



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Distr.: General
26 November 2025
English
Original: Arabic
Arabic, English, French and
Spanish only

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Combined second to fourth periodic reports submitted by Qatar under article 35 of the Convention, due in 2022*, **

[Date received: 3 August 2022]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.
** The present document was submitted pursuant to the simplified reporting procedure. It contains the responses of the State Party to the Committee's list of issues prior to reporting (CRPD/C/QAT/QPR/2-4).



Replies to the list of issues prior to reporting

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 1 of the list of issues

1. Following the accession of the State of Qatar to the two international human rights Covenants on 21 May 2018, pursuant to Decree No. 40 of 2018, a committee was formed to examine current legislation and determine to what extent it is consistent with those instruments. The committee – which was set up under Decree No. 27 of 2018 of the Council of Ministers, issued during its ordinary meeting held on 10 October 2018 – is chaired by the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers and its membership is drawn from a number of stakeholders in the State.
2. The provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that relate to its purpose and the general obligations of States Parties do not stipulate that the latter are required to adopt the Optional Protocol. It should be noted, moreover, that ratification of the Convention does not entail any obligation on States Parties to accede also to the Optional Protocol.

Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention

3. Political will in Qatar is to tend towards the ratification of a greater number of treaties and optional protocols, also in view of the State's firm belief in their importance as a way of promoting and protecting human rights. Nonetheless, the State considers it appropriate to accede to such instruments on a gradual basis, believing as it does that the significance of accession lies in quality rather than quantity. The State is also striving to reconcile its national legislation with international agreements, a process that demands a prudent approach to accession as instruments have to be examined in order to determine their consistency with local laws and legislation and thus ensure that all the obligations under a particular instrument can be met.
4. The Optional Protocol does not allow the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to receive any communication concerning a State Party to the Convention that is not also a party to the Protocol. Moreover, each State Party may, at the time of signature or ratification of the Protocol or accession thereto, declare that it does not recognize the competence of the Committee provided for in articles 6 and 7 of the Protocol. The fact that Qatar has not acceded to the Optional Protocol does not hinder its compliance with the Convention. Qatar, in fact, was one of the countries that rejected the language used in the monitoring provisions (arts. 6 and 7 of the Protocol), requesting the moderation of that language and the removal of any suggestion of interference in the internal affairs of other countries. In order to arrive at a compromise text that countries could accept without reservations, the controversial provisions were therefore integrated into an optional protocol, which has no effect on States that merely wish to accede to the Convention.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 2 (a) of the list of issues

5. Qatar acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities under Decree No. 28 of 2008. Article 1 of the Decree stipulates that the Convention – in accordance with article 68 of the Constitution – is to have force of law, taking due account of the reservations and declarations contained in the instrument of accession. The Convention was published in the Official Gazette No. 7, dated 24 July 2008.

6. Under article 68 of the Constitution, Qatar is to apply the provisions of international treaties within its own territory in line with the overarching principle of the “unity of law”. This means that the agencies, institutions and authorities of the State are obliged to implement treaties once they have been ratified by decree and published in the Official Gazette. However, peace treaties, treaties relating to State territory or to sovereignty rights, treaties relating to the public or private rights of citizens and treaties that require an amendment of domestic law need to be issued in the form of a law before they can be enforced.

7. In such cases, the State must amend and adapt its legislation to bring it into line with the treaty in question (in that regard it should be noted that Qatar did not enter any reservation to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). Moreover, any subsequent legislation must be consistent with the treaties to which the State has acceded.

8. The National Committee for Women, Children, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities was brought into being under Council of Ministers Decree No. 26 of 2019. The functions of the Committee include overseeing the rights of persons with disabilities and proposing means to advance towards the goals set forth in international disability-related treaties and instruments to which Qatar is a party. The Committee also makes proposals for accession to other relevant treaties and instruments, and it examines legislation affecting persons with disabilities and proposes amendments with a view to bringing it into line with the international treaties to which the State is a party.

9. For its part, the National Human Rights Committee has called upon legislators drafting a bill on persons with disabilities to undertake a comprehensive review of the national legal system, administrative measures, practical procedures and customary practices to identify and eliminate any provisions that are inconsistent with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities or that run counter to its objectives and goals.

10. The most significant comments made by the National Human Rights Committee concerning the bill are given below.

Section I

Definitions

11. The new bill should adopt a comprehensive definition of disability that takes account of environmental conditions and behavioural barriers and their effect on disability.

12. The bill should also adopt another definition of reasonable accommodation, which is something that poses a real challenge to persons with disabilities and the absence of which prevents them from exercising their rights and freedoms on an equal basis with others.

Section II

Rights of persons with disabilities

13. On this matter, the National Human Rights Committee proposed the following amendments:

- Section II, one of the most important sections of the bill, includes provisions relating to “the rights of persons with disabilities” (arts. 2–11). Almost all of the provisions in the section, with the exception of the last article, are taken from the current law; i.e., Act No. 2 of 2004 concerning persons with special needs.
- By acknowledging that certain persons have certain interests, the law grants such persons the authority to perform specific actions to achieve that interest, and it prohibits others from infringing thereupon. The persons concerned may be required to fulfil certain obligations in order to achieve their interest, and this creates a special legal status that is unique to the persons whose interest is protected by the law, to the exclusion of others.
- In the light of the foregoing, to talk about the rights of persons with disabilities is to talk about a body of interests that the law recognizes as pertaining to them, and they are thus empowered to act to preserve those interests, to the exclusion of others.

14. In addition to all the rights enjoyed by any other citizen or resident of Qatar, persons with disabilities also enjoy the following additional rights:

- Non-discrimination on grounds of disability, type of disability or sex and de facto equality in the exercise of all civil, social, economic and political human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- Separation between civil and political rights, on the one hand, and economic, social, and cultural rights, on the other, without overlooking the rights of the most vulnerable groups, notably children and women with disabilities.

15. Overall, however, the section fails to mention a number of rights including, by way of example, the following:

(i) Civil and political rights

Right to life of persons with disabilities

16. Under article 16 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, States Parties are under an obligation not only to protect the right to life, but also to provide a safe and barrier-free environment.

17. However, the proposed bill does not include any specific provisions or measures relating to the right to life of persons with disabilities. This legislative gap may perhaps be attributed to a lack of clarity on the part of the legislators who drafted the bill regarding the specificity of the right to life of persons with disabilities, whose disability can be a potential basis for discrimination, torture and assault against their lives.

18. Nonetheless, legislators in Qatar have guaranteed the right to life for all citizens, notably in article 21 of the Constitution and in article 305 of the Criminal Code.

19. However, the focus has been on a single interpretation of that right, with no mention of the fact that persons with disabilities may potentially face specific violations to the right to life.

20. The National Human Rights Committee has recommended that a provision concerning the right to life be added to the proposed bill. It has also proposed amending the Criminal Code to include mandatory penalties for any form of physical abuse that may lead to death.

Rights of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies

21. One major risk factor for persons with disabilities in emergencies or situations of serious and imminent danger is the absence of emergency and rescue services for them.

22. The proposed bill makes only a brief reference to emergency services, in article 2 (5) which concerns measures relating to the scope of rights and in article 3 (5) which relates to the provision of a range of services, including relief services.

23. Accordingly, the National Human Rights Committee has expressed the view that the bill should include provisions relating to emergencies and disasters, with specific measures on rescue, ambulance coverage and evacuation of persons with disabilities, taking due account of international standards on accessibility and reasonable accommodation. Alternatively, such provisions could be integrated into the Civil Defence Act No. 9 of 2012.

Right of persons with disabilities to be recognized as equal with other persons before the law

24. The proposed bill makes only a brief and vague reference – in section II, article 2 (10) – to the right of persons with disabilities to decide for themselves about matters that affect them.

25. The National Human Rights Committee has therefore recommended a review of national legislation with a view to amending provisions relating to legal capacity so that

persons with disabilities enjoy full recognition before the law on an equal footing with others, without discrimination on grounds of their disability.

26. The Committee also recommended amendments to legislative provisions in the Civil Code and in the Personal Status Act that contain impediments to legal incapacity, the aim being to prevent disability being an inherent impediment to the enjoyment and exercise of legal capacity.

27. A further recommendation was to amend provisions governing guardianship and trusteeship with a view to ensuring that persons with disabilities can enjoy individual independence and privacy, and to embrace a model of supported decision-making, as envisaged in article 12 of the Convention. This is intended to ensure that no one makes a decision of any kind on behalf of a person with a disability. Rather, the person is helped to make the decision they desire by being informed of the circumstances, the available options and the probable consequences, then provided with the reasonable accommodation necessary to enable the person to express their will.

Right of persons with disabilities to access to justice

28. This right is no different from those mentioned previously in that it is briefly mentioned in section II, article 2 (11), of the bill which concerns the “exercise of political rights and the right to access justice, in accordance with the law”.

29. It also figures in article 3 (7) on “procedural accommodations to enable persons with disabilities to have recourse to justice, as necessary”.

30. The National Human Rights Committee has therefore recommended a review and amendment of the proposed bill and of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

(ii) Economic, social and cultural rights

Right to live independently

31. As with other rights, fleeting mention of this is made in article 2 (8) on “housing that guarantees safe and secure movement and transportation for persons with disabilities”.

32. The right to live independently does not appear to be clearly addressed anywhere in the bill, and legislators have not adopted a clear and comprehensive concept of the right of persons with disabilities to independent living.

33. Qatari legislators have taken a predominantly medical approach to the question of independent living for person with disabilities. This is also evident in the services that are available for such persons.

General observations

34. Section II of the bill does not include certain privileges and exemptions that, in the view of the National Human Rights Committee, persons with disabilities should have, including the following:

- A financial grant for persons with disabilities of a value that reflects their type and degree of disability, to equip the home they are building or living in, according to their specific needs.
- A grant for persons with disabilities whose disability – as assessed by the competent authorities under the relevant conditions and regulations – is such as to require the assistance of a paid driver or servant.
- A marriage grant for persons with disabilities.
- A system of special leave for persons with disabilities, especially women. Moreover, under law and regulations, maternity leave (during pregnancy, childbirth and childcare) for women with disabilities, in addition to being fully paid, is longer in duration than that envisaged for other female workers.

- Workers who are caring for a child or spouse with a disability are entitled to special leave with full pay, which is not counted as part of their other leave entitlements.
- Workers who have a disability or are caring for a child or spouse with a disability are entitled to a reduction in working hours of one to two hours per day, with no deduction of pay, depending upon the type and degree of disability.

