total female deaths, by nationality and year

<i>Year</i>	<i>Maternal deaths among Qatari women</i>	<i>Total deaths of Qatari women</i>	<i>Maternal deaths among non-Qatari women</i>	<i>Total deaths of non-Qatari women</i>	<i>Maternal deaths in Qatar</i>	<i>Total female deaths in Qatar</i>
2004	None	272	0.7	145		417
2005	0.4	262	1.1	175	0.7	437
2006	None	277	0.5	199	0.2	476
2007	0.4	272	2.2	185	1.1	457
2008	0.4	267	0.5	220	0.4	487

Source: Qatar Statistics Authority, 2010.

332. All the efforts made in the health sector are reflected in the remarkable increase in life expectancy for Qataris, especially females; the rate rose from 71.4 years for males and 75.8 years for females in 2005 to 74.5 years for males and 77.8 years for females in 2009.

Table 32

Average life expectancy for Qataris, by sex and year

<i>Year</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
2005	71.4	75.8	73.6
2006	73	76.8	74.9
2007	73	76.8	74.9
2008	74.2	77.4	75.9
2009	74.5	77.8	76.2

Source: Qatar Statistics Authority, 2010, *Annual Statistical Abstract*, various editions.

333. As a result of its effective preventive health and treatment programmes for children, Qatar has achieved great progress in reducing the infant mortality rate, which declined from 12 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000 to 7 per 1,000 live births in 2008 (see Table 33).

Table 33

Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births), by nationality and year

<i>Year</i>	<i>Qataris</i>	<i>Non-Qataris</i>	<i>Total</i>
2000	10.7	13.3	12
2001	9.1	9.3	9.2
2002	10.5	7.2	8.8
2003	11.9	9.5	10.7
2004	6.9	10.1	8.6
2005	7.7	8.7	8.2
2006	8.4	7.8	8.1
2007	7.2	7.6	7.5
2008	5.7	9.1	7.7

Source: “Qalam” project and the Qatar Statistics Authority, 2010.

334. The under-5 mortality rate has fallen substantially in recent years, down from over 13 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000 to 8.8 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2009. It is therefore approaching levels in the advanced industrialized countries, where the under-5 mortality rate is approximately 7 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Contraceptive use

335. Women may obtain contraceptives from hospitals and health centres after being tested to determine the best method for them and ensure that their health will not suffer.

336. As with other Arab countries, there are no official data on rates of contraceptive use in Qatar, owing, on the one hand, to some abiding social traditions and, on the other hand, to the lack of any attempt by Qatari families to limit the number of children that they have. Contraceptives are therefore used only to control the timing and spacing of pregnancies so as to avoid any adverse effects on the mother’s health. Furthermore, knowledge of contraceptives may be limited to the well-known conventional methods. Modern methods are not widely known, although it can be taken that married women are aware of them, as was indeed evident from the Family Health Survey conducted in 1998. The use of family planning methods (male condoms) is not more than 20 per cent.

Gynaecological disorders in Qatar

Women and infertility

337. The finest treatments for male and female infertility became available in Qatar with the establishment of an assisted conception unit at the Gynaecology and Obstetrics Hospital that treats infertility in both sexes. Outstanding medical achievements have been accomplished in this sphere and in the use of new laboratory techniques for in vitro fertilization. The highest success rates have been recorded in the use of test-tube baby and microinjection procedures.

338. In 1999, laser treatment for uterine diseases and problems was introduced and the chances of success of artificial insemination were improved for women suffering from poor

ovarian function, recurrent miscarriage or cervical incompetence. A pioneering technique in which a new protein-free medium is used for the cultivation of embryos in in vitro fertilization procedures was also introduced.

339. The State attaches great importance to regular screening of women in Qatar for breast and cervical cancer. A screening service is offered at two specialist clinics at the Gynaecology and Obstetrics Hospital and by hospitals and health centres. All those diagnosed with the disease are referred to Al-Amal Hospital, which specializes in oncology.

340. Systematic awareness campaigns on cancer prevention, healthy diet and self-examination are carried out both through leafleting, talks and workshops held at health centres and through all the media. In 2010, the Qatar Cancer Society organized a march, in which over 500 women participated, to sensitize women to the importance of early detection in breast cancer treatment and of breast care; to highlight the role of the individual; and to promote participation in the awareness-raising activities and forums run by the Society. Women are now more alert to the importance of early screening; in 2009, for example, 800 women came forward for breast cancer screening and 10 cases were detected.

Cancer rates

341. Qatar began recording cases of cancer in 1987. In 2009, there were 756 new cases of cancer of all types with a confirmed diagnosis, 194 of them occurring in Qataris and 562 in non-Qataris. Breast cancer accounted for 141 of these cases.

342. Cancer is the third leading cause of death among Qataris; the highest death rate for the disease (12 per cent) was recorded in 2008. The rate is higher among females than among males, with cancer responsible for 17.9 per cent of deaths in every 100,000 females and 10.2 per cent in every 100,000 males. Breast cancer is the leading cause of death among women in the 40–49 age group.

343. Qatar provides modern medical services for the treatment of all cancers. Al-Amal Hospital specializes in oncology, including early detection, therapy, counselling, rehabilitation, education and awareness-raising for patients and their family members. It has the equipment and the medical and technical personnel to cater for between 3,000 and 4,500 patients annually. It has 82 beds for men, women and children, three radiation therapy machines, and radiology, laboratory, drug-preparation, physiotherapy and nuclear-detection departments. In 1997, the Qatar Cancer Society was established as a charitable organization devoted to raising public awareness, promoting environmental cleanliness and contributing, in cooperation with the health authorities, to publications, conferences, talks and research.

Sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS

AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome)

344. Approximately 10 new cases of HIV/AIDS are identified in Qatar each year, excluding cases in newcomers recorded by the Medical Commission. Between 1999 and 2002, 242 cases were reported, half in Qataris and the other half in non-Qataris residing in Qatar. Twice as many males as females are living with the disease. The number of cases identified, however, may be lower than the actual number; some of those living with the disease may be unaware that they are infected, while others may know of their infection but keep it hidden for fear of social stigmatization.

345. Qatar established the National Committee for AIDS Prevention in 2006 and signed a cooperation agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on development of the national AIDS plan. Since its establishment, the Committee has

organized seven specialized programmes to train opinion leaders in raising public awareness of AIDS and AIDS prevention methods. Of these programmes, four were for mosque imams, two for decision makers and one for members of the media.

Other sexually transmitted diseases

346. Other sexually transmitted diseases are more prevalent among males than among females, the reason being that the number of male migrant workers is far higher than the number of female migrant workers. Of persons with herpes zoster, 82 per cent are males and 18 per cent are females; of persons with hepatitis B virus infection, 67 per cent are males and 33 per cent are females; and of persons with hepatitis C virus infection, 75 per cent are males and 25 per cent are females.

Mental illness

347. Like other Arab countries, Qatar faces numerous challenges with respect to developing mental health services for the population. The main challenge is the rise in the global incidence of mental illness. There are no official statistics on the prevalence of mental illness in Qatar. The low uptake rate for mental health services is taken to mean that mental illnesses are either not very prevalent or are not properly diagnosed. Mental health information systems are poorly developed, because of the social stigma attached to mental disorders. For this reason, few patients come forward to request mental health services and some seek out such services abroad. These cases therefore go unrecorded on account of the fear of social stigma.

348. The number of visits to mental health clinics has risen gradually, from 14,017 in 2001 to 18,225 in 2008. The number of beds allocated for patients with mental illnesses rose from 37 in 2000 to 56 in 2006 — 40 beds for men and 16 for women — and increased again, to 76 beds in 2008.

Geriatric care

349. The number of older persons in Qatar has risen as a result of the health and social care available. The number of women aged 65 years and above, for instance, increased from 1,595 in 1986 to 6,026 in 2009.

