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Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 1 March 2022, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Pazartzis

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant
(continued)

Initial report of Qatar (continued) (CCPR/C/QAT/1; CCPR/C/QAT/Q/1; CCPR/C/QAT/RQ/1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Qatar joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Ben Achour** said that, although tangible progress had been made in terms of legislation that affected such groups as migrant workers and women, he remained concerned about inconsistencies between the will of the State as expressed in its laws and the practical implementation of those laws on the ground. Despite claims to the contrary by the State party, Islamic sharia was incompatible with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in a number of areas, including criminal penalties, family and civil status law, equal inheritance rights of men and women, and freedom of conscience and belief. One possible solution to the problem lay in jurisprudence and the interpretation of religious law. In that regard, it was important to note that, according to the Constitution of Qatar, Islamic sharia was to be a principal source of legislation, but not the only source.
3. **Mr. Gómez Martínez** said that he wished to know what laws and procedures were applied in cases where people were incarcerated for non-violent acts such as adultery, intimate relations outside wedlock, same-sex relations, begging, the consumption of alcohol and substance abuse. Did the Government have plans to apply non-custodial penalties for such acts or to decriminalize them altogether?
4. He understood that persons aspiring to become judges had to have the qualities of “good conduct and good reputation” and had to pass a personal interview and undergo a training course. In that connection, he wished to know how a person was determined to be of “good conduct and good reputation”, what form the interview took and by whom it was conducted and how long the training course lasted. Once a definitive list of candidates had been drawn up, was it possible for the Emir or the Supreme Judicial Council to modify it or exclude a name at will? He would be interested to learn how members of the Supreme Council were selected.
5. The information provided by the State party regarding the length of judges’ appointments, including those of non-Qatari judges, was insufficient to assuage the Committee’s concerns about their security of tenure, which was a prerequisite for judicial independence. The fact that some judges apparently held only temporary contracts and the fact that the Emir retained the right to dismiss judges in the public interest were particularly worrisome. The Committee had been pleased to learn that the Supreme Judicial Council had recently issued a code of judicial conduct and wished to know if a body had been created to oversee its implementation.
6. In the light of reports that the Mesaimeer Religious Complex was too small to host all the Christian communities present in Qatar, he would like to know if the authorities had plans to allow non-Muslim worshippers to practise their faith outside the confines of the Complex. Did any of the Christian groups inside the Complex include Qatari citizens among their members? He would be interested to learn how the State reconciled its constitutional obligation to ensure freedom of worship with provisions in the Criminal Code prescribing prison terms for blasphemy and proselytism and the death penalty for apostasy. He would appreciate information about any judicial proceedings in that connection and would be interested to learn whether or not the law on apostasy was still being enforced. He wished to know what action the State was taking to combat any discrimination or social pressures suffered by Muslims who converted to another faith and to protect the rights of Muslim women who married non-Muslim men. Could the delegation confirm reports that some expatriate Christians had been deported from the country for proselytizing? He would be interested to learn if the State intended to withdraw its declaration concerning article 18 (2) of the Covenant.
7. He wondered if a bill introduced in January 2020 that envisaged prison terms of up to 5 years for the publication of biased or false news reports had been passed into law and, if

so, how the new law guaranteed freedom of expression. The Committee was concerned about reports that newspapers publishing critical articles could be closed down by the authorities. Was there a government office in charge of censorship? He would welcome an explanation of the reasons behind the decision to close the Doha Centre for Media Freedom in 2019 and a description of any safeguards that were in place to guarantee freedom of information at the Government-owned Al-Jazeera television station. It was surprising that an executive body such as the Ministry of Culture and Sports should exercise “judicial authority to monitor and oversee material published via the media”, as noted in the State party’s initial report (CCPR/C/QAT/1). Further information on the Ministry’s mandate in that respect would therefore be appreciated.

8. **Ms. Sancin** said that she wished to learn more about the legal basis for the restrictions introduced to protect the public’s health during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. What monitoring mechanism had been set up to ensure the necessity and proportionality of those measures? She hoped to receive additional information about the procedures used to provide women and girls with access to safe abortions, particularly in cases of rape or incest. In that connection, she had been surprised to see rape included in a list of what were described as non-violent acts in the State party’s reply to the list of issues (CCPR/C/QAT/RQ/1).