35. Having reviewed the comments on the first two sections, the National Human Rights Committee has noted the following:

- The bill should include the general principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the services the State is required to provide and other obligations it is to fulfil and the privileges and exemptions to which persons with disabilities are entitled. Such inclusion – which should be clear and specific and not left to be regulated by administrative decrees – would lead to a number of benefits, including:
 - The form and content of the law would be consistent with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This would strengthen the position of the State at the international level and when submitting reports to the relevant treaty body, and it would be a demonstration of national commitment to comply fully with all the provisions of the Convention.
 - It would provide clarity of vision for decision-makers in the executive branch, as their decrees would derive from a body of overarching principles, while any details could be left to be regulated via administrative decisions that are consistent and compatible with the law. Thus, laying down general principles and broad outlines in the law facilitates and simplifies the application of that law, enabling it to achieve the purpose and goal for which it was enacted.
 - It would help to ensure that persons with disabilities are not denied certain rights or privileges to which they are entitled under the Convention and would explicitly reaffirm the State's respect for its obligations towards such persons.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 2 (b) of the list of issues

36. The Shura Council is responsible for reviewing bills affecting persons with disabilities. In doing so, the Council acts in accordance with article 34 of the Constitution which stipulates: "Citizens have equal rights and duties." The Council has also reviewed the Civil Service Human Resources Act, article 14 of which states: "Government agencies are to employ persons with disabilities in accordance with the quotas set forth in Act No. 2 of 2004 concerning persons with special needs. According to that article: 'Two per cent of posts are to be allocated to persons with special needs, such persons are to be provided with the means they require to perform their functions, and the workplace is to be adapted to meet their requirements.'"

37. The legal framework for equality and non-discrimination is embodied in chapter II ("Fundamental components of society") of the Constitution (arts. 18 and 19). Article 18 stipulates: "Qatari society is founded on the core values of justice, benevolence, freedom, moral rectitude and equality." Under that article, then, equality is one of the underpinnings on which national society is based. The principles articulated in article 18 are reinforced by article 19, which provides: "The State is to preserve the core values of society and to guarantee security, stability and equal opportunities for citizens." All State policies are therefore required to take account of and safeguard the core values of society referred to in article 18, including the principle of equality, which is exalted in Qatar and enjoys constitutional protection. No law or statute can be enacted if it runs counter to that principle. Under Act No. 12 of 2008, promulgated on 18 June 2008, the Supreme Constitutional Court was established to adjudicate in disputes over the constitutionality of laws and regulations, thereby further strengthening the protection envisaged under the Constitution.

38. The general principle of equality is set out in article 18 of the Constitution then elaborated in detail in chapter III (arts. 34 and 35) concerning public rights and duties. Article 34 stipulates: "Citizens have equal rights and duties", while article 35 guarantees the right to

equality and non-discrimination before the law, stating: “All persons are equal before the law and there shall be no discrimination on grounds of sex, origin, language or religion.” Fundamental rights and freedoms – including economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights – are thus enshrined in chapter III (arts. 34–58) of the Constitution on the basis that rights are complementary, interdependent, interrelated and indivisible. Moreover, chapter III provides further human rights safeguards in Qatar by enshrining public rights and freedoms as legal provisions at the very heart of the Constitution, according them primacy over ordinary laws and making them binding.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 2 (c) of the list of issues

39. Social justice for all persons lies at the heart of the Qatar National Vision 2030, the aim of which is to ensure that citizens and residents of the country are able to benefit from development and live lives of dignity. Social justice is a fundamental principle that recognizes the need to remove the barriers that prevent people from enjoying their rights on grounds of their sex, age, race, religion or disability. In that connection, Qatar continues its efforts to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities via projects specifically tailored for them that are integrated into national development strategies. Furthermore, the State provides the ministries principally concerned with the implementation of Act No. 2 of 2004 concerning persons with special needs with the financial resources necessary to run policies and programmes to uphold the rights of persons in that category.

40. Under the Financial System Act, promulgated under Act No. 2 of 2015, and its implementing decrees, all government bodies – including those concerned with the rights of persons with special needs – are to submit annual financial estimates to the Ministry of Finance. The estimates are to be calculated with a view to attaining national development goals, including those relating to the protection of the rights of persons with special needs, as envisaged in relevant national laws, in particular the aforementioned Act No. 2 of 2004. Each body is then to deliver public services to citizens, including those with special needs, in line with its budget allocation. The government bodies concerned include the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development and the Family and the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs.

41. In addition to this, the general budget envisages allocations to support private institutions that operate in the public interest as well as to centres and associations that provide services to persons with special needs, including the following:

- (i) The Shafallah Centre for children with special needs, which provides care for persons with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities and autism, from birth to age 27.
- (ii) The Al-Noor Institute for the Blind, which provides education and habilitation for persons with visual impairments, helping them overcome their disability and preparing them to become productive members of society. The Institute provides its services to persons aged between 3 and 21.
- (iii) The Qatar Society for the Habilitation of Persons with Special Needs, the Qatar Sociocultural Centre for Deaf Persons, which cares for people with hearing impairments, and other stakeholders.
- (iv) Processes are in place to identify disabilities among non-Qataris, particularly migrant workers, and to uphold their rights under the Convention.

42. Financial resources are allocated for the realization of the following national development strategies:

- A social protection strategy, which is part of the First National Development Strategy 2011–2016 and of the Second National Development Strategy 2018–2022. Its purpose is to create an effective, integrated and sustainable system of social protection for all Qataris in order to achieve the following important sectoral outcomes:
- The strategic goal of developing social protection legislation, which includes:

- A project to build a comprehensive database of groups covered by the protection system.
- A project to set up national committees for the development of strategies and policies for families and children, older persons and persons with disabilities, and to monitor coordination between the sectors involved.
- A project to develop specific social protection legislation (i.e., bills that have a bearing on social protection in the areas of housing, social security, retirement and pensions, childhood, older persons and persons with disabilities).
- The strategic goal of improving vocational and social habilitation for vulnerable persons who are of working age and are able to work. The goal is to target 70 per cent of persons in that category during the period 2018–2022. This includes:
 - A national work-from-home project.
 - A project to update rehabilitation and vocational training programmes for persons with disabilities.
 - A project to cooperate with State-run and private educational institutions with a view to integrating persons with disabilities.
 - A project to raise public awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities and the issues that affect them.
 - A project to provide family support for persons with disabilities.
 - A project to provide professional and social habilitation for persons with disabilities.
 - A project to develop the skills of persons with disabilities.
- The strategic goal of operationalizing 50 per cent of the services provided at service delivery outlets, during the period 2018–2022. This includes:
 - A project to enhance social development centres.
 - A project to improve service delivery outlets that provide social welfare services.
 - A project to improve health services for persons with disabilities.
 - A project to improve education for children with disabilities.

43. The following may be concluded from the information contained in the preceding paragraphs:

- All laws and regulations in Qatar are based on articles 18 and 19 in chapter II (“Fundamental components of society”) of the Constitution. Those provisions undergird the legal framework for the principle of equality and non-discrimination among all members of society, including persons with disabilities. In enactment of that constitutional principle, the Government takes effective administrative measures and other actions to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others.
- Act No. 2 of 2004 concerning persons with special needs also serves to protect persons with disabilities against discrimination. Although the name of the Act may not be consistent with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, its provisions as a whole do not differ from those of the Convention. In fact, the primary objective of the Act is to enable persons with disabilities to exercise their rights and freedoms on an equal basis with others.
- With the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities under Decree No. 28 of 2008, the Convention was incorporated into the internal legal system of Qatar and became an integral part of national legislation. Therefore, all governmental and non-governmental bodies and institutions, as well as individuals, are required to comply with the Convention, and the courts in Qatar are responsible for ensuring that it is respected and protected.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 3 of the list of issues

44. In order to uphold the principles of justice, equality and equal opportunities for all citizens, and to promote the integration of persons with disabilities, the Shura Council has cooperated with Qatar University and other institutions on programmes to empower students and the public at large, including persons with disabilities, by enabling them to attend sessions of the Council and learn about its work. The visits also provide an opportunity for members of the Shura Council to hear about the needs of persons with disabilities and the obstacles they face, in order to then take those issues into account when considering prospective legislation.

45. Other initiatives and decrees have contributed to the development of social protection legislation, making it more effective and bringing it into line with changes at the local and global levels, with development needs and with the provisions of Qatar National Vision 2030:

- Council of Ministers Decree No. 26 of 2019 regarding the creation of the National Committee for Women, Children, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities, ratified by the Amir of the State of Qatar on 16 September 2019.
- Decree-Law No. 21 of 2020 concerning private associations and institutions.
- A bill to regulate voluntary work, approved by the Council of Ministers at its regular session held on 28 August 2019.
- A bill on older persons and the rights of persons with disabilities, which has been submitted to the Council of Ministers.
- Qatar has taken a number of specific measures to enable persons with disabilities to participate on an equal footing in the country's public affairs. The State has moved away from a welfare approach and towards an integrated rights-based approach that allows such persons to participate effectively in all aspects of life, including decision-making.
- The State has enacted legislation aimed at promoting the participation of persons with disabilities. This includes Act No. 2 of 2004 concerning persons with special needs, which upholds the right of persons with disabilities to be involved in decisions affecting them and enables them to work in the public sector. The Act also stipulates that a minimum of 2 per cent of public-sector posts are to be reserved for persons with disabilities, in accordance with their abilities and qualifications.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 4 (a) of the list of issues

46. The State has been showing ever greater concern for the rights of persons with disabilities. It has taken legislative, legal, administrative and other measures to give effect to such rights and has provided the means to consolidate, develop and update them within a framework of integrated social development. Its actions in this regard are underpinned by national instruments, foremost among them the Constitution and the strategies envisaged under the Qatar National Vision 2030. Together, those instruments provide a solid and supportive environment in which older persons and persons with disabilities can exercise their rights. The strategic underpinnings of this approach have been drawn from the following:

- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Qatar was one of the first countries to ratify, in 2008.
- A 2018 report of the working group formed to study the services provided to persons with disabilities.
- Recommendations that emerged from the 2019 Doha Conference on Disability and Development, which concluded with the Doha Declaration for the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities around the world. The Declaration serves as an international reference for Governments around the world as they strive to integrate the rights of their citizens with disabilities into development plans and to ensure that their needs are reflected in policies governing education, healthcare, employment and other areas.