350. The host of facilities that deliver treatment and social care to older women in Qatar is confirmation of the attention afforded to this group by the State. The Rumailah Hospital has played a key role in geriatric care since 1957, when it became the first hospital to offer its services to all groups in the country, including older persons. With the opening of the Hamad General Hospital in 1982, Rumailah Hospital began to specialize in the care of older persons and in rehabilitation of persons of all ages, with older persons occupying most of its 120 beds. When the hospital was reopened in 1997 after being renovated, it had 459 beds. Of these, 244 are managed by the Geriatrics Department. The Rumailah Hospital plays an effective and leading role in the delivery to older persons of health, social and psychological care, including continuing and private health care and treatment. It also caters to a number of older persons who have no family to care for them at home and provides care training for families with older members. To these ends it makes home visits and supplies the essentials needed by older persons in the home. The Home Care Unit offers health, psychological and social care delivered by gerontologists assisted by a nursing team.

351. Care for older women not in urgent need of medical attention is provided by the Qatar Foundation for Elderly Care, which has a fully equipped, state-of-the-art women's wing that is separate from the men's wing. The Foundation also runs various educational, social and recreational programmes for older persons. The establishment of the Foundation

in 2003 represented a major qualitative shift in the field of geriatric care in Qatar. The goals of the Foundation are to: provide residential accommodation and appropriate health, social and psychological care for older persons whose families are unable to care for them or who have no family to look after them; deliver care services to older persons living at home or in a family setting; increase family awareness of the need to include older persons; provide guidance for families as to the best care methods; equip older persons to deal with and adapt to the problem of old age; and integrate older persons into the community in accordance with their individual capabilities. The Foundation is a non-profit organization.

Health care for women with disabilities

352. In a survey of persons with disabilities that was conducted in 2007 a total of 4,321 cases of disability were declared by persons with disabilities or their relatives, with Qataris accounting for 59 per cent of the total number and non-Qataris for 41 per cent. As to the breakdown by gender, females accounted for 39 per cent of the cases and males 61 per cent. The proportion of Qataris with disabilities fell from 2.1 per cent of all Qatari inhabitants in 2004 to 1.4 per cent in 2009, which is very low compared with the global figure of approximately 10 per cent. Similarly, the prevalence of disabilities among Qatari women is noticeably lower than among non-Qatari women.

Table 34

Prevalence of disability by sex, nationality and year (%)

Year	Prevalence of disability among Qataris (%)			Prevalence of disability among non-Qataris (%)			Prevalence of disability in Qatar (%)		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
2004	2.6	1.7	2.1	0.4	0.7	0.5	0.8	1.1	0.9
2005	2.2	1.4	1.8	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.8	0.7
2006	1.7	1.1	1.4	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.5
2007	1.6	1.1	1.3	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.7	0.4
2008	1.8	1.2	1.5	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.7	0.4
2009	1.7	1.2	1.4	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.4

Source: *Annual Statistical Abstract*, www.qsa.gov.qa, various editions; "Qalam" project, www.qix.gov.qa, and the Qatar Statistics Authority, 2010.

353. In 1974, the State established the Qatar Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Special Needs to deliver the highest possible standard of health, social, psychological and educational assistance to persons with special needs. The Society provides specific medical equipment, prosthetics and assistive devices to all its members on the basis of need and type of disability. In addition, it helps to place persons with special needs in employment, working on that score in fruitful cooperation with all relevant ministries, institutions and bodies. It also develops training, educational and personal plans and programmes for persons with special needs, provides psychological, social, educational and vocational advice and guidance, and runs training workshops and courses to help families to cope with special needs children. The Society has four centres for persons with special needs. The Social and Cultural Centre, for example, was established to: help integrate persons with special needs into the community through social activities; develop friendly cultural and social relations between centres and clubs; and offer training for members and their families in the form of year-round vocational courses and workshops. The Education Centre provides various training services for persons with mental or multiple disabilities, while the

Rehabilitation Centre for Boys and the Rehabilitation for Girls provide boys and girls with vocational, psychological and social services.

354. The Shafallah Centre for Children with Special Needs was established in 2001 with the aim of: providing treatment for girls and boys with disabilities; teaching these children skills to help them integrate more effectively into the community; raising public awareness; and providing families with advice and support. The Centre offers its services to children from birth up to 18 years of age.

Women health workers and their fields of activity

355. The State provides women health workers and specialists with opportunities for training, education and advancement in their field of work. The Weill Cornell Medical College in Doha trains doctors and Qatar University trains doctors and Qatar University trains pharmacists and sends students abroad to study medicine. Candidates are selected on the basis of merit, without discrimination as to sex, race or religion. In addition, the Sidra Medical and Research Centre provides both men and women, without discrimination, opportunities to conduct scientific research. Careers in medicine, dentistry and pharmacy are furthermore open to graduates of both sexes.

356. The proportion of health professionals in the Supreme Council of Health and the Hamad Medical Corporation who were Qataris fell from 16.8 per cent in 2005 to 14.1 per cent in 2007. Although, in absolute terms, the number of health professionals has increased, the figure remains quite low in comparison with the number of non-Qatari health professionals. This is due to increased recruitment of migrant workers as a result of the expansion of health services.

357. There are more women than men in several fields, in particular nursing, laboratory technology and technical work and dentistry. The numbers of females and males are similar in other fields, apart from medicine, and there are still few or no Qataris in certain specialized areas of health and medicine.

Table 35

Health workers in the national health system and the Hamad Medical Corporation, by profession, sex and nationality, 2008

Profession	Qatari			Qatari %	Non-Qatari			Non-Qatari %	Overall total		
	Male	Female	Total		Male	Female	Total		Male	Female	Total
1 Doctors	178	341	519	23	1 236	513	1 749	77	1 414	854	2 268
2 Dentists	22	74	96	38	92	66	158	62	114	140	254
3 Nurses	None	612	612	9	866	5 413	6 279	91	866	6 025	6 891
4 Laboratory technologists and technicians	10	140	150	23	211	286	497	77	221	426	647
5 Pharmacists and assistants	5	38	43	8	300	214	514	92	305	252	557
6 Radiology technologists and technicians	3	19	22	7	179	137	316	93	182	156	338
7 Physiotherapists and assistants	1	11	12	9	73	54	127	91	74	65	139
8 Dental technicians	1	4	5	3	59	110	169	97	60	114	174

Profession	Qatari			Qatari %	Non-Qatari			Non-Qatari %	Overall total		
	Male	Female	Total		Male	Female	Total		Male	Female	Total
9 Respiratory therapists and assistants	3	9	12	15	43	27	70	85	46	36	82
10 Occupational therapists and assistants	3	5	8	11	32	31	63	89	35	36	71
11 Anaesthetic technicians	None	None	None	None	35	27	62	100	35	27	62
12 Dieticians and dietetic technicians	1	13	14	44	7	11	18	56	8	24	32
13 Nursing instructors	None	None	None	None	7	24	31	100	7	24	31
14 Audiology technicians	None	9	9	38	3	12	15	63	3	21	24
15 Haemodialysis technicians	-	-	-	-	22	12	34	100	22	12	34

Source: Annual Report, Hamad Medical Corporation, Qatar, 2008.

Abortion and women's reproductive rights

358. The Qatari Criminal Code prohibits deliberate abortion and lists the cases in which abortion is punishable by law (arts. 315, 316 and 317). A person who intentionally performs an abortion with the victim's consent other than for the purpose of saving the victim's life is liable to a penalty of imprisonment for a term of up to 5 years. These provisions also apply to a woman who performs an abortion on herself or who allows another person to perform an abortion on her. In the case of an abortion performed without the woman's consent, the penalty may be doubled to imprisonment for a term of up to 10 years. A person who performs an act intended to cause an abortion to which a woman has consented, in order to save her life (the victim's life), shall face imprisonment for a term of up to 10 years if the act causes the woman (the victim) to die.

359. Reproductive health organizations in Qatar spare no effort to provide services in their field of activity: numerous seminars, workshops, programmes and media campaigns have been organized in line with the general goals of the State's population policy, which encourages Qatari citizens, a minority in their own country, to produce more offspring, provided that pregnancy spacing is used to safeguard the health of mothers and children.

Health services for female resident aliens

360. With respect to the delivery of treatment, in Qatar, no distinction is made between female citizens and female resident aliens. All are welcome at Hamad General Hospital, the Gynaecology and Obstetrics Hospital, Al Khor Hospital and health centres. A project is under way involving the construction of three hospitals and five new health centres in locations where there are high concentrations of male and female workers.

361. Under the State's health policy, all job-seekers, including women, must undergo a medical examination, and health services must be made available to migrant workers in accordance with the regulations in force.