9. The Committee would be interested to know what the minimum sentence was for a person convicted of torture. She was still uncertain about the distinction between torture and “acts of cruelty” as envisaged in article 161 of the Criminal Code. The delegation’s claim that no complaints of ill-treatment had been received appeared to contradict information contained in the initial report concerning cases brought against public officials. Could the delegation provide information about any similar cases, including details of prosecutions, convictions, penalties and compensation? She wished to know if the State was planning to propose any specific legislation on torture and ill-treatment to supplement the existing provisions of the Criminal Code. The Committee would be interested to hear about any plans to extend the prohibition on corporal punishment, which currently covered children up to the age of 16, to include persons up to the age of 18 in line with the definition of a child under international law.

10. She welcomed the recent release, as part of the precautionary and preventive measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, of 200 persons who had been in prison for non-payment of debts, and she wished to know if their release was temporary or permanent. She would be interested to know if there were any plans to amend the law so that an inability to fulfil a contractual obligation would no longer be grounds for imprisonment, as that practice was incompatible with article 11 of the Covenant.

11. She was gratified to learn of the recent amnesty of 514 prisoners and wished to know if the new custodial facilities mentioned in the replies to the list of issues were operational and, if so, whether they were helping to alleviate the problem of prison overcrowding. She would appreciate further details about the measures taken by the Committee for Crisis Management to curb the spread of COVID-19 in prisons and wished to know if account had been taken of inmates’ specific vulnerabilities. Had the State party considered adopting non-custodial alternatives to imprisonment such as bail and release, particularly for persons convicted of non-violent offences?

12. **Mr. Furuya** said that he welcomed the January 2021 agreement whereby unilateral coercive measures imposed on Qatar in 2017 by surrounding Gulf States had been lifted. As more than a year had passed since the conclusion of that agreement, the Committee wished to know whether citizens of Qatar or of any other Gulf country still faced obstacles related to cross-border travel, work or study. He wished to commend Qatar on its recent adoption of the Political Asylum Act, which could serve as a model for other States. He looked forward to hearing details about the application process for asylum seekers and refugees and would be interested to see a breakdown of their countries of origin. He remained concerned, however, about some of the restrictions placed upon asylum seekers and refugees regarding their place of residence in Qatar and their right to engage in political activity, express their views through the media and participate in demonstrations. Could the delegation provide information on what steps the authorities took to protect the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in that connection?

13. While Qatar was to be congratulated on its first Shura Council elections, held in October 2021, the Committee nonetheless had certain concerns about the conduct and outcome of the electoral process. According to some reports, only nationals whose families had been resident in Qatar since before 1930 had the right to vote, while citizens who were classified as “naturalized” were not enfranchised. Moreover, naturalized status was apparently inherited, which meant that the descendants of naturalized persons also had no right to vote. He therefore wished to invite the delegation to inform the Committee whether the right to vote was indeed restricted to certain citizens and, if so, why. He would also be interested to learn what proportion of the population had been eligible to participate in the 2021 election. The Committee was concerned that no women had been elected to the Council and hoped the delegation could explain why that was the case and what Qatar intended to do to ensure that Shura Council members reflected the diversity of Qatari society.

14. **Mr. Muhumuza** said that, as new legislation that criminalized the broadcasting or publishing of biased reports had the potential to restrict freedom of speech, he would like to know how the State party ensured the right to freedom of expression, especially on social media. How was “biased” news defined or categorized? He wished to learn whether any law was in place to protect the right to freedom of association for domestic, government, migrant and foreign workers. It would be useful to know more about the powers and scope of work of trade unions and the extent to which their decisions were enforced.

15. He would also like to know whether the State party had considered alternatives to corporal punishment for juvenile offenders, whether the corporal punishment of children by parents or other persons was penalized, and how the Government guaranteed that practices with respect to corporal punishment did not infringe the right to freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

16. In the light of reports that some migrant workers who were assisting with the preparations for the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup had not been paid for over seven months, the Committee would welcome clarification as to whether all salaries had been paid in full.