47. The rights of older persons are enshrined in chapter II (“Fundamental components of society”) of the Constitution of Qatar, which includes the following provisions:

- Article 21 stipulates: “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 safeguarding mothers, children and older persons.”
- Article 23 includes provisions to protect the health of older persons, stipulating that “the State is to concern itself with public health and to provide the means to prevent and treat disease and epidemics, in accordance with the law”.
- Articles 18 and 19 in chapter II (“Fundamental components of society”) of the Constitution undergird the legal framework for the principle of equality and non-discrimination among all members of society, including persons with disabilities. In enactment of that constitutional principle, the Government takes effective administrative measures and other actions to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others.
- Act No. 2 of 2004 concerning persons with special needs also serves to protect persons with disabilities against discrimination. Although the name of the Act may not be consistent with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, its provisions as a whole do not differ from those of the Convention. In fact, the primary objective of the Act is to enable persons with disabilities to exercise their rights and freedoms on an equal basis with others.
- With the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities under Decree No. 28 of 2008, the Convention was incorporated into the internal legal system of Qatar and became an integral part of national legislation. Therefore, all governmental and non-governmental bodies and institutions, as well as individuals, are required to comply with the Convention, and the courts in Qatar are responsible for ensuring that it is respected and protected.
- As concerns migrants with disabilities, according to articles 18 and 19 in chapter II (“Fundamental components of society”) of the Constitution, the principles of equality and non-discrimination apply to everyone in Qatari society.
- Under Act No. 2 of 2004, persons with special needs are to enjoy the same rights and duties as citizens with disabilities in terms of free healthcare, habilitation and education.
- The Qatar Society for the Habilitation of Persons with Special Needs pursues the psychosocial, academic and health reinsertion of persons with disabilities, in accordance with the tenets of Islam and the customs, traditions and particularities of Qatar, while also taking account of the need to modernize services and programmes in line with the urban advancement and humanitarian development taking place in society.
- The efforts of Qatar to protect persons with disabilities are clearly evinced in its accession to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and in its enactment of a law to incorporate the instruments to which it has acceded into national law.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 4 (b) of the list of issues

48. The strategies adopted by the State to raise awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities and ensure that they are able to enjoy those rights effectively and promptly are governed by the following legal and regulatory provisions:

- (i) Articles 14 and 47 of Act No. 15 of 2016 promulgating the Civil Service Human Resources Act.
- (ii) Article 117 of Amiri Decree No. 35 of 2012 promulgating the staff regulations of the Administrative Control and Transparency Authority.

(iii) Item 78 of the table annexed to the Civil Defence Act No. 25 of 2015.

(iv) Article 11 (3) of Decree No. 19 of 2019 of the Minister of Endowments, concerning the General Authority for Minors' Affairs.

(v) Article 22 (7) of Amiri Decree No. 6 of 2016 regarding the organizational structure of the Ministry of Administrative Development.

(vi) Articles 1, 3 and 4 of Council of Ministers Decree No. 26 of 2019 regarding the creation of the National Committee for Women, Children, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities.

49. In addition to these, there are 23 other pieces of legislation of all levels that address the issue of the rights of persons with disabilities and are duly enforced by the courts.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 4 (c) of the list of issues

50. Article 10 of Act No. 2 of 2004 concerning persons with special needs stipulates that the authorities are to provide such persons with housing that meets particular specifications, in accordance with the priorities set by the Ministry of Social Development and the Family. This matter was previously the responsibility of the Supreme Council for the Family.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 5 (a) of the list of issues

51. The Social Security Department in the Ministry of Social Development and the Family disburses social security allowances to persons with disabilities. Moreover, via the Citizens' Housing Department of the same Ministry, the State provides free housing to needy citizens who meet the necessary conditions and to other persons in need who are covered by the provisions of Decree No. 18 of 2007 of the Council of Ministers, which expanded the eligibility criteria applied in previous housing regulations. The law covers all female citizens in need, including widows, divorcees, women with disabilities, older women and women married to non-Qataris, and beneficiaries of the system receive either a housing unit or a rental subsidy. In addition to this, article 22 of Amiri Decree No. 13 of 2019 envisages the development of projects to support productive families via training, assistance and facilitated access to markets for the products of productive family programmes.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 5 (b) of the list of issues

52. Under the Constitution, girls and women with disabilities enjoy the same rights and freedoms as boys and men with disabilities. The principle of equality and non-discrimination is also enshrined in Act No. 2 of 2004 concerning persons with special needs, article 2 of which stipulates that persons with special needs enjoy additional rights "in addition to those envisaged in other legislation". This provision is absolute and overarching, in that all persons with special needs – be they male or female and without distinction between boys and girls or between men and women – have the right to enjoy their rights, without discrimination on grounds of sex.

53. Reference is made to Council of Ministers Decree No. 26 of 2019 regarding the creation of the National Committee for Women, Children, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities. The purpose of the Committee is to protect and promote the rights of persons in those categories, to which end it has the following tasks and functions:

- Overseeing the rights of women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities.
- Proposing means to advance towards the goals set forth in international treaties and instruments to which Qatar is a party and that are related to the rights of women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities. The Committee also makes proposals for accession to other relevant treaties and instruments.

- Examining legislation affecting persons with disabilities and proposing amendments with a view to bringing it into line with the international treaties to which the State is a party.
- Coordinating between the various State bodies that concern themselves with women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities, with a view to ensuring that they operate within a unified national framework.

54. As part of its efforts to reinforce the legislative infrastructure undergirding the rights of persons with disabilities, Qatar has ratified several international and regional treaties on human rights, including the rights of persons with disabilities. They include:

- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- Arab Charter on Human Rights.

55. Qatar has set up well-funded social protection systems and programmes that guarantee a decent life for vulnerable social groups. The State seeks to rehabilitate such groups and integrate them into society so that they too can be involved in the development process. The social protection system consists of social security services provided by the Ministry of Development and Social Affairs, in addition to services for the habilitation and employment of social security beneficiaries.

56. The role of the State is not limited to providing cash assistance to help vulnerable groups meet their daily needs. It also extends to protecting citizens from the risks of poverty thanks to a retirement and pension system which is administered by the General Authority for Retirement and Social Insurance and which covers civilians working in the public and private sectors as well as military personnel. A significant role in the protection system is played by civil society organizations, which provide social services to citizens in general and to vulnerable groups in particular. Notable among them is the Qatar Social Work Foundation, which provides social welfare services at centres it runs throughout the country. Other national charitable groups, such as Qatar Charity and the Sheikh Thani Bin Abdullah Foundation for Humanitarian Services, support the Zakat Fund in the assistance it provides to poor and needy families. Families in Qatar play a key role in protecting their members against the risks of poverty and deprivation and in maintaining cohesion in the face of the challenges of rapid social and economic change.

57. The Sectoral Social Protection Strategy 2017–2022 will aim to integrate the social protection system across all sectors that are involved in or provide support to the social protection network. This process – which will serve to guarantee the effectiveness and sustainability of the network and to ensure that the entire burden does not fall on the Government alone – envisions the following intermediate outcomes and specific goals, which represent the tripartite structure of the social protection strategy:

(i) First intermediate outcome: creating an integrated, effective and sustainable social welfare system

58. Social welfare consists in the joint efforts of the Government, civil society and the private sector to provide social services to all individuals under human rights laws and legislation.

59. Under laws and legislation enacted since 1962, Qatar has made great strides in advancing modern concepts of social welfare. This includes a number of elements:

- (i) Social security.
- (ii) Pensions and social insurance.
- (iii) Empowerment of disadvantaged groups and vocational support.
- (iv) Housing.

60. The Strategy will aim to bring together the various elements of social welfare with a view to ensuring that it remains effective and sustainable, notably by achieving the following specific objectives:

- First objective: Drafting three pieces of social protection legislation by the end of 2022.

61. The Strategy will work to achieve this goal via two programmes, one on research into social protection and one to develop and improve legislation and regulations that have a bearing on social protection. The two programmes include five projects.

- Second objective: Improving vocational and social habilitation for vulnerable persons who are of working age and are able to work. The goal is to target 70 per cent of persons in that category during the period 2018–2022.

62. Directives from His Highness the Amir of Qatar have highlighted the need to move from passive acceptance of simple social welfare policies to active engagement that enables all groups in society to participate in national development. The Strategy will work to achieve the goal enshrined in those directives via a programme intended to empower and protect vulnerable groups. The programme includes 11 projects.

- Third objective: Operationalizing 50 per cent of the services provided at service delivery outlets, during the period 2018–2022.

63. This objective is to be achieved via a programme that seeks to develop and consolidate a comprehensive and integrated system of social welfare services for beneficiaries. The programme includes 11 projects.

(ii) Second intermediate outcome: creating strong, cohesive and empowered Qatari families

64. The family is the main building block for a cohesive society. For this reason, policies affecting the family are based on the understanding that strengthening family cohesion and protecting families from disintegration is fundamental if the challenges facing society are to be addressed. Families, moreover, are the institution where young persons are “moulded” and new generations are raised, thus laying the foundations for the future and keeping pace with development. Thus, the development of Qatari families comprehends a set of elements intended to address issues such as late marriage, high rates of divorce, parenting and childcare, domestic violence, strengthening families’ economic status and building social capital.

65. The Strategy will envisage a number of programmes and projects to support families, make them more cohesive and empower them socially and economically. Some of the programmes and projects are new and some have been carried over from the first Strategy (2011–2016). The aim is to achieve the following specific objectives:

- First objective: Developing policies related to family and childhood by 2022.
- Second objective: Improving the performance of socioeconomic empowerment projects for young persons at an annual rate of between 5 per cent and 20 per cent up to 2022, with respect to 2016.
- Third objective: Improving the performance of projects to improve family cohesion and strengthen marriages by an annual rate of between 10 per cent and 70 per cent up to 2022, with respect to 2016.
- Fourth objective: Improving the performance of anti-violence projects by an annual rate of between 10 per cent and 30 per cent up to 2022, with respect to 2016.

(iii) Third intermediate outcome: increasing the scope and effectiveness of social capital

66. The Sectoral Social Protection Strategy 2017–2022 will aim to increase the scope and effectiveness of social capital and to create robust partnerships between civil society, the private sector and the Government in order to advance social protection programmes and projects in Qatar. Such partnerships will increase the sustainability of social protection systems by transferring certain responsibilities for social services from government agencies to civil society organizations, local-level charitable and voluntary associations and

non-governmental groups. The Strategy will serve to achieve the intermediate outcome by focusing on the following objectives:

- First objective: Expanding the scope of services to protect social capital run by civil society organizations at an annual rate of 20 per cent between 2018 to 2022, with respect to 2016.
- Second objective: Promoting voluntary social work and community participation by increasing the number of active private-sector institutions and civil society organizations by 20 per cent up to the end of 2022, with respect to 2016.