362. In addition to the public health services in place, the majority of private enterprises provide health insurance coverage for their workers. Thus, both male and female employees have access to the best health services.

Role of the non-governmental sector in supporting the delivery of women's health care in Qatar

363. In the past few years, the non-governmental sector has played an important part in supporting the delivery of women's health care, as exemplified by the existence of four hospitals offering various types of women's health care as a valuable addition to the Government's efforts in this domain.

364. Some associations, such as the Qatar Red Crescent Society, offer medical services to disadvantaged groups in the community and carry out health education and awareness campaigns directed at women in particular with a view to preventing disease and building the capacity to treat it.

365. The Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking provides integrated health care for victims of human trafficking. Health care is one of the key services offered by the Foundation, which refers victims of abuse to medical institutions for examinations and follow-up care until they have recovered. Since the medical examination given to all workers by the Medical Commission Administration did not include a pregnancy test, the Foundation asked the Labour Department to use its powers under the Labour Code to compel labour recruitment offices to have women in countries that export domestic labour tested for pregnancy and to impose fines for failure to do so. The point of this is to ensure that a woman's health does not suffer due to ignorance of a pregnancy and to protect women from occupational risks and children from being harmed by x-rays or other procedures carried out during the standard medical examination. The Labour Department agreed and circulated a decision to that effect to labour organizations and labour recruitment offices.

366. Several associations offering health services have been established, notably the Qatar Cancer Society, which was founded in 1997 to: establish a comprehensive national programme for combating cancer; make recommendations and plans to that end; coordinate among the different entities involved with cancer treatment; hold educational conferences on cancer; disseminate information and raise awareness across the board; assist indigent cancer patients; undertake studies and research; and explore the latest methods of treatment of the disease. The Qatar Diabetes Association was founded in 1995 to provide support to enable diabetics and their families to enjoy normal and productive lives. It raises awareness of the causes of the condition and teaches sufferers how to cope with the disease using various methods to control blood sugar levels. The Association works closely with the health and sports authorities to encourage the public to take regular exercise and eat healthily. Special attention is focused on women in their capacity as family health advisors.

Challenges and prospects

367. Qatar has made great strides with its health system, which provides all women and men, whether citizens or resident aliens, with equal access to its high-quality services. The health situation of women is nonetheless beset by continuing challenges, the same ones in fact as confront men, particularly the shortage of programmes to raise awareness of certain health risks and the pervasiveness of a lifestyle typified by inactivity and lack of exercise that leads to disorders such as diabetes and hypertension.

368. Furthermore, the health sector is suffering from a shortage of national personnel: Qataris account for no more than 23 per cent of doctors and 9 per cent of nurses. The positive indicator on this score, however, is that there are almost twice as many Qatari

female doctors as Qatari male doctors (341 female doctors as compared with 178 male doctors).

369. Qatar looks forward to emerging as one of the best examples of women's health empowerment through its unending efforts to improve its health system, formulate a strategy on women's health, strengthen preventive health programmes for women and develop primary health-care services and mental health facilities for women.

370. In this connection, the State seeks to engage civil society in efforts to promote health awareness through campaigns aimed at reducing the prevalence of harmful health behaviours in the community as a whole and among women in particular.

Article 13

Economic and social benefits

The right to family benefits

371. All the legislation relating to economic and social benefits underscores the equality of women and men. For example, the Retirement and Pensions Act No. 24 of 2002, as amended, does not discriminate between workers and civil servants on the grounds of sex. Moreover, it affords to women who contribute to a pension scheme or who are pensioners privileges not afforded to men. For instance, a widowed pensioner may combine her salary or pension with her entitlement from her husband's pension without any cap being put on the monetary amount. A daughter also has the right to combine her pension with her entitlement from her mother's or her father's pension or both pensions.

372. Concerning the entitlement to social benefit, Qatari female civil servants used to be discriminated against in favour of their male counterparts: they would receive the single person's allowance (of a lower monetary value than the married person's allowance) based on the legal principle that a male civil servant with children was the person duty-bound to provide for the family. The onus lay with a female civil servant to prove that she was the family provider, if she was to obtain the married person's allowance or child support allowance. Under the Human Resources Management Act of 2009, however, women receive equitable treatment; the married person's allowance or child support allowance paid to civil servants is granted without discrimination to the spouse entitled to the highest allowance. The single person's allowance goes to the other spouse. The Act also provides that a married female civil servant is eligible for the married person's allowance if her husband is retired or takes early retirement, or if his salary is stopped as a result of his being imprisoned.

373. In accordance with the Housing Act No. 2 of 2007, Qatari women can be assigned housing under the State housing scheme. The following groups are given priority in the scheme: family providers, married couples, and disadvantaged persons. The State provides free housing for disadvantaged groups of citizens who satisfy the conditions set out in Cabinet Decision No. 18 of 2007. In that decision, the eligibility criteria applied under previous housing schemes were broadened. The Act applies to all groups of women citizens in straitened circumstances, including widows, divorced women, older women and women married to non-Qataris. Applicants are eligible for a housing unit or a rental allowance under the scheme. Cabinet Decision No. 17 of 2007 also contains rules on eligibility that allow for Qatari women to benefit from the housing scheme (land grants and State-subsidized construction loans) for the first time and include as beneficiaries women who are widowed or divorced, as well as women over 35 years of age who are unmarried or the family breadwinner.

The right of access to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit

374. Banks in Qatar grant loans to their customers without distinguishing between men or women customers. In accordance with instructions issued by the Qatar Central Bank, traditional and Islamic banks grant financial credit to all customers, regardless of their sex.

375. Three institutions help raise women's awareness of the mechanism for gaining access to loans: the Social Development Center; the Development Bank; and the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting.

376. Qatari women have the same access as men to loans for financing small businesses. The uptake rate among women is low, however. This is less a matter of legislation than one of personal, social or cultural factors.

377. National banks have special branches offering a variety of women's banking services. This helps women to manage their own financial affairs without needing an intermediary. Since services at the general branches are still available to customers of both sexes, women can choose the option that best suits them.

The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life

378. A women's sports committee was established in Qatar, as a voluntary committee of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, by Decision No. 3 of 2000 of the President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. To allow it to operate within a legal framework, the committee was incorporated into the Qatar Olympic Committee on 18 March 2001, pursuant to Decision No. 112 of His Highness Crown Prince Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, President of the Qatar Olympic Committee. It was named the Qatar Women's Sports Committee. Its chief aims are to promote women's sports, improve technical and administrative standards in women's sporting activities and strengthen participation by Qatari women in these activities. Qatar now has six sporting institutions for girls and women, two of them in the Doha municipality, three in the Rayyan municipality and one in the Umm Salal municipality.

379. Women actively participate in all aspects of cultural life in Qatar, in the activities organized by the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage and by various governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations, and in all areas of culture, arts and creative expression. Several women have won State awards in a number of categories since the awards were first introduced in 2003.

Challenges and future outlook

380. The fact of the matter is that women have little awareness of financial and investment matters and lack easy access to bank loans. Some women have been caught in the debt trap after embarking on misguided projects born of the greater investment opportunities produced by the Qatari economic boom. This situation calls for intensified efforts to be made educate women about the risks of debt and the prerequisites for setting up projects. Numerous programmes have been put in place for this purpose. For example, a development centre for small and medium-sized enterprises was set up at the Social Development Center.

381. As corroborated by an exploratory study commissioned by the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and undertaken by the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting, it is difficult to determine how many enterprises are owned by women because women register them in the name of their husbands or sons for social and cultural reasons.

382. It is also the case that women have little awareness of family housing and social security benefits provided by the State.

383. In order to address these difficulties, line ministries and relevant non-governmental organizations have adopted various measures to build women's capacities in administering loans and investments, setting up small businesses and using programmes to fund these businesses. The Ministry of Social Affairs has stepped up its efforts to increase women's awareness of their right to housing and social security and to make it easier for them to secure these rights. The Ministry has also stepped up its efforts under its productive family programmes to support low-income women in achieving economic independence. To that end, a specialized department, named the Productive Families Department, was created at the Ministry.

Article 14

Rural women

384. "States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas."