17. **Ms. Bassim** said that, according to information received by the Committee, although there was a maximum initial period of pretrial detention, the duration of such detention was in some cases prolonged by means of a series of extensions, sometimes for a period of years. She would therefore appreciate details on any existing measures or plans to reduce the absolute maximum length of pretrial detention in line with article 9 (3) of the Covenant. The Committee would also like to know how many people had been held in pretrial detention over the preceding five years, how the Government intended to reduce that number and whether any alternatives to pretrial detention were being considered.

18. She understood that the age of criminal responsibility in Qatar was currently 7 years of age, which she found deeply distressing. In its replies to the list of issues, the State party had noted that it intended to promulgate the Children’s Act in early 2021, which would bring the age of criminal responsibility into line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Could the delegation inform the Committee whether that law had indeed been adopted and had entered into force?

19. The Committee would welcome clarification on article 19 of Act No.1 of 1994 and specifically on the maximum sentences applicable to juveniles aged 14 to 16 years in the case of *hudud* crimes. It would also be useful to know whether any efforts were being made in the State party to raise the age of persons eligible for the reduced sentences provided for in that law from 16 to 18 years in line with the definition of a child set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

20. **Mr. Bulkan** said that, in the light of the extensive reforms to the legislative framework related to domestic workers which had been introduced, he would like to know whether any employers had been prosecuted for violating the rights of such workers. If so, he would like to invite the delegation to provide information on the number of prosecutions and convictions.

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 11.25 a.m.

21. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) said that, while his Government was firmly committed to implementing the Covenant, it would be necessary for the Government to amend some of its national laws in order to align them with certain articles of the Covenant before it was in a position to fully implement those provisions. The Government was proceeding to do so, but the process was a lengthy one.

22. **Mr. Al-Jusaiman** (Qatar) said that there was no contradiction between Islamic sharia and the articles of the Covenant that his Government had accepted. However, his Government had expressed reservations upon accession to the Covenant in relation to the issues of homosexuality and equality in inheritance, and it needed more time to review its position in that regard. The Qatari Constitution stated that sharia was the source of national law, and it therefore took precedence over international instruments.

23. **Mr. Al-Muhannadi** (Qatar), responding to the Committee's request for more information on torture, said that, during the inspections carried out by the Human Rights Department and the National Committee for Human Rights between 2012 and 2018, they had not noted any cases of torture. The penalties of flogging and stoning had been abolished. More information in that connection could be found in the replies of Qatar to the list of issues in relation to its initial report ([CCPR/C/QAT/RQ/1](#)).

24. The Ministry of the Interior and other relevant authorities had taken the necessary measures since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic to avoid prison overcrowding. The Emir had pardoned over 400 prisoners to that end. The Government had made an effort to provide all appropriate health care in the country's prisons, and a number of prisoners infected with COVID-19 had been transferred to hospital. Correctional centres had been provided with medical equipment for the treatment of cases of COVID-19.

25. There was a specific law in place in Qatar on the granting of political asylum, and article 9 of that law granted unrestricted freedom of movement and protection to refugees. Under the Constitution, all legal residents in Qatar enjoyed the protection of their property. The authorities determined the place of residence of asylum seekers in order to ensure their safety and security, not to restrict their movement. There had been 89 applications for asylum in the State party, but the majority had been submitted by persons seeking employment rather than political asylum. A commission had consequently been established with members from the relevant ministries to examine asylum applications and to determine whether they were in line with the relevant legal provisions.

26. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) said that 90 per cent of asylum applicants were seeking employment and did not meet the requirements to be considered for political refugee status. Some 83,000 Syrians were nonetheless living in Qatar and benefitting from education and health-care services as well as receiving a monthly stipend.

27. **Mr. Al-Jusaiman** (Qatar) said that, under Qatari law, judges were independent and could be dismissed under certain conditions. Judges were appointed by royal decree following a process presided over by a council of high-ranking judges. New judges must undergo an interview, fulfil certain character requirements, be over 25 years old and have a certificate of good conduct from the Ministry of the Interior. The security services also carried out a background check to rule out any security risks. The training course for new judges was three years in duration; during that period, candidates acted as assistants to sitting judges. Candidates considered to be competent upon the completion of that process were then appointed to positions in the court of first instance. There was no set length for the appointments for foreign judges. Qatari legislators believed that the judiciary could benefit from the expertise of judges from different countries, but judges were often needed in their country of origin and could not absent themselves to work abroad for extended periods of time.