67. The implementation of programmes to build the capacity of civil society institutions and to promote volunteer work is expected to expand the scope of the services run by those institutions to protect and consolidate fundamental relationships in society. At the same time, the enhancement of effective partnerships between the State, civil society and the private sector will promote a sense of social responsibility. Furthermore, the consolidation of an institutional environment that supports the development of social capital will help civil society and the private sector fulfil their respective roles.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 6 (a) of the list of issues

68. As concerns educational programmes for children with disabilities, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education conducts comprehensive oversight of all schools that run special education services and programmes for students with disabilities of various kinds. The Ministry is developing a system for assessing and diagnosing students with disabilities, and it is repurposing several facilities to serve as centres for the integration of persons with disabilities. For its part, Qatar University welcomes students with special needs in all educational programmes, and it encourages students to discuss the academic support they require with the University's own Inclusion and Special Needs Support Centre.

69. The Kindergarten Regulatory Act No. 1 of 2014 was promulgated with a view to providing a full range of care services for children in an environment conducive to the development of their skills and talents in various fields through sound pedagogical practices, a proper healthy upbringing and enhancement of their linguistic and mental aptitudes.

70. Act No. 2 of 2004 concerning persons with special needs includes provision for numerous preventive measures in education, healthcare and other fields.

71. The institutions that provide rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities ensure that such persons are actively involved by:

- Consulting in a fruitful and positive manner with the persons concerned – notably those with motor, visual or hearing impairments – in order to determine and cater for their needs.
- Identifying the requirements of persons with mental disorders through consultation with their families, parents or guardians.
- Each institution, in accordance with its objectives, identifies the problems and requirements of the persons with disabilities registered with it and endeavours to meet their needs in consultation with the relevant entities.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 6 (b) of the list of issues

72. In cooperation with other bodies, the Ministry of Social Development and the Family implements and participates in programmes and activities intended to raise awareness about persons with disabilities. It also helps to find suitable job openings for candidates with disabilities via the National Employment Platform. In doing so, the Ministry operates under article 5 of the 2004 Act concerning persons with special needs, which envisages a minimum 2-per-cent job quota for such persons.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 7 (a) of the list of issues

73. The Department for Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Social Development and the Family is responsible “for proposing and implementing strategies, plans, and policies on older persons and persons with disabilities and for raising community awareness about their rights”.

74. The Department for Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities has also run programmes and workshops to raise awareness about persons with disabilities and their families. These include:

- An awareness-raising programme entitled “The decision is yours” about living with Down syndrome.
- A forum on “Persons with disabilities in the shadow of the coronavirus crisis”.
- A forum on “Initiatives run by the authorities for persons with disabilities during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic”.
- A forum on “How to interact with persons with autism spectrum disorder in the context of current challenges”.

75. To commemorate World Autism Awareness Day, the Ministry launched an awareness-raising campaign entitled “Do you know?” which involved posting information about autism on the ministerial website and social media accounts. The aim was to disseminate more accurate information about autism and to educate society about how to interact with persons with autism.

76. The function of the Office for Persons with Special Needs, which is part of the Human Resources Department at the Ministry of the Interior, is to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to enjoy their rights, to which end it conducts the following awareness-raising activities:

- Publishing brochures and research to disseminate an awareness of disability culture in society.
- Running lectures on disability-related concepts for affected families in order to help them integrate their children with disabilities into the community, as well as for ministerial staff without disabilities to facilitate their interaction with their colleagues who do have disabilities.
- Cooperating with civil society organizations to run annual psychological support sessions for families of persons with disabilities and visiting State and private institutions to raise awareness about persons with disabilities.
- Running training courses and workshops to familiarize workers with disabilities with their rights and responsibilities.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 7 (b) of the list of issues

77. The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs has a raft of programmes and activities to draw attention to the rights of persons with disabilities and empower them in society. These include:

- The Ministry has 44 officials of both sexes with special needs for whom it has put in place special programmes to facilitate their work, which has a positive impact on the community.
- The Zakat Fund Department, which is also part of the Ministry, prioritizes persons with disabilities in the assistance it provides (to people eligible for zakat). The Fund also supplies assistive medical devices for persons who need them. The total amount disbursed during the course of 2020 was in excess of 2 million Qatari riyals (QR).
- From an educational perspective, the Ministry is seeking to raise awareness in society about the rights of persons with disabilities through various means, including audiovisual and print media.

78. In accordance with State directives, the Supreme Council of the Judiciary has instructed its staff to adopt special measures to protect the rights of persons with disabilities (according to type of disability), be they fellow members of staff or visitors to the Council.

79. With a view to promoting the social integration of students with disabilities (citizens and residents), the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has sought to involve such students in various events and activities. This is done while preserving their security and safety, and in a manner consistent with the students' individual abilities and requirements. Those events and activities, include the following:

- Interschool events and competitions, depending upon the capacities of the students involved.
- The "My disability is my talent", competition, which focuses on the role of students with disabilities in State-run and special schools.
- Seminars and discussion groups with specialized teaching staff that aim to improve the services and activities provided to students with disabilities; this also helps to raise awareness among parents and the public at large and helps the children concerned to integrate more effectively into society.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 7 (c) of the list of issues

80. There is currently no information on this matter, but it is under consideration and initiatives will presently be developed to make human, technical and financial resources available to promote attitudes of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 8 (a) of the list of issues

81. The Human Rights Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other State human rights bodies have proposed a review of the country's previous report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. There have been several changes to organizational structures in Qatar, including the transfer of the functions of the Supreme Council for the Family – following its abolition – to the Ministry of Social Development and the Family.

82. Qatar is convinced that it is important to invest in information and communications technology as a way of unlocking the potential of persons with disabilities, helping them achieve independence and self-reliance, and providing them with equal opportunities in education, employment and independent living. For this reason, the Mada Assistive Technology Centre was set up in 2010 as a non-profit organization committed to connecting persons with disabilities to information and communications technology as a means of enhancing their potential and building their capacities. The Mada Centre deals with four types of disability: hearing, visual, intellectual and physical.

83. The institutions that work to integrate persons with disabilities into society base their efforts and develop their plans on the basis of accurate data collected during the course of regular surveys in the field. This includes a disability survey conducted by the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics in collaboration with the Mada Assistive Technology Centre and the World Health Organization (WHO).

84. The Ministry of Municipalities and the Environment has developed a guide to construction specifications and requirements in Qatar. The guide serves to make citizens and investors aware of the requirements, specifications, conditions, documents and procedures associated with obtaining building permits for projects of various kinds. It includes a building code that takes account of the needs and seeks to facilitate the movement of persons with disabilities and older persons who use wheelchairs.

85. The Ministry of Transport, through the Mada Assistive Technology Centre, has developed a strategy for the integration of persons with disabilities via the use of technology. The strategy aims to facilitate access to the Internet for persons with disabilities.

86. The purpose of the strategy is “inclusion through technology”, which consists in a three-year national plan to use technology to improve quality of life for persons with disabilities in Qatar. The strategy – which emerged from a process of interaction and consultation with a range of stakeholders both inside and outside Qatar, including persons with disabilities themselves – aims to direct and orient the future activities of the Mada Assistive Technology Centre.

87. The strategy takes a comprehensive approach the focus of which is to give persons with disabilities the opportunity to share their extensive experience, maximize the operational advantages of technology and address sector-specific issues to the full, thereby promoting the full integration and application of assistive technology for persons with disabilities in all sectors.

88. With regard to access to communication, the Mada Assistive Technology Centre, which is a non-profit institution, seeks to fulfil its obligation to introduce persons with disabilities to information and communication technologies as a means to increase their potential and enhance their capacities. Visitors to the Centre can test a wide range of assistive technological devices that provide them with access to the world of technology and communications. The Centre’s activities include the organization of training courses for persons with disabilities, their parents or guardians and their care providers, as well as individual assessment sessions to determine the needs of persons with disabilities and the role that assistive technology could play in ensuring real and effective social integration. The Centre, which is working with companies producing assistive technological devices with a view to the development of Arabic-language applications, has already developed a number of Arabic-language devices and programmes for use by persons with disabilities.

89. The Centre has also continued its efforts to empower persons with disabilities of all kinds, via the use of technology. Working with its partners, the Centre has provided educational assistance to 430 students with disabilities and employment assistance to 25 persons with disabilities, as well as helping a further 190 persons in the community.

90. The Centre is seeking to augment the number of websites in Qatar that are accessible to persons with disabilities, and it is working with government and private-sector entities encouraging them to adapt their online presence for use by persons with disabilities and thus move towards a more inclusive digital environment. This will increase the number of users of those websites and provide access to wider segments of society. Through its digital accessibility team, the Centre has reviewed 30 websites in Qatar, which have been enhanced to enable greater access by persons with disabilities. Seven training courses on digital accessibility have been held to make web developers aware of the need to apply digital accessibility guidelines.

91. The Centre has accredited three of the most important service-providing institutions for applying the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (W3CG), which aim to make web content available to persons with disabilities. The institutions currently accredited are the Ministry of the Interior, the e-Government Portal and the Malomatia company.

92. In 2016, the Mada Assistive Technology Centre signed memorandums of understanding to develop the capabilities of assistive technology teams in a number of different institutions. One memorandum, signed with the Shafallah Centre, aimed not only to build the capacity of the assistive technology team there but also to draw up a plan to extend and expand the provision of assistive technology services and make them available to a larger number of persons with disabilities. The Mada Centre also signed a memorandum of understanding with Hamad Medical Corporation to enhance and extend the latter’s assistive technology capabilities. A programme was developed to build the capacity and skills of 12 Hamad Medical Corporation staff in the use of assistive technology and the provision of frontline assistive technology services. This reflects the Mada Centre’s strategy of knowledge transfer and capacity-building for service providers, with a view to reaching more clients.

93. As part of its strategy to expand the use of assistive technology, the Mada Centre has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Qatar Foundation for the Welfare of Older Persons (Ehsan). It has also provided technology training for 82 older persons in Qatar, each of whom was given an iPhone and shown how to use it, thereby facilitating their access to the digital world.

94. The Mada Centre has set up three assistive technology points at Qatar University for the benefit of students with disabilities. In addition to this, a referral system is in place for transferring users from Qatar University to the Centre.

95. After three years of work, the Mada Centre has rolled out a first set of alternative communication symbols in Arabic. The new system – which is known as “Tawasul” – is based on Qatari Arabic. Speech therapists and special education teachers in the countries of the Arab Gulf had consistently faced challenges in finding appropriate symbols for alternative communication systems, because they were having to rely on a body of symbols developed in the West. In fact, most sets of alternative communication symbols (both those available free of charge and those that come at a cost) were designed in the United States of America or Europe to express words in English and other European languages, and such symbols often come up against cultural and contextual differences when used in Arab society.

96. The project came up with 300 new Arabic symbols for use by professionals and service providers who assist persons with disabilities. The project also envisages means for ensuring that the symbols can continue to be updated.

97. In collaboration with Qatar Development Bank, the Mada Centre has conducted a study on best entrepreneurship practices for persons with disabilities. The study – which addressed several issues, including how institutions can provide support to persons with disabilities and increase their business opportunities – was published during Global Entrepreneurship Week, held recently in Qatar.