385. "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:

"(a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;

"(b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;

"(c) To benefit directly from social security programmes;

"(d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;

"(e) To organize self-help groups and cooperatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self employment;

"(f) To participate in all community activities;

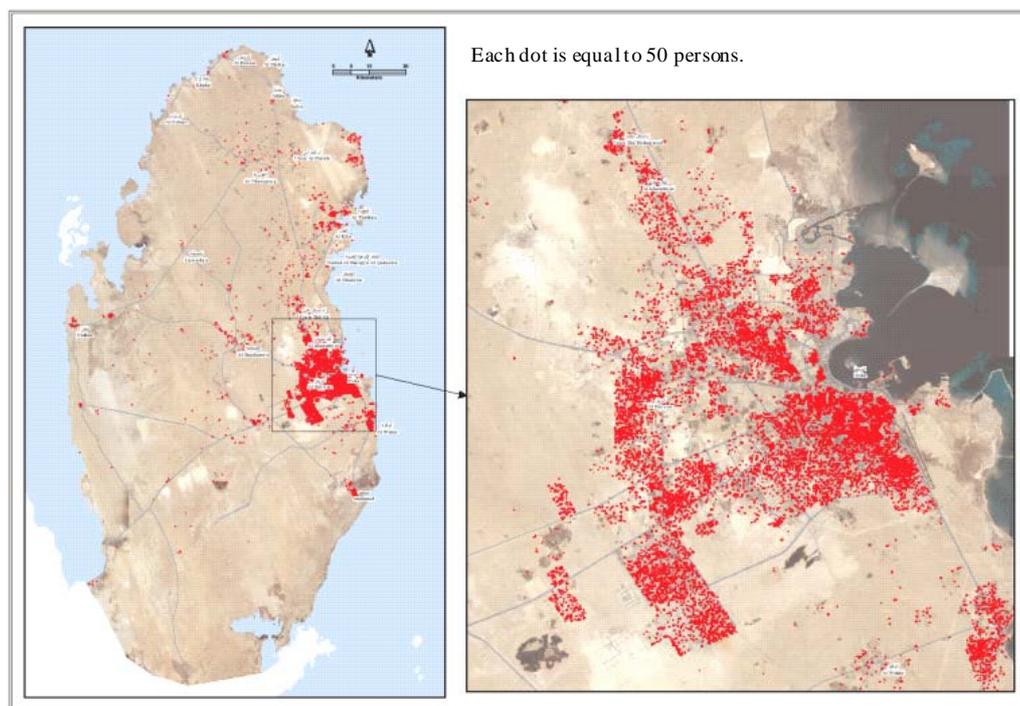
"(g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;

"(h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications."

386. There are no comments to be made about rural women in Qatar, because there are essentially no rural areas in Qatar. The country has a surface area of 11,437 square kilometres and a population of some 1.67 million inhabitants, the overwhelming majority of whom are concentrated in the city of Doha (figure 2). The climate is characterized by sparse rainfall (averaging no more than 81 millimetres per annum), high temperatures and high evaporation rates (averaging over 2,300 millimetres per annum). Surface water is lacking and the soil is typically shallow and wanting in organic materials, leaving roughly only 3 per cent of the total surface area that is cultivable immediately or following mediation through farming activities.

387. State line ministries and agencies ensure access for inhabitants of both sexes to educational, health, cultural and sports services across all regions of the country, and various charitable associations and civil society organizations have opened branches in the regions.

Figure 2
Population distribution in Qatar

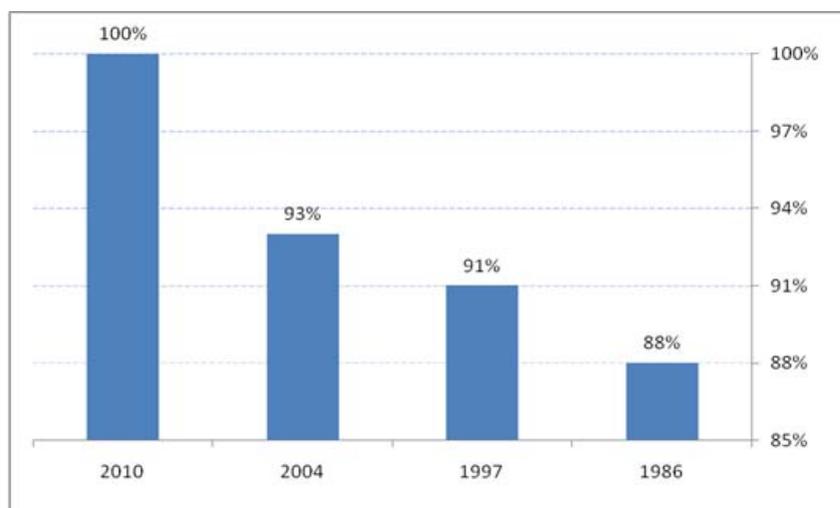


Source: Qatar Statistics Authority, 2008, Geographical Information Systems.

388. These and other environmental factors largely explain the absence of intensive farming in Qatar and the fact that there is a limited expanse of rural areas. Such areas have virtually disappeared in recent times because, with the development boom, Qatar has entered a phase of rapid and extensive urbanization. Buildings of all types and designs have been built on a wide scale and the cities, especially Doha, are thronging with people, both Qataris and non-Qataris.

389. In 1986, urban dwellers accounted for 88 per cent of the total population. The figure then rose to 93 per cent in 2004 and has remained at 100 per cent since 2008.

Figure 3
Urban dwellers as a percentage of the total population of Qatar, 1986 to 2010



Source: Qatar Statistics Authority, 2010, *General census of population and homes*, various issues.

Article 15 Civil rights

Equality of men and women before the law

390. The principle of equality between men and women before the law is recognized in article 35 of the Qatari Constitution, which provides that: “All persons are equal before the law, with no discrimination between them on grounds of race, origin, language or religion.”

391. Women enjoy the legal capacity to enter into contracts and manage their assets and property; under article 49 of the Civil Code (Act No. 22 of 2004), any person who has reached the age of majority has the full legal capacity to perform legal transactions unless that person is still in the care of a guardian or tutor or has been declared legally incompetent. Accordingly, the law makes no distinction between women and men with respect to the capacity to seek legal redress. Article 50 of the Code also stipulates that a person who is incapable of discernment on account of young age, mental illness or insanity is not competent to perform legal transactions. Persons under 7 years of age are considered to be incapable of discernment.

392. The right of women to manage their assets and property is also affirmed in article 57 of the Family Code (Act No. 22 of 2006), concerning a woman’s rights vis-à-vis her husband. These rights include protection from interference in private property.

393. The principle of gender equality is recognized in all the legislation on commercial and economic activities. For example, article 17 of the Commercial Code (Act No. 27 of 2006) states: “All Qataris of legal age have the right to work in commerce, provided that they are not legally barred from doing so for reasons to do with their person or with the nature of the commercial activity.” In the same way, under the Commercial Companies Act No. 5 of 2002, men and women have an equal right, without any discrimination, to establish and run commercial companies of various kinds. The same situation obtains with respect to transactions, the conclusion of contracts and the management of property. Women enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with men and in Qatar they do not need a male intermediary or an agent to manage their financial affairs.

394. Banks give loans to male and female customers alike, without discrimination, in accordance with the instructions that the Qatar Central Bank has issued to traditional and Islamic banks on the disbursement of credit/financing to individual, corporate and institutional clients. The details are spelled out in these instructions.

395. Article 9 of Act No. 11 of 1990, concerning the Qatar Chamber of Trade and Industry, lists the conditions for membership of the Chamber. It states that applicants must be Qataris or foreigners with a licence to carry out the activities enumerated in article 7 of the Act. The Act contains no provisions that discriminate on the grounds of sex or that distinguish between men and women when it comes to membership of the bodies that form part of the Chamber, namely, the general assembly, the governing board and the executive bureau. There is currently one woman member on the governing board.

Equality of men and women before courts and tribunals

396. Article 135 of the Constitution states: “The right of legal recourse is guaranteed to all. The law shall specify the procedures and conditions for exercising this right.” Women and men have the right to seek legal recourse in all courts in Qatar. Women have the right to file lawsuits on their own behalf and are afforded equal treatment by the courts and at all stages of legal proceedings.

397. Qatari women began working as lawyers decades ago and women argue cases in the Qatari courts. In 2010, the Amir issued a decree appointing a Qatari woman for the first time ever to the position of judge. Earlier, a woman had been appointed as an assistant judge. There are Qatari women working in the Office of the Public Prosecutor, where some have reached the rank of chief prosecutor.