28. The code of judicial conduct recently introduced by the Supreme Judicial Council was one of the first in the world to expressly refer to the international instruments, such as the Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenant, which formed its frame of reference and to regulate judges' use of social media, which had been a quite controversial issue. It had been shared internationally and translated into the official languages of the United Nations.

29. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) said that Qatari and foreign judges were appointed under the same royal decree, which demonstrated that there was no discrimination based on a judge's country of origin. In the spirit of the Doha Declaration on Integrating Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice into the Wider United Nations Agenda, the Government was working with the United Nations to train the country's judges.

30. **Ms. Al-Suwaidi** (Qatar) said that the Mesaimeer Religious Complex made it possible for thousands of Christians to practise their religion. It comprised six churches, housing, teaching facilities and a library. Christians throughout the country could practise their religion and establish institutions and schools, some of which received support from the Government. Christians could also access health and education services without discrimination, and non-Muslims were permitted to import religious materials.

31. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) said that no distinction had been drawn between mosques and churches in the application of restrictions designed to protect the population. Both had been closed during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic; indeed, Friday prayers at mosques had been prohibited, and social distancing measures had been imposed during Ramadan. Muslims were not prevented from entering the Mesaimeer Complex.

32. **Mr. Al-Mahmoud** (Qatar) said that the Mesaimeer Religious Complex had been established within the framework of counter-terrorism efforts for the protection of non-Muslims. The approximately 60 non-Muslim places of worship located outside the Complex were asked to inform the Government of their location for their own protection. With regard to the questions asked earlier about the deportation of Christians, it should be noted that religion did not even figure among the personal data on individuals that were recorded for official purposes in Qatar. No restrictions whatsoever were imposed on a person's choice to convert to Islam or Christianity.

33. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) said that the Al-Jazeera media outlet and its employees enjoyed complete freedom from government interference of any kind.

34. **Mr. Al-Mahmoud** (Qatar) said that the Supreme Committee for Crisis Management had been established in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; it counted representatives of a number of government departments among its members and was guided by the Emir.

35. **Mr. Al-Marri** (Qatar) said that the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic had been carefully considered and had been guided by the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) and international best practice. Statistics on maternal mortality included women who had died during pregnancy and in the 40 days after giving birth. Recent figures had demonstrated a maternal mortality rate of 9 deaths per 100,000 live births in Qatar, one of the lowest in the world.

36. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) said that the country's national airline had continued to operate throughout the pandemic, thereby facilitating medical evacuations and the evacuation of 70,000 Afghans from Kabul to Qatar.

37. **Mr. Al-Obaidli** (Qatar) said that a number of employers had been sanctioned for violating workers' rights in 2021. Those cases had included 13 incidents involving violence against domestic workers, 6 cases of ill-treatment of domestic workers and 5 cases of rape. Although challenges persisted with regard to the implementation of recent labour reforms, the Government was working to address violations and to prosecute the perpetrators. As part of that effort, it had recently extended a technical cooperation programme with the International Labour Organization (ILO), and there were plans to convert the ILO project office in Doha into a permanent one. The Government had also signed memorandums of understanding with several countries with a view to sharing expertise relating to the implementation of labour laws and regulations and was working in cooperation with international trade unions. In 2021, around 246,000 workers, including 4,056 domestic workers, had changed employers, and since 2021, 484 employers had been sanctioned for withholding workers' passports. The minimum wage, introduced in 2021, benefited almost 300,000 workers. Approximately 14,000 labour disputes had been resolved by the courts, with a further 5,000 referred to labour dispute settlement committees.

38. The Workers' Support and Insurance Fund had paid 52 million riyals to workers whose employers were no longer able to pay them; those funds would later be recovered from

the employers concerned through the courts. Around 320,000 labour inspections had taken place in 2021, and penalties had been imposed on employers who had been found to be maintaining poor working and living conditions or had been late in paying workers' wages. Workers' rights were protected under a strict system applying to all projects in the country, including those linked to the preparations for the 2022 Fédération Internationale de Football Association World Cup. Workers who left Qatar and were owed wages could receive their pay through the State party's embassies. Twenty-seven complaints of human trafficking involving 35 accused persons had been lodged with the authorities. The authorities were cognizant of the vital role of increased awareness and training in the implementation of laws and regulations, and a large number of awareness-raising campaigns concerning workers' rights had therefore been organized in cooperation with local and international partners.