98. The Mada Centre has drafted a report on best practices for developing assistive technology services in education and improving teaching methods for persons with disabilities. It has also produced a report on best community practices for the development of assistive technology services and the application of that technology in entities such as Hamad Medical Corporation and the Ehsan Foundation. Another report focuses on best employment practices to improve the conduct of employers and to provide persons with disabilities with assistive technology in the field of employment. A further report concerns best practices for persons with disabilities in the world of sports.

99. In addition to the foregoing, a report on policies and the regulatory landscape in Qatar has been drafted, the aim being to identify existing government policies and regulatory frameworks vis-à-vis persons with disabilities and to draft a guide on digital accessibility standards for persons with disabilities to clarify best practices in that regard.

100. Under the guidance of the Ministry, the Malomatia company ran a number of projects across the country in 2016 to automate certain internal institutional processes and facilitate customer-facing procedures and transactions. These projects have served to interlink and simplify the internal operation of certain institutions and to provide outstanding online services to the public. One of these projects, being run by the Public Works Authority, involves an online tendering and procurement system for road and infrastructure projects. One particularly positive and successful project has been that of converting the services provided by the Ministry of Economy and Trade to the public and the business sector into online services, which has earned the Ministry several regional and international awards.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 8 (b) of the list of issues

101. The Ministry of Municipalities and the Environment has released the second edition of the Qatar Building Code 2020, which is applicable to all new buildings in the country. It includes a section on regulations and design specifications that must be respected in buildings in order to facilitate access by persons with special needs. As concerns existing buildings, regulations concerning access by persons with disabilities become applicable when seeking authorization for refurbishment.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 9 of the list of issues

102. Qatar considers the existence of the death penalty to be a preventive measure, a general deterrent for certain serious crimes the perpetrators of which can be deterred only by

their knowledge of the existence of such a punishment. Thus, it serves to protect the right to life of individuals in society. In practice, the death penalty has not been carried out in Qatar since 2005, except in one instance due to the particularly heinous nature of the crime involved. The penalty cannot be abolished altogether because there are several crimes where Islamic sharia stipulates that perpetrators must face the death penalty.

103. Strict controls have been put in place to regulate and restrict the application of the death penalty, which must be:

- Handed down in accordance with the law.
- Restricted to the most serious crimes, the gravity of which admits no clemency.
- Carried out only after approval by the Amir who, under article 67 of the Constitution, also has the power to issue a pardon or commute the sentence, in accordance with the law.
- Commuted to a term of imprisonment of up to 15 years if the victim's heirs pardon the offender or accept blood money (*diyah*).
- Imposed by unanimous decision of the court; if consensus cannot be achieved, the sentence is to be commuted to one of life imprisonment.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 10 of the list of issues

104. The Ministry of Health set up a hotline to handle both regular and emergency cases during the COVID-19 pandemic. Centres for persons with special needs undertook to apply the health conditions and restrictions stipulated by the Ministry of Health, and each centre appointed a liaison official to provide guidance and raise awareness. The centres also monitored entry and exit from their premises, enforced social distancing and established methods for preventing and controlling infection, with a focus on education and awareness-raising.

105. From the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, Qatar was determined to protect human rights and to provide care to all groups in society, without discrimination. The Ministry of Health cooperated with other stakeholders to take the measures necessary to protect all members of the community. Those measures made a significant and effective contribution to containing the spread of the virus and helped the health system to deal with all cases.

106. The Ministry of Health provided free treatment to all members of society, Qataris and non-Qataris alike. The Ministry also set up a hotline to deal with cases of all kinds, whether related to the virus or to any other emergency.

107. The Ministry of Health developed a special emergency policy for vulnerable groups such as older persons, persons with disabilities and persons with chronic diseases such as a heart condition, a respiratory complaint or cancer.

108. During the COVID-19 crisis, the Ministry provided free testing at all government-run medical centres. It also set up temporary centres which operated around the clock throughout the pandemic.

109. In addition to this, the State provided free quarantine facilities for all members of society. Those who preferred to stay at home and whose condition did not require hospitalization were provided with services at home, including medication and daily telephone contact to monitor their state of health throughout their period of quarantine.

110. Information relating to the COVID-19 pandemic was disseminated via the "Ihtiraz" app which, among other features, published data about the number of cases and about other matters related to the crisis.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 11 (a) of the list of issues

111. Legislation and laws in Qatar that seek to abolish guardianship and sponsorship regimes do not discriminate against women with disabilities or persons with mental or psychological disabilities.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 11 (b) of the list of issues

112. In accordance with State directives, the Supreme Council of the Judiciary has instructed its staff to adopt special measures to protect the rights of persons with disabilities (according to type of disability), be they fellow members of staff or visitors to the Council.

113. Persons with disabilities have the possibility of obtaining the support they need to exercise their legal capacity, and such assistance is provided under the presumption that they have full legal capacity, even if they need help to exercise it. Appropriate safeguards need to be put in place to prevent any abuses, and the rights and desires of the person concerned must be respected, while also ensuring that the assistance is free from any conflict of interest and subject to constant review.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 11 (c) of the list of issues

114. It is important to note, in this regard, that the Ministry of Finance is not authorized to provide any banking services or financial facilities such as loans or mortgage services. Such services are provided by banks, which operate in the country under the supervision and control of the Qatar Central Bank. As concerns inheritance rights and financial assistance provided by public authorities, these are the responsibility of the General Authority for Minors' Affairs and the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs, as detailed below.

115. In accordance with the Constitution, the State guarantees the same rights to all persons with special needs, women and men, and Qatari legislators have set up mechanisms whereby persons with special needs can manage their own finances. On the subject of inheritance, article 43 of the Family Code (Act No. 40 of 2006) defines inheritance as: "The automatic transfer of money, assets and financial rights, upon the death of the owner thereof, to the persons entitled to receive them". Legislators have also acted to preserve the inheritance rights of persons with special needs, as set forth in article 43 of the Guardianship of Minors' Assets Act No. 40 of 2004.

116. Article 127 of the Civil Code (Act No. 22 of 2004) addresses the issue of physical incapacity, stating that the courts may appoint an assistant judge to help persons with severe physical disabilities as necessary to achieve their best interests. Under Social Security Act No. 38 of 1995, the Ministry of Administrative Development and Social Affairs coordinates with the General Authority for Minors' Affairs to run mechanisms for the disbursement of social security pensions to their intended beneficiaries, without an intermediary and without burdening persons with special needs.

117. As concerns financial facilities, the Qatar Central Bank has issued instructions to other banks and financial institutions setting out controls and standards intended to ensure that banking and financial services are accessible to persons with special needs. Those controls are issued in the form of circulars, notably Circular No. 73 of 2009, which concerns interaction with clients who are blind and which instructed all banks and financial institutions in the country to develop systems and procedures for dealing with such persons, including through the use of Braille forms. For its part, Circular No. 9 of 2010 concerns the implementation of instructions contained in a letter from the President of the Arab Union for the Blind and the President of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights vis-à-vis, in particular, technical matters relating to Braille. In May 2010, the Central Bank issued a further circular requiring all banks in the country to set up special counters, parking spaces and entrances for persons with special needs. The Bank has also put distinctive marks on banknotes to make it easier for blind persons to identify the denominations.

118. With regard to support for persons with special needs in exercising their legal capacity and managing their financial affairs, the (former) Ministry of Social Affairs and the (current) Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs coordinate and follow up with the Qatar Central Bank on the mechanisms necessary to enable persons with special needs to administer their own finances.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 12 (a) of the list of issues

119. Protection for crime victims who are minors or have mental disabilities is regulated under the Code of Criminal Procedure (Act No. 23 of 2004). Article 213 of the Code stipulates that, in the case of crimes committed against minors under the age of 16, the minors concerned may – as necessary and until the case is decided – be referred to a trusted person who undertakes to monitor and protect them, or to an officially recognized care institution. An order to that effect is to be issued by the Office of the Public Prosecution or by the court hearing the case, either on its own initiative or at the request of prosecutors.

120. If the crime in question is committed against a person with a mental disability, the Office of the Public Prosecution or the court hearing the case may order that the victim be temporarily placed in a treatment facility or delivered into the care of a trusted person, as appropriate and until the case is decided.

121. It should be noted that the facilities housing the Office of the Public Prosecution have entrances, doors and windows designed with persons with disabilities in mind, and that applications from such persons are given priority, in order to ensure easy access to justice.

122. As concerns the question about the measures taken to remove the barriers faced by women and girls with disabilities in terms of access to justice, it should be noted that these rights are all guaranteed under article 35 of the Constitution.

123. As concerns suitable accommodation, it should be noted that there is also a shelter for minors.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 12 (b) of the list of issues

124. The Office of the Public Prosecution and the Department for the Enforcement Sentences at the Ministry of the Interior have coordinated with other State authorities to run training courses on how to interact with persons with disabilities.

125. Training courses were also held at the section for older persons and persons with disabilities at the Passport Department of the Ministry of the Interior for staff who deal directly with inmates. Training courses on the following topics will be held with the competent authorities:

- Interaction with inmates using sight, sound and movement.
- Psychological examination of inmates.
- Preparing inmates for social integration.
- Training in first aid.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 13 (a) of the list of issues

126. The Ministry of Justice requested that this issue be referred to the Legislation Department of the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers. However, the Department stated that it had no jurisdiction over the matter.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 13 (b) of the list of issues

127. Article 1 in section I of the Mental Health Act No. 16 of 2016 describes individual mental capacity as: “An individual’s ability to understand and comprehend the actions and

information with which they are presented and to make a sound decision on the basis of that understanding.” The right of individual patients to be informed of their state of health and of their right to treatment, in accordance with their mental capacity, is enshrined in article 3 of the Act, which also describes the rights of the individual to a proper treatment environment, independence and privacy. Treatment processes in hospital for individuals who lack mental capacity are described in article 4 of the Act, which stipulates that the legal guardian of the person concerned is required to submit a request for examination and treatment at the institution in question. The Act then requires that institution to notify the competent independent authority within two working days of the date of admission. The legal guardian has the right to remove the individual from inpatient care at any time by submitting a request, unless the criteria for involuntary admission are met.