398. The general penalties set forth in the Criminal Code (Act No. 11 of 2004) apply to men and women equally without any distinction. At the same time, special protection measures have been established to shield women from all possible forms of violence and discrimination. Some examples are cited below:

- Article 279: “A penalty of death or life imprisonment shall be imposed on anyone who has intercourse with a female against her will through the use of coercion, threats or deception. The penalty shall be death, if the perpetrator is the victim’s ascendant, tutor or carer, a person with authority over her, or a servant employed in the victim’s home or the home of any of the aforementioned persons.”
- Article 315: “A term of up to 10 years’ imprisonment shall be imposed on any person who, by means of battery or a similar act, intentionally assaults a pregnant woman, knowing that the woman is pregnant, and thereby causes her to miscarry.”
- Article 316: “A term of up to 7 years’ imprisonment shall be imposed on any person who intentionally performs an abortion on a woman through the administration of drugs or other methods. The penalty shall be a term of up to 10 years’ imprisonment if the offence is committed without the woman’s consent or if the person performing the abortion is a doctor, a surgeon, a pharmacist, a midwife or an ancillary health or ancillary pharmacy professional.”
- The same principles are echoed in articles 280, 286, 291, 296 and 297 of the Criminal Code.

399. Under Qatari law, men and women have the equal right to receive compensation for damage suffered in comparable circumstances. For example, according to Act No. 19 of 2008, men and women have the equal right to receive blood money in cases of accidental killing. The amount of blood money payable is set at QR 200,000 in the Act and may be modified by a decision of the Council of Ministers. Consequently, there is no discrimination between men and women with regard to the entitlement to blood money;

both sexes are afforded equal treatment under the Act (it is worth noting that, in the past, women received half the amount that men received). The same applies to the other laws in effect in Qatar.

400. The Qatari legislature safeguards the rights of both male and female employees and has established a procedure for filing complaints about administrative decisions. The procedures for filing complaints about final administrative and disciplinary decisions are spelled out in Prime Ministerial Decision No. 5 of 2008. An employee may submit the complaint to the administrative authority that took the decision or to a higher authority; depending on the circumstances. He or she may submit in person or send a written complaint by registered mail with a return receipt or use any modern means of communication. The competent authority must decide within 60 days of submission whether to accept or to dismiss the complaint. If it dismisses it, it must provide an explanation of its decision. The complainant must be informed of the decision within three days of it being taken. The complainant has the right to then lodge the complaint with the administrative division of a first instance court.

401. The Qatari legislature has established special procedures for the enforcement of pretrial detention orders issued by the Office of the Public Prosecutor in respect of women. Article 2 of the Prisons Regulation Act No. 3 of 2009 defines two types of prisons: men's prisons and women's prisons. Article 2 (c) states that women's prisons must be managed by a female officer, who will have all the same tasks and responsibilities as a male officer under the Act. In the absence of a female officer, a male officer will run a women's prison but must do so with the assistance of a female supervisor reporting to him. To the extent possible, women's prisons must be staffed by women. In any event, the guards and those who serve the inmates must be women. Article 2 (d) states that the prison director, the woman officer who deals with inmates and the supervisor are all given law enforcement powers commensurate with their rank.

402. Pregnant women in prison are afforded additional rights. Article 39 of the Prisons Regulation Act states: "Pregnant prisoners shall receive the same treatment as category 'A' prisoners, if they are not already in this category, and shall be exempted from prison work. From the sixth month of pregnancy, they shall be accorded special treatment in regard to food and rest and shall be given appropriate medical care. They shall be transferred to hospital when the time of their delivery approaches and shall remain there until discharged by a doctor." Article 40 of the Act provides: "Disciplinary sanctions imposed on a pregnant prisoner shall not be enforced until the woman has given birth or until her child is no longer with her, as the case may be."

403. Under Act No. 10 of 2002, concerning the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the Office of the Public Prosecutor is entitled to inspect prisons and to receive prisoners' complaints. According to Act No. 3 of 2009, regulating penal and correctional institutions, members of the Office of the Public Prosecutor have the right to conduct inspections. In keeping with these provisions, the Office has conducted several surprise visits to penal institutions.

Reservations entered by Qatar to article 15 of the Convention

Reservation to article 15, paragraph 1

404. The State entered a reservation to article 15, paragraph 1, of the Convention, in connection with matters of inheritance and testimony, as it is inconsistent with the provisions of Islamic law. This is explained below.

405. It is not true that women's testimony is devalued or rejected out of hand. It is true that, in the sharia, women's testimony is preferred to men's in some matters and men's to

women's in others. This belies the claims about there being discrimination against women, just as the requirement for more than one man to give testimony in certain cases does not amount to discrimination against men. Where a man and a woman provide conflicting testimony in a case, their testimony is accorded equal value.

406. The subject of inheritance under the sharia is one of the areas where the greatest misunderstandings occur, owing to a superficial interpretation of Islamic law that suggests that the sharia discriminates against women by giving them half the inheritance that a man receives. The truth is that women receive half of what a man receives only in given circumstances that are specified in the sharia. In other circumstances, they receive an equal share. For example, both parents each receive one sixth of an offspring's estate, without any discrimination between the father and the mother. In other cases, the woman receives more than the man. For example, if a person dies and is survived by a daughter and the parents, the daughter will receive one half of the estate, which is more than her grandfather will receive (one sixth). There are cases where daughters (two or more) will receive two thirds of an estate, while the brothers of the deceased will receive only the remaining third. Hence, the reasons why women receive less than men in certain cases have nothing to do with discrimination against women but rather with ensuring that an inheritance is distributed based on the criteria of social equity, the degree of kinship and the number of heirs. Islam ensures that women have the right to inherit, even if they are rich. This right is enshrined in article 51 of the Constitution of Qatar, which provides: "The right to inherit is safeguarded and is regulated by the sharia."

407. The subject of women's inheritance rights is covered in articles 241–301 of the Family Act, which state that the inheritance rights of both male and female children must be protected and children must receive the share that they are due under the sharia. Indeed, according to article 294 of the Act, a larger share of an estate must be set aside for a foetus, pending discovery of the child's sex. Women are furthermore entitled to receive the portion of an estate that is assigned to them according to the sharia in their capacity as wives, sisters, daughters, granddaughters and grandmothers.

Reservation entered by Qatar to article 15, paragraph 4, of the Convention

408. Article 1 of the Constitution states that the sharia is the principal source of law in Qatar, and the sharia informs the provisions of the Family Act on personal status matters. Article 3 of the Act provides: "Questions not covered by this Act shall be addressed based on the prevailing view of the Hanbali school of law, unless a court decides otherwise for reasons that must be explained in its decision. If there is no prevailing view of the Hanbali school regarding a matter not covered by this Act, the court shall be guided by whatever views of the four schools it deems relevant, failing which it shall apply the general rules of Islamic jurisprudence."

409. The paragraph of the Convention under discussion suggests that adult women, whether married or single, must be afforded the right to freedom of movement and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile. This is inconsistent with Act No. 22 of 2006, promulgating the Family Act, and with prevailing social norms. Article 64 of the Act states that a husband must: "Prepare a suitable home for his wife that is fitting for both spouses." Article 65 states: "The wife shall live with her husband in the home that he has prepared for her and shall move from it when he does, unless the contract states otherwise or the purpose of the move is to do her harm." Article 69 provides that a recalcitrant wife is not entitled to receive maintenance in given circumstances, including where she refuses to move to the marital home or leaves it for no good reason, or refuses to travel with her husband for no good reason, or travels without his permission, or works outside the home without his consent, unless the husband's refusal to allow her to work is deemed to be arbitrary. However, the law does not oblige a woman to live with her husband against her

will; she does have the option of seeking a separation. As for unmarried women, the sharia and social mores dictate that women must live with their families and parents. They will only live on their own if they are divorced or widowed, for example, or if they are not married but are of a certain age, or if they have no one to provide for them.