39. **Mr. Al-Jusaiman** (Qatar) said that *hudud* punishments were not carried out in Qatar. Moreover, under Islamic sharia, such punishments were never applicable to minors. Domestic legislation did not provide for criminal responsibility for children under 7, and the degree of criminal responsibility of persons aged between 7 and 14 increased gradually. Sanctions for minors in that age group included reprimands and referrals to psychological care and shelters staffed by psychologists, social workers and educators. They were not fined, and their parents or guardians were not required to assume responsibility for their crimes. Minors between the ages of 14 and 17 were subject to some sanctions, including limitations to their liberty. The death penalty was not applicable to children under 16. Criminal records did not include convictions handed down to persons during their childhood years.

40. **Mr. Al-Muhannadi** (Qatar) said that only criminal proceedings could result in imprisonment; prison sentences could not be imposed in cases of outstanding debt. Thanks to the construction of new detention facilities and the decrees on the release of prisoners issued by the Emir during the COVID-19 pandemic and to mark Human Rights Day and the first day of Ramadan, there was no overcrowding in the country's prisons or detention centres. Some minor crimes were punished by a few days' detention, after which a court would rule on whether the perpetrator was to be imprisoned or released. Precautionary detention was used only in cases involving terrorism or threats to national security.

41. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) said that pretrial detention, which was limited to six months in duration, was used in exceptional cases of serious crimes and when accused persons could not afford bail. The length of pretrial detention was deducted from a person's prison sentence if he or she was later convicted.

42. **Mr. Al-Mahmoud** (Qatar) said that the Government of Qatar had not introduced any restrictions in relation to the unilateral coercive measures imposed during the blockade of Qatar by other States. Following an agreement with the States in question, the Government had worked with them to abrogate all the provisions of the unilateral coercive measures imposed on Qatar by those countries.

43. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) said that his Government had decided against terminating foreigners' work contracts or residency permits while the unilateral coercive measures had been in place. Many foreign workers had left the country during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Government had allowed those of them who had left the country for longer than six months to return, thereby overriding legal provisions that would normally have led to the revocation of their residency permits.

44. In all, 30 of the 45 members of the Shura Council were directly elected; the others were appointed. The Deputy Speaker was a woman. It was true that the law on voting rights did have some shortcomings, but the Shura Council was committed to remedying them and upholding the equal rights and responsibilities of all citizens.

45. **Mr. Alali** (Qatar) said that the electoral process had been developed quite recently and did stand in need of further refinement but was indeed a step in the right direction. The turnout rate had been 63.7 per cent of citizens of Qatari descent. The turnout rate for women had been 44.2 per cent. Four women had been elected to local councils. Anyone could stand for election, but the final decision lay with the ballot box.

46. **Mr. Al-Obaidli** (Qatar) said that Decree-Law No. 21 of 2021 governed the establishment of civil society organizations, which were entirely free to play a part in

educational, scientific and cultural affairs. There were no specific restrictions on the creation of such organizations; they must simply fulfil the same conditions as any other organization with regard to fees and membership. Members had to be over the age of 18 and have a good reputation. Approximately 30 such organizations were currently in existence, and a further 70 had filed applications. The Government was open to working with civil society organizations and, in fact, held weekly coordination meetings with local and international non-governmental organizations.

47. As for the matter of trade unions, a labour committee could be set up within any company, and any employee could join. Such committees held meetings where discussions might well cover working conditions as well as other matters. The International Trade Union Confederation had helped to conduct a review of the work of the labour committees and had found their structure and membership to be consistent with local standards. The review had also included an assessment of the committees' effectiveness in truly allowing workers' voices to be heard and ensuring that the terms of labour agreements were respected. Elections to such committees had recently been held in 36 enterprises, including a number of hotels and transport companies.

48. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) said that employers' payment of workers' wages was carefully monitored. In one case of non-payment which had been reported in the media, for example, the Government had stepped in and settled the outstanding amount.