128. Article 5 of the Act describes the conditions that must be met for the continued hospitalization of inpatients without their voluntary consent. This can come about only after the individual in question has undergone a comprehensive assessment and if the treating psychiatrist believes that discharge from the hospital would pose a serious risk of immediate or imminent harm to the safety of the individual or of others, or that the individual is incapable of caring for themselves due to their mental condition.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 13 (c) of the list of issues

129. This matter is under review.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 14 (a) of the list of issues

130. Under article 3 of the Mental Health Act, patients cannot be subjected to any form of corporal punishment or moral threat, for any reason whatsoever. Patients must also be protected from commercial or sexual exploitation as well as from physical or mental abuse and any form of degrading treatment, whether inflicted by staff or other patients. The freedom of patients cannot be restricted and they cannot be placed in isolation rooms except in case of need, to be determined by the treating psychiatrist, and for a limited period of time only. Any restriction of freedom through the use of chemical or physical restraints or environmental restrictions must first be approved then subject to regular monitoring.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 14 (b) of the list of issues

131. Under applicable laws and policies, such persons are treated as special cases when any decision has to be made. As concerns restrictions on freedom, no sedatives are used stronger than those ordinarily used for adults, and guidelines have been produced on the use of specific medications in these population groups. Staff are currently being trained in a de-escalation technique called Positive Behaviour Support, which is an international evidence-based standard for managing aggression and violence in individuals with learning difficulties. This technique helps to minimize any restriction on the freedom of those individuals as it focuses on environmental modifications as a way of managing aggression, rather than restrictions.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 14 (c) of the list of issues

132. Legislators in Qatar have envisaged penalties for the mistreatment of persons with disabilities, which are enshrined in the Criminal Code (Act No. 11 of 2004) as amended. Article 269 of the Code envisages a term of imprisonment of up to 2 years and/or a fine of up to QR 10,000 for anyone who endangers a person under the age of 16 or a person who – due to their state of health or psychological or mental condition – is unable to protect themselves. The penalty increases to a term of imprisonment of up to 3 years and/or a fine of up to QR 15,000 if the victim is abandoned in a deserted location, or where an offence is committed by a person entrusted with the custody or care of the victim.

133. Article 318 of the Code envisions a term of imprisonment of up to 10 years for anyone who abducts, detains or deprives a person of their liberty in a manner contrary to the law.

134. The penalty increases to a term of imprisonment of up to 15 years if the victim is a female, a minor, insane or has a mental disability.

135. A penalty of death or of life imprisonment is applicable if the offence results in the death of the victim.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 15 (a) of the list of issues

136. Data on violence against all persons, including persons with special needs, is collected via the “unified security system” and from police reports by the different security departments and divisions in the Ministry of the Interior. Statistics are extracted annually as part of indicators relating to sustainable development.

137. Statistical data on the number of persons (including those with disabilities) who were subjected to violence during the period 2017–2021 is given below.

عدد السكان الذين تعرضوا للعنف الابدني او النفسي او الجنسي حسب الجنس والفئات العمرية 2017-2021

2021			2020			2019			2018			2017			
المجموع	ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة	شخص سليم	المجموع	ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة	شخص سليم	المجموع	ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة	شخص سليم	المجموع	ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة	شخص سليم	المجموع	ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة	شخص سليم	
19	0	19	21	0	21	41	0	41	28	0	28	30	0	30	أقل من 15 سنة
702	0	702	574	1	573	751	0	751	577	3	574	803	0	803	64-15
15	0	15	9	0	9	8	0	8	5	0	5	8	0	8	+65
2	0	2	2	0	2	4	0	4	0	0	0	6	0	6	غير مبين
738	0	738	606	1	605	804	0	804	610	3	607	847	0	847	المجموع
7	0	7	8	0	8	11	0	11	74	0	74	13	0	13	أقل من 15 سنة
397	0	397	329	0	329	442	0	442	350	4	346	370	0	370	64-15
7	0	7	4	0	4	4	0	4	4	0	4	3	0	3	+65
0	0	0	5	0	5	2	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	4	غير مبين
411	0	411	346	0	346	459	0	459	428	4	424	390	0	390	المجموع
26	0	26	29	0	29	52	0	52	102	0	102	43	0	43	أقل من 15 سنة
1099	0	1099	903	1	902	1193	0	1193	927	7	920	1173	0	1173	64-15
22	0	22	13	0	13	12	0	12	9	0	9	11	0	11	+65
2	0	2	7	0	7	6	0	6	0	0	0	10	0	10	غير مبين
1149	0	1149	952	1	951	1263	0	1263	1038	7	1031	1237	0	1237	المجموع

عدد السكان الذين تعرضوا للعنف الابدني او النفسي او الجنسي حسب الجنس والفئات العمرية 2017-2021

2021			2020			2019			2018			2017			
المجموع	ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة	شخص سليم	المجموع	ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة	شخص سليم	المجموع	ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة	شخص سليم	المجموع	ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة	شخص سليم	المجموع	ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة	شخص سليم	
19	0	19	21	0	21	41	0	41	28	0	28	30	0	30	أقل من 15 سنة
702	0	702	574	1	573	751	0	751	577	3	574	803	0	803	64-15
15	0	15	9	0	9	8	0	8	5	0	5	8	0	8	+65
2	0	2	2	0	2	4	0	4	0	0	0	6	0	6	غير مبين
738	0	738	606	1	605	804	0	804	610	3	607	847	0	847	المجموع
7	0	7	8	0	8	11	0	11	74	0	74	13	0	13	أقل من 15 سنة
397	0	397	329	0	329	442	0	442	350	4	346	370	0	370	64-15
7	0	7	4	0	4	4	0	4	4	0	4	3	0	3	+65
0	0	0	5	0	5	2	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	4	غير مبين
411	0	411	346	0	346	459	0	459	428	4	424	390	0	390	المجموع
26	0	26	29	0	29	52	0	52	102	0	102	43	0	43	أقل من 15 سنة
1099	0	1099	903	1	902	1193	0	1193	927	7	920	1173	0	1173	64-15
22	0	22	13	0	13	12	0	12	9	0	9	11	0	11	+65
2	0	2	7	0	7	6	0	6	0	0	0	10	0	10	غير مبين
1149	0	1149	952	1	951	1263	0	1263	1038	7	1031	1237	0	1237	المجموع

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 15 (b) of the list of issues

138. The State has taken legislative action to prevent, protect against and criminalize trafficking in persons, notably by enacting the Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 15 of 2011. The Act seeks to address human trafficking offences of all kinds, without discrimination and irrespective of whether the victims are persons with special needs or others, or whether the offence takes place inside or outside the home.

139. In addition to this, the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons was set up under Act No. 15 of 2017. In coordination with other State agencies, the Committee seeks to monitor, prevent and combat human trafficking in all its forms.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 15 (c) of the list of issues

140. The National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons has drawn up a plan for 2019–2022 to combat human trafficking and forced labour. The plan focuses on the following areas:

Prevention

- (i) Strengthening national legal frameworks to monitor, prevent and combat trafficking offences.
- (ii) Running awareness-raising campaigns at the national level to make persons with special needs aware of the different forms of human trafficking and forced labour.
- (iii) Providing training to protect persons with special needs against trafficking and forced labour.
- (iv) Involving the private sector in action to protect against human trafficking and forced labour.

Protection

- (i) Identifying victims and others who have suffered harm from human trafficking and forced labour.
- (ii) Protecting and supporting victims of human trafficking and forced labour who have special needs; this includes shelter in humanitarian care homes as well as moral and psychological support.
- (iii) Ensuring access to justice and reparations for victims of human trafficking and forced labour.

Law enforcement and prosecution

- (i) Strengthening law enforcement and instituting specialized judicial proceedings.
- (ii) Creating a special unit within the Ministry of the Interior to combat human trafficking offences.

Regional and international cooperation

- (i) Promoting transparency and regional and international cooperation.
- (ii) Exchanging information and experiences with Arab, regional and international organizations and agencies on how to identify and interact with victims of human trafficking with special needs.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 15 (d) of the list of issues

141. The Office of the Public Prosecution deals with cases of violence against persons with special needs in the same way as it deals with other cases. Investigations are conducted and the matter is then referred to the courts for them to consider, rule upon and award

compensation. The Ministry of Social Development and the Family, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, runs a number of specialized centres that provide treatment for persons with disabilities who are victims of violence.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 15 (e) of the list of issues

142. The government body responsible for developing plans and programmes for persons with disabilities is the National Committee for Women, Children, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities. The agency entrusted with the implementation of such plans and programmes is duly supervised by the competent authority.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 16 of the list of issues

143. The State has not placed a blanket prohibition on the forced sterilization of women with special needs.

144. There are no cases in Qatar wherein lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex persons with special needs require protection.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 17 (a) of the list of issues

145. The procedures for acquiring or changing nationality are the same for persons with disabilities as for anyone else.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 17 (b) of the list of issues

146. The State is greatly concerned with the welfare of persons with disabilities in this situation. They are treated well and given precedence to complete the procedures they need to follow at the Investigation and Follow-up Department, without discrimination between citizens and residents. The services they receive are of high quality and are courteously and promptly delivered.

147. A review of the records of the Investigation and Follow-up Department has not revealed any indication that persons in this category have been detained in the temporary detention centre (detention prior to deportation) during the past five years.

148. Detention procedures for persons with disabilities are as follows:

- The Investigation and Follow-up Department deals with persons in this category in the light of State directives, the teachings of Islam, the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the provisions of the Convention. It follows from this that no person with a disability may be held in the temporary detention centre (detention prior to deportation), as to do so would run counter to those principles.
- All available technical and technological means are used to communicate with persons with disabilities during the course of procedures in which they are involved, so as to avoid them having to come to the Investigation and Follow-up Department unless absolutely necessary. If their presence is required, the Department is equipped to facilitate matters for them (wheelchairs, tactile flooring, parking places, lifts, etc.) and a specialized staff member is on hand to assist them.

149. It should be noted that article 35 (5) of Act No. 21 of 2015 regulating the entry, exit and residency of migrant workers authorizes the Minister or the Minister's representative to forbear from applying the provisions of the Act, on humanitarian grounds, and the Investigation and Follow-up Department keeps that fact in mind when dealing with persons in this category.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 17 (c) of the list of issues

150. The following procedures are in place to register children born in Qatar:

- The child is delivered and registered in the records of the hospital where the birth took place.
- The hospital sends a text message to the parent or guardian explaining the process for registering the birth online via the website of the Ministry of Health.
- Accurate information about the child and its parents is then to be entered using the link contained in the text message. The information must be provided by a relative of the first degree (the father, a paternal uncle or a person officially authorized by the father).
- State-run and private hospitals are then contacted, at the request of the applicant, when applying for a birth certificate.

151. Together, these procedures serve to ensure that all children, without exception, are duly registered at birth.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 18 (a) of the list of issues

152. The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology is working with other stakeholders on a number of new initiatives such as voice-activated automatic teller machines. Learners can use a range of assistive technologies to enhance their independence, for example through the use of screen-reader software. Learners with special needs should also be given access to a wide range of online services and opportunities, including e-government services, in order to promote their equality with other members of the community, empower them and integrate them into Qatari society.