Challenges and future outlook

410. The fact that some women have little awareness of their legal rights or of the procedures for securing and exercising their rights poses a real challenge for efforts to improve their situation. This is compounded by the fact that women are reluctant to attend talks and discussions to familiarize them with their rights. Organizations distribute informational booklets on key legal provisions of relevance to women. These materials include, for example, a series entitled “Know your rights”, which was produced by the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. New methods must be found to reach out to these women. One of the main challenges that women face in securing their rights before the courts is ignorance of legal procedures.

Article 16

Marriage and family life

411. “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

“(a) The same right to enter into marriage;

“(b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;

“(c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;

“(d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

“(e) The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;

“(f) The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

“(g) The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;

“(h) The same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration.

412. “The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.”

Constitutional and legislative framework

413. The family is one of the foundations of Qatari society. Article 21 of the Constitution provides: “The family is the foundation of society and its mainstays are religion, morality

and patriotism. The law regulates the means for protecting the family, supporting the family unit, strengthening family bonds and protecting mothers, children and older persons.” All the sharia rules on matters relating to the family such as marriage, divorce, care of young children (*hadanah*), maintenance and so on have been incorporated into the Family Act No. 22 of 2006. The Act is the first written statute on the family to have been adopted in Qatar. The bill was drafted in 2000 by a committee chaired by the sharia courts. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs contributed to its development through the comments that it provided, many of which were taken into account. It suggested inter alia that: a minimum age for marriage should be established; mandatory premarital testing should be introduced; means tests should be conducted as a condition for allowing a man to take more than one wife; and the provisions on forcible obedience should not be applied.

414. No law has ever been discussed as extensively as the Family Act. It was discussed for years in the general debates organized by the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, in media stories and in radio and television programmes in which Islamic scholars, legal experts and people who work on family and women’s issues in Qatar and the Arab world participated. The contents of the Act were discussed in full and the discussions helped to shape the final form of the Act.

415. The Family Act offers some flexibility, insofar as article 3 states that the prevailing view of the Hanbali school should be invoked to resolve matters not covered by the Act, unless a court decides otherwise for reasons that must be explained in its decision. If there is no prevailing view in the Hanbali school on a matter not covered by the Act, the court may apply whatever views of the four schools of law that it deems relevant, failing which it must apply the rules of Islamic jurisprudence.

416. Article 4 states that the Act applies to those subject to Hanbali rules of law. The situation of other persons is regulated under other laws. For non-Muslims special provisions on family matters apply. In any event, the provisions of the Act apply if the parties so request it or if they do not share the same religion or denomination.

417. The established family model in Qatar is one based on a lawful marriage between a man and a woman. Any other model is considered illegitimate or unlawful and is not governed by the Family Act.

Marriage

418. For a marriage contract to be valid it is essential that the woman consents to the marriage. According to article 12 of the Act, a marriage contract is valid if both partners have legal capacity, are not barred by law from marrying and both give their consent. Article 13 of the Family Act lists the criteria for valid consent, stating that consent must be given freely in words that signify marriage as understood in the language or customary norms. If the spouses are unable to speak, consent can be provided in writing or by means of a comprehensible sign.

419. It is not permitted under the Family Act for women to contract their own marriage. Article 26 provides: “The guardian of the woman shall conclude her marriage contract, with her consent.” It also states that the guardian in marriage is the father, or the agnatic grandfather, or the son, or the full brother, or the half-brother on the father’s side, or the full uncle, or the paternal uncle, in that order. The guardian must be a male adult of sound mind who is not in a state of consecration for the hajj or the *umrah* (the “minor hajj”). He must be a Muslim, if the ward is a Muslim”. Article 30 of the Act provides: “The judge shall act as a guardian for those who have no guardian. He may not enter into marriage with a person under his guardianship.”

420. Women are protected from arbitrary denial by a guardian of the right to marry. Article 29 of the Family Act provides that a marriage may be concluded with authorization from a sharia judge in the following circumstances:

- Where the women's closest guardian prevents her from marrying and/or her guardians in the same degree of kinship prevent her from so doing or disagree with one another
- Where the closest guardian is absent and the judge decides that it is not in the woman's interest to wait to hear the guardian's opinion. The family court has contracted several marriages based on this provision of the article

421. Article 35 of the Act states that the parties to a marriage may include special conditions in the contract. The article specifies how these conditions affect the validity of the contract. It provides that the conditions to be cited in evidence. A woman can stipulate in a marriage contract that she must be allowed to continue to study or work, that her husband cannot take another wife, or that she will not be required to accompany her husband on his travels.

Marrying age

422. According to the Family Act No. 22 of 2006, the minimum age for marriage is 16 years for girls and 18 years for boys. Article 17 of the Act provides that a girl below this age may only be married with her guardian's consent, with the proven consent of both parties and with permission from a competent judge. This is a key provision of the Act; there was no minimum age for marriage before the Act was issued.

423. Education is one of the main factors that explains why early marriage in Qatar is now such a rare occurrence. As marriage prevents girls in particular from continuing their general education, families prefer to defer a marriage until their daughters have gained at least a secondary school certificate. The authorities advise families wishing to have their daughters marry at an early age to wait, given that, under the Family Act, a girl below marrying age may only be married with the consent of her guardian, on condition that both parties have been shown to have given their consent and subject to the approval of a competent judge.

Financial independence of the wife

424. In the sharia women are recognized as having financial independence. There is nothing in the legislation on the organization of economic life that reveals any discrimination between women and men. The provisions on the organization of economic processes such as trade, industry, investments, share dealing, access to bank loans and the opening of bank accounts are all worded in general terms and apply to all citizens.

425. There is nothing in the sharia to prevent a married couple from agreeing to share financial liability under the terms of their marriage contract such that anything earned by one of the partners during the marriage will be considered joint property. It can happen that, a married businesswoman or a female property owner sometimes suffers financial losses after a separation, especially if she contributed to the costs of purchasing or building the family home, which is normally registered in the husband's name. An awareness campaign needs to be launched to protect the rights of wives in such cases. The Family Act No. 22 of 2006 affirms that women have the right to have whatever they spend on the marital home returned to them. Article 46 provides that a wife may reclaim the money that she contributed to the construction of the marital home from her husband. This money will not be considered as a gift, unless it has been explicitly declared to be such. Article 47 of the Act states that any dispute between the spouses over the home furnishings will be settled

based on evidence or a sworn oath. Article 48 adds that if the evidence is evenly balanced or cannot be produced, the spouses must share the furnishings equally.

Responsibilities of marriage partners

426. According to article 55 of the Act, when two people marry they acquire joint rights as well as individual legal rights vis-à-vis their spouse. Article 56 of the Act defines the joint rights of spouses, article 57 the rights of a wife vis-à-vis her husband and article 58 the rights of the husband vis-à-vis the wife. Both partners must observe these rights and abide by them in good faith, as this is essential to cementing the marital bond and ensuring the stability of family life.

427. According to the sharia, husbands have the right to look after their wives' affairs. The role of the man in the family is not that of a supervisor but rather a responsibility that must be borne by one of the marriage partners. Under the sharia this role is assigned to the husband in keeping with the verses of the Holy Koran, which explicitly states: "And they (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in kindness, and men are a degree above them. God is Mighty, Wise" (Koran, verse 208 of the chapter entitled *Al-Baqrah* (The Cow), and "Men are custodians of women, because God hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women)" (Koran, verse 34 of the chapter entitled *Al-Nisa'* (Women). Thus, men are responsible for protecting and maintaining the family. The custodianship arrangement does not imply that men can rule over women or dictate to them, nor does it mean that a wife or a woman can be denied her family role. A relationship based on respect, which is what the sharia seeks to foster, must be based on balanced and equal rights and obligations and on consultation in married life. Some men mistakenly believe that custodianship means that they have the right to rule over their wives and to decide what kind of work their wives can and cannot do or what occupation they may pursue. This is to misunderstand what custodianship means and is a misconstruction that the authorities responsible for dealing with Islamic and family affairs are attempting to rectify.

428. According to the sharia, both women and men enjoy financial independence. Article 57 of the Family Act states that wives have the right to protection of their property. There is nothing in the sharia to prevent a married couple from agreeing to include provisions in the contract to the effect that they will hold their property in common. This means that anything earned by one of the partners during the marriage will be considered their joint property. It may happen that a married businesswoman or a female property owner sometimes suffers financial losses after a separation, especially if she contributed to the costs of purchasing or building the family home, which is normally registered in the husband's name. These situations can be ascribed to a lack of awareness among women of their rights and the social stigma associated with asking for a wife's financial contributions to be documented. To do so would be considered an affront to social mores and the wife might fear that it would be construed as a lack of trust in the husband and thus adversely affect the marriage. More needs to be done, therefore, to raise awareness among both women and men. This issue is addressed in articles 46–48 of the Family Act, concerning marital disputes.