49. **Mr. Al-Mahmoud** (Qatar) said that a commission on children's rights had been set up for the first time in 2019 with the aim of drafting a new children's code which would raise the age of majority to 18. The entry into force of the new code had been postponed until the new Council of Ministers had taken office.

50. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) said there was no *hudud* punishment for adultery. The stoning of a person who had committed adultery had been an ancient practice not condoned by the Prophet Muhammad. Penalties such as the cutting off of a person's hand did not exist in Qatar. Outdated provisions of the Criminal Code were amended when the Government deemed that necessary. A member of the Shura Council or of the Supreme Judicial Council could propose amendments to the Code.

51. **Mr. El Haiba** said that he wished to know what obstacles prevented Qatar from acceding to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

52. **Mr. Furuya** said that he would like to know whether the State party planned to abolish the distinction between citizens by descent and those categorized as naturalized citizens in respect of the right to vote in elections to the Shura Council.

53. **Ms. Sancin** said that she would appreciate information about the scope of the criminal offence of "acts of cruelty" in the context of the performance of official duties and how that offence was distinguished from the offence of committing acts of torture and ill-treatment. She wondered why the penalties for the former offence were lighter. Had anyone been charged with that offence? She was surprised that rape was not classified as a violent act and wondered whether the State party might be willing to reconsider that position in the future and to amend its legislation and practices accordingly.

54. **Mr. Gómez Martínez** said that he had not yet received the information he had requested on the average length of pretrial detention under the law on the protection of society, the anti-terrorism law and the State security law, which allowed for longer periods of pretrial detention than were normally permitted, and would be grateful for statistics on the number of persons held under those special laws. Were persons detained under those laws entitled to a lawyer's assistance from the moment they were arrested? He also wished to know how many people had been put to death. Since the State party did not intend to sign the Second Optional Protocol to the Covenant in the immediate future, he would appreciate an indication of whether it might consider introducing a moratorium on the death penalty. He was curious to know what the consequences were if a judge infringed the Code of Judicial Conduct. He had not heard an answer to the earlier question as to whether the death penalty could be imposed for apostasy. Lastly, he would be interested to learn whether there were any mechanisms in place to guarantee the freedom of expression of Al Jazeera journalists.

55. **Mr. Zyberi** said that he wished to know whether the National Committee for Human Rights simply forwarded complaints to other State bodies or whether it had decision-making authority. If so, what force did its decisions have?

56. **Mr. Muhumuza** said that he was curious to know whether workers who left Qatar without being paid did actually receive their wages through the good offices of Qatari embassies. Were there any plans to amend the Constitution to ensure equal voting rights for men and women? He would like to have further information on the steps being taken to guarantee media freedom in practice.

57. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) said that his Government made an effort to protect all domestic workers and their families.

58. **Mr. Al-Obaidli** (Qatar) said that, as from their official arrival in Qatar, temporary migrant workers were considered to be employees under the terms of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Qatar had signed labour agreements on migrant workers with 38 States. It was possible to send outstanding wages through the good offices of embassies if a worker had not received his full wages before leaving the country. However, the Ministry of Labour worked to ensure that all workers did receive their wages before their departure.

59. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) said that careful consideration was being given to granting naturalized citizens the right to vote. Rape was a crime liable to very severe penalties.

60. **Mr. Al-Muhannadi** (Qatar) said that, under the Criminal Code, the maximum initial duration of pretrial detention was four days, but that period could be extended for a further four days. The death penalty had been carried out in only five cases since 2014.

61. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) said that no provision had been made for sanctions in the event of non-compliance with the Code of Judicial Conduct. Judges' work was, however, regularly reviewed in the light of the Code. The Constitution guaranteed equality between men and women, and all citizens were equal before the law.

62. **Mr. Al-Hammadi** (Qatar) said that his Government would carefully study the Committee's comments, recommendations and concluding observations when formulating its policies and national strategies in all fields. He would like to invite the Committee to take account of the varying experiences of different States and their particularities and specific systems when drafting its concluding observations. Qatar was committed to constructive cooperation with the Committee in an ongoing effort to promote and protect human rights.

63. **The Chair** said that the Committee hoped that the State party would consider acceding to the two optional protocols to the Covenant and wished to thank the delegation for its constructive participation in the dialogue and its frank answers to the many questions put to it by the Committee.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.