153. Decree No. 18 of 2007 of the Council of Ministers, regarding priorities and regulations concerning housing for persons in need, also grants persons with special needs the right to benefit from the housing system. Article 2 of the Decree stipulates: “Qatari citizens of both sexes may benefit from the system if they belong to a category that necessitates social care, such as persons with disabilities, orphans, persons unable to work and older persons.” For its part, article 2 of Act No. 2 of 2004 concerning persons with special needs states: “In addition to the rights they enjoy under other legislation, persons with special needs also enjoy the following rights: ... (vii) Accommodation that enables them to move and ambulate securely and safely, and special facilities for them in public places.”

154. The Qatar Paralympic Committee plays an important role in enabling persons with disabilities to unleash their sporting abilities and potential. This is reflected in the outstanding results achieved by young persons in international sporting events, including first place among States of the Gulf Cooperation Council and fourth place among all Arab States at the World Para Athletics Championships held in London last July. This is in addition to the medals won at the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro and at the Special Olympics World Winter Games in March 2017.

155. Persons with disabilities are expected to play a role in the 2022 World Cup. In fact, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy has taken significant steps to involve persons with disabilities in the volunteer programme that is organizing events to mark the World Cup. The first of these steps was the “Empowerment forum”, launched by the Supreme Committee in November 2016.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraphs 18 (b) and (c) of the list of issues

156. Civil society organizations, such as the Qatar Foundation for Social Action, play an effective role in this connection. For its part, the Qatar Foundation for the Welfare of Older Persons (Ehsan) provides care and social services for older persons, helps them uphold their rights and works to ensure that they are respected in society. By setting up the Shafallah

Centre, the State aimed to provide outstanding education and habilitation services to persons under the age of 21 with intellectual disabilities and autism. It also hoped to raise awareness in the broader community about the issues such persons face and their right to live more independent lives, and to promote their integration into society.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 19 of the list of issues

157. The Ministry of Health in Qatar provides mobility equipment and aids for persons with special needs. The equipment, which meets the highest international standards, is imported from abroad.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 20 (a) of the list of issues

158. The Qatar Sociocultural Centre for Deaf Persons is the first institution of its kind in Qatar to concern itself specifically with the education and recreational activities of persons who have hearing impairments. The Centre was established on 21 July 2005 under Decree No. 11 of 2005. Persons who are deaf or affected by mutism have been strongly represented in campaigns to raise awareness about elections to the Shura Council, for example, in a sign-language video on the elections broadcast by Qatar Television. The sign language used was the local Qatari (rather than the standard Arabic) variant because the video was intended for an internal public. For its part, the Ministry of Economy and Trade has recently translated the Consumer Protection Act into sign language for persons with special needs relating to hearing or speech. The video with the sign-language translation was put on a compact disc and distributed to the public and the authorities. It was also posted on the Ministry's own social media channels in order that it might reach the largest possible audience.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 20 (b) of the list of issues

159. The television station Al-Jazeera, acting on the principle that all persons have a right to news, became the first private news channel in the Arab world to concern itself with persons who are deaf or mute. Its first news broadcast to be translated into sign language was in 2002, and that experiment has since continued with two bulletins per day that achieve high audience ratings and maintain the channel's pre-eminence in this area. The National Museum of Qatar has developed a system that enables visitors with visual impairments to access the collections through audio commentaries and tactile guides which lead the visitors through the exhibition spaces, where they can also learn about the exhibits via Braille. This service is available in both Arabic and English. In December 2020, Katara, in cooperation with the Al-Noor Institute for the Blind, launched an initiative to print 100 Braille books containing stories and novels for children and adolescents. The Qatar Computing Research Institute, one of three national research institutes affiliated with Hamad Bin Khalifa University, announced the development of a keyboard for iOS operating systems that allows one-handed sightless typing using Braille, suitable for both Arabic and English speakers.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 21 (a) of the list of issues

160. Act No. 22 of 2006 promulgating the Family Code.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 21 (b) of the list of issues

161. The international human rights treaties ratified by Qatar and mentioned earlier in the present report (the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 21 (c) of the list of issues

162. Council of Ministers Decree No. 13 of 2001 promulgating the implementing regulations to the Civil Service Act contains the following provisions concerning maternity leave:

- Article 109: Female staff are to be granted two hours per day for breastfeeding for a period of one year, starting immediately after the end of their maternity leave. The staff member is free to decide when to breastfeed.
- Article 110: With the approval of the Minister or the Minister's representative and taking account of the exigencies of the service, female staff members who have been in the service of the State for four years may be granted leave to care for their children under the age of 16. Such leave may be granted twice during the period of service of the staff member concerned and may last a maximum of two years on each occasion. The leave is to be on full pay on the first occasion and on half pay on the second occasion, and the interval between the two may not be less than four years. Female staff members who have children with special needs are exempt from the conditions relating to the age of the child and the frequency of the leave.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 21 (d) of the list of issues

163. The same reply as that given in response to paragraph 21 (a); i.e., Act No. 22 of 2006 promulgating the Family Code.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 22 (a) of the list of issues

164. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education undertakes to provide comprehensive education to all persons with special needs in Qatar (citizens and residents) as a fundamental human right. In doing so, it acts under the two basic principles of “education for all” and “comprehensively inclusive education” as it aims to fulfil its role within national and international frameworks. The Ruaa Centre for assessment, consultation and support was established in 2015. Its purpose is to assess and diagnose students with disabilities of various kinds in order to identify their educational needs then find an appropriate school that provides an education to meet those needs. The process of comprehensive assessment is conducted within the Ruaa Centre by a qualified multidisciplinary team from the Ministry of Health. As soon as a comprehensive assessment report is issued, another team examines that report and interviews the child with disabilities in order to make a placement decision on the basis of the child's abilities and needs and the availability of appropriate educational services in State-run schools.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 22 (b) of the list of issues

Audio education complex

165. These are schools that provide services to students (both citizens and residents) with moderate to severe hearing disabilities. There are two such schools, one for boys and one for girls, providing education of different levels. Specifically, they offer the following services:

- Education supported by sign language.
- Psychosocial support for students with hearing disabilities.
- Technical support by monitoring the quality of the hearing aids used by students.
- Regular sign-language training for students, school staff and parents.
- Assistive technology tools to support communication skills and educational processes.

166. Other State-run schools provide services to students with learning difficulties of various kinds, as well as to students with disabilities who do not have cognitive or intellectual impairments, such as those with hearing impairments (persons with mild to moderate hearing

loss or persons with cochlear implants), visual impairments or physical and motor disabilities. The schools strive to meet the needs of these students, monitor their treatment plans and provide special arrangements and accommodations in assessment methods, the school environment and classroom activities.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 23 (a) of the list of issues

167. Sexual and reproductive health services are routinely provided to all patients, including those with special needs, on a basis of equality and without discrimination. However, priority is given to persons with special needs in maternity hospitals (for women) and in urology departments (for men). Persons with special needs enjoy all the privileges envisaged in Act No. 2 of 2004.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 23 (b) of the list of issues

168. The Social Services Department at Hamad Medical Corporation takes the following action in this area:

- It addresses the social problems faced by individuals with disabilities and provides them with assistance, either directly or via referral to civil society organizations.
- It runs regular training workshops, which sometimes focus on disability-related topics.
- It provides vocational training for university students, which also covers interaction with persons with disabilities.
- It examines the problems and difficulties faced by persons with disabilities and brings them to the attention of the competent authorities.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 23 (c) of the list of issues

169. In the panorama of national legislation, Act No. 2 of 2004 concerning persons with special needs guarantees the continuity of healthcare services for persons with disabilities. In addition to this, Qatar remains committed to implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Decree No. 28 of 2008 under which the Convention was ratified.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 24 of the list of issues

170. Act No. 2 of 2004, concerning persons with special needs, reads: “In addition to the rights they enjoy under other legislation, persons with special needs also enjoy the following rights:

- (i) Education and habilitation, according to their abilities.
- (ii) Medical, psychological, cultural and social care.
- (iii) Access to equipment, devices and means of transport to assist them in their education, habilitation, movement and transportation.
- (iv) Relief and aid as well as other assistance services.
- (v) Access to work in the public and private sectors that is consistent with their abilities, qualifications and training.
- (vi) The possibility to practise sport and leisure activities, according to their abilities.
- (vii) Accommodation that enables them to move and ambulate securely and safely.
- (viii) Special facilities for them in public places.
- (ix) Participation in decisions that affect them.”

171. Stakeholders coordinate with one another to ensure the ongoing delivery of services and programmes to persons with special needs in the areas mentioned in the previous paragraph, in particular:

- (i) Providing preventive and therapeutic medical, health and psychological services, as well as special medical reports, free of charge for such persons and their dependants who are not covered by any other health insurance scheme.
- (ii) Ensuring access by persons with special needs to employment opportunities compatible with their capabilities and to rehabilitation in competent institutions.
- (iii) Raising public awareness concerning the rights of persons with special needs, and endeavouring to ensure that they are provided with the necessary assistance and that they are well treated and socially integrated.
- (iv) Implementing appropriate educational, rehabilitative and pedagogical programmes, and training staff qualified to work with persons with special needs.
- (v) Providing opportunities and encouragement for them to engage in sports and leisure activities in such a way as to meet their needs and develop their capacities.
- (vi) Providing facilities for their benefit in the areas of welfare, care, support and vocational training as well as family-related, technical, sports and leisure services.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 25 (a) of the list of issues

172. Legislators have embraced the approach used in the Constitution, where the term “employee” is used in an absolute sense to include all categories of workers, including those with disabilities. However, legislators have also conferred certain privileges on persons with disabilities to help them perform their work, including the following:

- Providing them with the means necessary to carry out their professional duties and equipping workplaces to meet their needs, in accordance with article 14 of the Civil Service Human Resources Act No. 15 of 2016 as amended by Act No. 23 of 2020.
- Reducing working hours, in accordance with article 73 of Council of Ministers Decree No. 32 of 2016 promulgating the implementing regulations of the Civil Service Human Resources Act, as amended by Decree No. 20 of 2020.
- Envisaging an additional work allowance for persons with disabilities in accordance with article 26 of the Civil Service Human Resources Act No. 15 of 2016 as amended by Act No. 23 of 2020 and Council of Ministers Decree No. 12 of 2021.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 25 (b) of the list of issues

173. Government institutions are committed to providing certain jobs for persons with disabilities, in accordance with the provisions of Act No. 2 of 2004 concerning persons with special needs. At the same time, they undertake to provide such persons with the means necessary to carry out their professional duties and equip workplaces to meet their needs.

174. The Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs (as it was called at the time) has worked with other authorities and disability stakeholders to set up a regular “Career Day for employing persons with disabilities”.