Care of young children (*hadanah*)

429. Both spouses are responsible for caring for young children during marriage. When a marriage ends, the right to provide such care is assigned as a matter of priority to the mother. As stated in article 166 of the Family Act: "Both parents have a duty to care for young children as long as their marriage lasts. If they separate, even if by means other than divorce, the mother shall have the right to care for the minor, unless a court decides otherwise in the interests of the child. The court shall endeavour to reconcile the two

parties, provided that a reconciliation does not harm the interests of the child. The right to care for young children is a renewable right. If an impediment ceases to obtain or is removed pursuant to a court judgement, the right of *hadanah* may be restored. The right to care for young children is shared between the carer and the child. The right of the child takes precedence.”

430. The legislature has established that the period of *hadanah* comes to an end at the age of 13 for boys and 15 for girls. However, the courts have discretion to extend the arrangement in the interests of the child or to allow a child to choose between the disputing parties if they have both been shown to be fit to care for the child. Moreover, a mother may be allowed to continue to care for a child if the child has special needs.

431. Matters of guardianship with respect to minors’ property are regulated under Act No. 40 of 2004. Pursuant to articles 18, 19 and 21–23, women have the right, without discrimination between them and men, to act as a custodian of a minor’s property. The articles state that one or more males or females can act as custodian, provided that they are fair, qualified, legally competent, trustworthy and of the same religion as the minor.

Maintenance

432. As stated in article 57 of the Act, an article that deals with the rights of wives vis-à-vis husbands, wives are entitled to maintenance, even if they are wealthy. The Act provides: “Maintenance includes food, clothing, housing, medical treatment and everything normally needed for a person’s life”. The rules on maintenance in marriage are set out in articles 61–73. A wife may have her right to maintenance revoked by a court, if she is shown to have displayed recalcitrance as defined in article 69 of the Act.

433. Articles 74–84 of the Family Act list rules on maintenance of relatives, the main ones being the following:

- (a) Fathers must maintain their daughters until the daughters marry;
- (b) Fathers must maintain daughters who divorce or become widowed, unless the daughters have their own means;
- (c) Parents must be maintained by wealthy offspring (whether male or female) that have the means to keep them;
- (d) Fathers must maintain children being cared for under the *hadanah* arrangement, unless they do not have the means to do so.

434. In article 83 of the Family Act, maintenance is defined as a privileged debt. In practice, however, divorced women face many difficulties in having maintenance orders enforced, either because of the length of procedures or because the ex-husband does not honour his obligation to pay maintenance. Since this problem adversely affects women and children, the authorities are examining a proposal to establish a maintenance fund on which women can draw if an ex-husband fails to comply with a maintenance order.

435. According to article 115 of the Act, a divorced woman is entitled to compensation if the husband is the one responsible for the divorce. This provision does not apply if the divorce is granted on the ground of failure to maintenance owing to indigence on the part of the husband. The amount of compensation will be determined based on the man’s financial status and the circumstances of the woman. It must not in any case exceed the equivalent of three years’ maintenance.

436. Article 181 of the Family Act states that a divorced woman has the right to remain in the marital home if she is caring for her children and if her ex-husband has been given State housing because he has remarried.

437. The Qatari legislature addresses the question of housing for women (including divorced women) in Act No. 2 of 2007, concerning the housing scheme. According to Cabinet Decision No. 17 of 2007, concerning the priorities for access to housing benefit, divorced women are entitled to receive gifts of land from the State and subsidized loans for the construction of a home five years from the date of their divorce. According to Cabinet Decision No. 18 of 2007, concerning the priorities and regulations on access to housing benefit for persons in need, divorced women in straitened circumstances have the right to be provided with a free housing unit or a rental allowance. In this way, the legislature has created several alternatives to ensure that adequate housing is made available to Qatari women.

Termination of marriage

Divorce

438. Divorces are essentially initiated by men, based on his wishes alone. However, a husband may authorize his wife to have a condition written into the marriage contract whereby she also has the right to ask him for a divorce. Thus, in such cases, a woman can divorce her husband, if a stipulation to that effect is included in the marriage contract. Article 109 of the Family Act provides: “Divorce is initiated by the husband, a representative of the husband who has been given power of attorney, or the wife, if the husband has given her permission to ask him for a divorce.”

Khula` (consensual dissolution of marriage initiated by a wife)

439. *Khula`*, as defined in article 118 of the Family Act, is the dissolution of marriage by mutual consent. It may be effected orally or through the payment of compensation by the wife. As stated in the Act, the fact that a wife pays compensation in these circumstances cannot be construed as implying that she has forfeited her right to care for her children or any other rights. Article 122 of the Act states that if there is no agreement between the spouses on the dissolution of the marriage, a court must attempt to bring about a reconciliation and appoint two mediators to work towards that end for a period of up to six months. If the mediators fail in their efforts and the wife asks for the marriage to be dissolved in exchange for her forfeiting all her financial rights under the law and repaying the bride price (*mahar*) that the husband gave her, a court can issue a decree of judicial separation.

Decree of judicial separation

440. According to the Family Act, a spouse can seek a separation if there is evidence that the other spouse suffers from an irreversible defect or an incurable or long-term illness and if it is impossible to live with that person without suffering severe harm. A wide range of defects or illnesses that warrant the granting of a separation are mentioned in the Act. The list is not exhaustive; instead, the assistance of subject matter experts may be enlisted in this regard (arts. 123–127).

441. The Act provides that a wife who has not been paid the bride price can seek a separation if the marriage has not been consummated (art. 128).

442. Moreover, a wife can seek a separation before or after her marriage has been consummated on the ground that she cannot continue to live with her husband. The Act states that a judge must endeavour to bring about a reconciliation. If his efforts at reconciliation fail, and if there is evidence of damage being suffered, the judge must issue a decree of judicial separation. Hearsay testimony may be taken as evidence of damage (arts. 129–136).

443. A wife has the right to petition for a divorce if her husband fails to maintain her or is indigent (Family Act, arts. 137–143) or if the husband is absent, missing or in prison (arts. 143–145).

Family planning

444. The subject of family planning is covered in the Family Act or any other domestic legislation, as it is a private matter for married couples that does not allow for outside interference. There is nothing in the sharia that prohibits the use of family planning methods, particularly when justified on legitimate grounds (such as an illness). Rules on the practice are set out in the general provisions of the sharia and in the opinions issued by Islamic jurists. In keeping with the requirements of article 12 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, health institutions provide all kinds of health care, free of charge, for mothers and children.

Adoption

445. Adoption is incompatible with the duty to preserve clear lines of filial descent under the sharia. Hence, it is prohibited under Islamic law, which does not allow for a child or a person of unknown parentage to be recognized as the offspring of anyone other than his or her biological father or parents. However, the sharia does provide for an alternative to adoption — kafalah — an arrangement whereby a family or family members who meet given conditions and criteria can care for children of unknown parentage under the supervision of the Qatar Foundation for the Welfare of Orphans. The children keep their own name or, in the case of foundlings, the name given to them by a court. They do not have the right to inherit from the carer, although the carer can make them a gift of up to one third of his or her estate. Orphans whose parentage is known are cared for in the extended-family setting.

Inheritance

446. The right to inherit is afforded to men and women and regulated by the sharia. The rules on the distribution of shares in an estate are set forth in the Holy Koran. The Family Act draws on these sources. A detailed explanation of the subject of inheritance is provided in the section on article 15 of the Convention.

Family courts

447. Pursuant to Act No. 10 of 2003, the sharia and the civil courts in Qatar were amalgamated. In the past, the sharia courts issued rulings in personal status cases on the basis of the sharia.

448. Under Act No. 22 of 2006, one or more divisions of the first instance court and court of appeal (“the Family Court”) are competent to hear family and inheritance cases and disputes.

449. The Family Act contains provisions on certain procedural matters. Other matters are governed by the rules laid down in the Code of Civil and Commercial Pleadings, as amended. Given that family cases are private matters and that it is important to ensure that decisions are taken on them promptly, a bill has been drawn up on judicial procedures in family and inheritance cases.

450. A branch of the Family Advice Centre was set up in the courthouse in 2004 further to a cooperation agreement that the Centre concluded with the Supreme Council of the Judiciary. The branch dispenses legal advice and counselling and makes special efforts to resolve disputes and reconcile disputing parties, working on that score in continuous coordination with the courts. Cases are referred to the Centre by the Family Court for the

former to look into the background issues and to attempt to reconcile the opposing parties. This work is done by a group of advisers and counsellors with training in social work, psychology, Islamic law and legal affairs. Family-based solutions are sought in the following cases:

- Cases before the court: cases referred for reconciliation, such as petitions for divorce, *khula`*, maintenance and the right to visit a child being cared for under the *hadanah* arrangement, and family disputes and so on
- Enforcement of judgements: cases involving the issuance of judgements or decisions on the transfer of *hadanah* or the right to visit or see a child being cared for under the *hadanah* arrangement
- Verification: cases in which spouses agree to a divorce or a dissolution by mutual consent (*khula`*); some of these cases are referred to the Centre for it to pursue reconciliation efforts.

Reservations entered by the State to article 16, paragraph 1 (a), (c) and (f), of the Convention

451. The State entered reservations to article 16, paragraph 1 (a), of the Convention, concerning the equal right of men and women to enter into marriage, as it is inconsistent with the provisions of Islamic law that assign certain rights to men in marriage, such as the right to enter into marriage without the guardian having to be there, the right to marry a woman who belongs to the “People of the Book” (i.e. who is a member of the Christian or the Jewish faith), and the right to take more than one wife.

452. The State also entered a reservation to paragraph 1 (c) of the article, which states that men and women must be given the same rights and responsibilities during marriage and its dissolution. This is inconsistent with the provisions of Islamic law, according to which the partners in a marriage have separate rights, together with rights that they share.

453. The State entered a reservation to article 16, paragraph 1 (f), of the Convention, which states that men and women must be given the same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; the interests of the child being the primary consideration in all cases. The reservation was entered because adoption is not recognized under Islamic or Qatari law. Moreover, women’s guardianship of children is confined to child-rearing; it is not all-embracing and does not include the right to represent minor children in marriage (in the Family Act, the minimum age for marriage is set at 16 for females and 18 for males).

Challenges and future outlook

454. Islamic law and the laws in force in Qatar afford women equitable treatment in marriage and in family relations. However, women have little awareness of their legal rights, particularly in regard to personal status matters, and this leaves them vulnerable to discrimination and poses a challenge to the efforts being made at the governmental and non-governmental levels to achieve gender equality.

455. In addition, there are other challenges such as the lengthiness of judicial procedures, particularly in family cases, and poor coordination between governmental and non-governmental organizations that are responsible for protecting women from domestic violence.

456. The State monitors progress towards the realization of strategic development goals relating to families and family members; activities to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women that deal

with marriage and family relations; efforts to raise awareness of the contents of the Convention; and training of law enforcement personnel, lawyers, and journalists in particular about the Convention, thus helping to create more opportunities for the realization of gender equality in this domain. Moreover, the authorities are examining a bill on judicial procedures in family and inheritance cases which, if adopted, could bring an end to the difficulties that women encounter in family cases.

Article 29

Interpretative declarations regarding article 29 of the Convention

Interpretative declaration of Qatar regarding article 29 of the Convention

457. The State of Qatar made an interpretative declaration regarding article 29, paragraph 2, of the Convention, which states: "Each State Party may at the time of signature or ratification of the present Convention or accession thereto declare that it does not consider itself bound by paragraph 1 of this article. The other States Parties shall not be bound by that paragraph with respect to any State Party which has made such a reservation." The interpretative declaration of Qatar is explained hereunder.

458. Article 29 of the Convention states that any dispute between two or more States parties concerning the interpretation or application of the Convention must be settled by arbitration or by the International Criminal Court. The article allows for a reservation to be entered to this provision. In exercise of the right afforded to it under this article, Qatar decided to enter a reservation so that it would not be compelled to submit to international arbitration or a decision of the International Criminal Court but would remain free to decide whether it wished to do so should a dispute arise. The State has entered reservations to similar provisions of other treaties to which it is a party, particularly in recent years.

Conclusion

459. In submitting this report to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Government of Qatar confirms that it will do its utmost to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. This it will do based on the Constitution of Qatar, its national vision, which is to build a safe and stable society guided by the principles of justice, equality and the rule of law, and to build the capacities of women, enable them to participate actively in economic, political and public life and ensure that they have access to decision-making positions. The State will work diligently to achieve its vision of improving the social status of women and ensuring that they, working side by side with men, can contribute more to the development of Qatari society.

460. Qatar thanks the Committee for the pioneering work that it has done to empower and build the capacities of women and pledges to forge closer ties with the Committee and to submit all available information in its future reports.

Annex

Laws, decisions and decrees

1. Act No. 38 of 1995, concerning social security
2. Act No. 25 of 2001, concerning compulsory education
3. Act No. 24 of 2002, as amended, concerning retirement and pensions
4. Act No. 10 of 2003, promulgating the Judicial Authority Act
5. Act No. 2 of 2004, concerning persons with special needs
6. Act No. 11 of 2004, promulgating the Criminal Code, as amended
7. Act No. 12 of 2004, as amended, concerning associations and private institutions
8. Act No. 14 of 2004, as amended, promulgating the Labour Code, as amended
9. Act No. 22 of 2004, promulgating the Civil Code
10. Act No. 23 of 2004, promulgating the Code of Criminal Procedures
11. Act No. 40 of 2004, concerning custodianship of minors' property
12. Decree-Law No. 21 of 2006, concerning private associations that contribute to public welfare
13. Act No. 22 of 2006, promulgating the Family Act
14. Act No. 2 of 2007, concerning the housing scheme and implementing decrees
15. Act No. 7 of 2007, concerning the adjudication of administrative disputes
16. Act No. 12 of 2008, concerning the establishment of the Supreme Constitutional Court
17. Act No. 19 of 2008, concerning payment of blood money
18. Amiral Decree No. 51 of 2007, approving the establishment of the Arab Democracy Foundation
19. Amiral Decree No. 86 of 2007, approving the establishment of the Doha Centre for Media Freedom
20. Amiral Decree No. 3 of 2008, approving the establishment of the Silatech Foundation
21. Amiral Decree No. 44 of 2008, adopting the Qatar Vision
22. Amiral Decree No. 15 of 2009, concerning the organization of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs
23. Ministerial Decision No. 10 of 2010, concerning the establishment of the Committee for Follow-up on Parental Breaches of the Compulsory Education Act
24. Amiral Decree No. 20 of 2010, approving the establishment of the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue
25. Cabinet Decision No. 17 of 2007, concerning the regulations on access to housing benefit

26. Cabinet Decision No. 18 of 2007, concerning the priorities and regulations on access to housing benefit for persons in need
27. Supreme Council for Family Affairs Presidential Decree No. 4 of 2007, turning the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women into a private, public welfare institution
28. Supreme Council for Family Affairs Presidential Decree No. 1 of 2008, concerning the founding document of the Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking
29. Decree No. 54 of 1995, as amended, approving the State's accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - Document withdrawing part of a reservation
30. Decree No. 15 of 2003, as amended, approving the State's accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
 - Document withdrawing a reservation
31. Decree No. 28 of 2008, concerning the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
32. Decree No. 28 of 2009, concerning the State's accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
33. Decree No. 17 of 2010, concerning the Committee on the Rights of the Child

The comprehensive vision of development set out in the Qatar National Vision 2030 report was adopted with a view to building the capacities of Qatari nationals in the framework of human development – the first thematic area of the Vision. The aim here is to support the development of the people of Qatar so that they in their turn will be able to build a prosperous society. As for social development, the second thematic area, the aim is to develop, based on high moral standards and social welfare, a just and caring society that is capable of interacting with other societies and playing a significant role in the global partnership for development and related implementation measures, namely, the formulation of a strategic development plan for Qatar that will translate the political commitment to the promotion of women’s participation in all aspects of life in society into meaningful action, particularly with respect to women’s participation in economic and political decision-making.