175. Amiri Decree No. 58 of 2021 was issued on 19 October 2021 to establish the Bureau for the Civil Service and Government Development. The Bureau continues the work previously carried out by the Ministry by appointing persons with disabilities to work in the government sector, in coordination with other authorities.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 25 (c) of the list of issues

176. A total of 138 persons with disabilities were hired during the first, second and third “Career Days” organized by government institutions.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 25 (d) of the list of issues

177. The Qatar Development Bank has taken the following measures on behalf of persons with disabilities:

- It provides the same banking services to customers with disabilities as those offered to any other customer, without imposing any additional burdens such as interest, fees, etc.
- It takes appropriate and effective measures to ensure that customers with disabilities are able to manage their financial affairs on an equal footing with others and that they have equal access to banking services, credit facilities and other financial services.
- It allows customers with disabilities to appoint one or more persons as agents to operate their accounts, if they so desire; the Bank makes the customer aware of the risks associated with this process and of the steps they need to take if they wish to rescind the agent's functions.
- It equips all entrances and exits with ramps to accommodate and facilitate the movement of persons with disabilities.

178. For customers who have hearing impairments or are hard of hearing:

The Bank sent two of its staff members on a sign-language course entitled: "How to communicate with persons with hearing impairments around you" to train them to help customers conduct their banking transactions. The nature of the Qatar Development Bank and of its work means that it has only a very small number of customers who have hearing disabilities or are hard of hearing. Nonetheless, as an expression of its readiness to serve persons with disabilities at all times, the Bank has set up a special office to facilitate and expedite transactions for such persons.

179. For customers who have visual impairments or low vision:

- The nature of the Qatar Development Bank and of its work means that it has only a very small number of customers who have visual impairments or low vision. Nonetheless, as an expression of its readiness to serve persons with disabilities at all times, the Bank has set up a special office to facilitate and expedite transactions for such persons.
- Special forms for opening accounts, entering into facility agreements and conducting financial transactions are provided in Braille.
- Two client service representatives assist customers in filling out forms and documents, and they also provide witnesses if customers so request.
- When concluding agreements with customers who have visual impairments, care is taken to fulfil all legal requirements vis-à-vis the customer agent, witnesses and power of attorney.

180. For customers who have physical disabilities:

All entrances and exits are fitted with stairs and ramps to accommodate and facilitate the movement of persons with disabilities.

181. For customers who have cognitive disabilities:

Persons with cognitive disabilities who cannot attend to their own affairs always have a representative who conducts transactions on their behalf.

182. For customers who are incapacitated, elderly or ill:

The Bank provides a special service whereby, if necessary, staff can visit customers who are incapacitated, elderly or ill to help them carry out their transactions easily and conveniently in their own homes.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 25 (e) of the list of issues

183. Under article 14 of the Civil Service Human Resources Act No. 15 of 2016 as amended by Act No. 23 of 2020, government institutions are under an obligation to adapt their buildings and offices to meet the needs of the persons with disabilities who work there.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 26 (a) of the list of issues

184. The social protection strategy – which is part of the First National Development Strategy 2011–2016 and of the Second National Development Strategy 2018–2022 – reflects the directives of the country’s leaders and the aspirations of the Qatar National Vision 2030. It is also aligned with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the sustainable development agenda. Its purpose is to build an effective system of social protection for all Qataris in order to achieve a key sectoral outcome, which is to create an effective, integrated and sustainable system of social protection by translating intermediate outcomes into ongoing programmes and projects, namely:

- The strategic goal of developing social protection legislation, which includes:
 - A project to establish online links between the entities involved in social protection.
 - A project to build a comprehensive database of groups covered by the protection system.
 - A project to set up national committees for the development of strategies and policies for families and children, older persons and persons with disabilities, and to monitor coordination between the sectors involved.
 - A project to develop specific social protection legislation (i.e., bills that have a bearing on social protection in the areas of housing, social security, retirement and pensions, childhood, older persons and persons with disabilities).
 - A project to develop a pension fund investment system.
 - Drafting 10 pieces of social protection legislation by the end of 2022.

185. The strategic goal of improving vocational and social habilitation for vulnerable persons who are of working age and are able to work. The goal is to target 70 per cent of persons in that category during the period 2018–2022. This includes:

- A project for the habilitation of beneficiaries of social security pensions who are of working age, and their integration into the labour market.
- A national work-from-home project.
- A national small business project.
- A project to update rehabilitation and vocational training programmes for persons with disabilities.
- A project to cooperate with State-run and private educational institutions with a view to integrating persons with disabilities.
- A project to raise public awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities and the issues that affect them.
- A project to provide family support for persons with disabilities.
- A project for community activities to foster greater inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- A project to provide professional and social habilitation for persons with disabilities.
- A project to develop the skills of persons with disabilities.

186. The strategic goal of operationalizing 50 per cent of the services provided at service delivery outlets, during the period 2018–2022. This includes:

- A project to enhance social development centres.
- A project to improve service delivery outlets that provide social welfare services.
- A project to improve health services for persons with disabilities.
- A project to improve education for children with disabilities.
- A project to develop therapeutic rehabilitation services.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 26 (b) of the list of issues

187. This matter came up in earlier replies, notably in the reply to the questions raised in paragraph 2 (c).

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 26 (c) of the list of issues

188. This matter has also come up in earlier replies. There is no discrimination against persons with special needs in this matter, as is plainly stated in the Constitution.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 27 (a) of the list of issues

189. Article 1 of Decree No. 17 of 1998 concerns elections to the Central Municipal Council, while article 3 of Act No. 6 of 2021 concerns elections to the Shura Council. Both of these legislative provisions regulate the matter of voter eligibility, and neither discriminates in any way but covers all members of society, including persons with disabilities. In addition to this, anyone who meets the requirements stipulated in article 5 of the Decree regulating the Central Municipal Council or those set forth in article 10 of the Act regulating the Shura Council may stand as a candidate for those bodies, and no one may be excluded on grounds of an injury or disability.

190. Article 20 (2) of Decree No. 17 of 1998 concerning elections to the Central Municipal Council and article 36 (2) of Act No. 6 of 2021 concerning elections to the Shura Council stipulate: “Voters who are unable to make their preference known by marking their own ballot paper may cast their ballot in such a way that only the chairperson and/or a member of the polling committee can hear it. A member of the polling committee is then to record that vote on the ballot paper and place it in the ballot box.” Thus, legislators have ensured that there is no discrimination between members of society, including those with disabilities, in terms of their participation in the electoral process.

191. It should be noted that a candidacy request was received from a female candidate with disabilities to stand in the Shura Council elections held on 2 October 2021.

192. At the 2021 elections for the Shura Council, a special committee was set up to facilitate procedures and provide special services for persons with disabilities and older persons.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 27 (b) of the list of issues

193. There is no discrimination against persons with disabilities in this regard.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 27 (c) of the list of issues

194. There is no discrimination against persons with disabilities in this regard.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 28 of the list of issues

Access to collections and use of resources

195. The Library selects its resources then makes them available in multiple formats, in particular for persons with disabilities. Available resources include the following:

- Audiobook collections, such as Booki and OverDrive.
- The PressReader service, which gives audio access to newspapers and magazines.
- Braille books in Arabic and English, and a free Braille printing service for works of fewer than 100 pages.
- TheBookShare platform, which provides books and other educational resources for persons with disabilities. Libraries have held workshops to show people how to use the platform.
- A growing collection of large-print books for persons who are visually impaired.

196. The Library acted to promote and advocate the ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled, which greatly increased possibilities for cross-border book transfers and led to an increase in the number of digital books available for persons with disabilities, particularly those with visual impairments who have difficulty reading printed material.

197. The Library's copyright policies are based on the Copyright and Publication Act. The Act allows individual users or their representatives to make copies of books and other works in the collections so that persons in a particular category can benefit from them for their own personal use.

198. In order to improve access to services and resources for children with disabilities, the Children's Library provides educational kits containing sensory reading matter as well as other materials designed and produced by specialists specifically to assist young learners in this category.

Use of facilities

199. The Library has an assistive technology centre. This is strategically located on the ground floor of the building to facilitate access by persons with disabilities. The centre is equipped with adjustable tables and has the latest modern devices and software, such as scanning pens with headphones, keyboards, ergonomic computer mice, Braille keyboards and portable electronic magnifiers.

200. The Library building is designed to meet the movement and mobility requirements of persons with disabilities, with features such as wheelchair ramps and lifts to facilitate access to the book collections and services available on different floors. There are also designated parking spaces close to the entrance, with ramps to facilitate movement in wheelchairs from cars to the interior of the building. In addition, front row seats at events and activities can be reserved for persons with disabilities, upon prior request.

201. The Library has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Mada Assistive Technology Centre. The memorandum includes provision for evaluating the experiences of users of the Library and its website with a view to determining how technologies can be used to support persons with disabilities and older persons, and how the Library can develop its services in this area.

202. In partnership with Mada, the Library is soon to open a special office on its premises to assist users with disabilities as their first point of contact with the Library. The Library will also work with Mada to provide staff in the client service department with comprehensive training on the use of assistive technologies in the new office.

203. The Library has partnered with the Shafallah Centre for persons with disabilities to develop ways to make its facilities more accessible to visitors with disabilities.

204. Evacuation procedures throughout the Library have been adapted to accommodate persons with disabilities. There is a trained emergency response team at the library entrance to facilitate the tracking and evacuation of persons with disabilities in case of emergency.

205. The Children's Library is in the process of creating a sensory space and a listening station with audiobooks in Arabic and English. Other activities carried out by the sensory room to serve persons with disabilities are mentioned in the following paragraphs.

206. A series of workshops has been held for parents, teachers and caregivers of children with disabilities.

207. Numerous events and programmes have been organized for children and adolescents with disabilities and their families.

Education and community development

208. In partnership with the Shafallah Centre, the Teaching Centre and the Mada Centre, the Library runs regular programmes for persons with disabilities and their families. Many topics have been covered including, most recently, the following:

- Behavioural challenges and sensory issues in children.
- Effective integration at home.
- Down syndrome and healthy nutrition.
- Visual aids for children with autism.
- A workshop on early language development for parents of children with disabilities.
- Apps for parents of children with autism.
- Women and disability.

209. Upon request, the Library can organize tours, orientation sessions and equipment demonstrations. It also offers group visits by schools and other organizations that serve persons with disabilities.

210. The Library organizes a book club for persons who are blind, which takes the form of a regular meeting where participants can discuss books and topics that are relevant to them.

211. In order to enable persons with disabilities to derive benefit from Library resources and services, staff receive training on the use of assistive devices of various kinds. The Library has also developed an online guide with information about the disability-related services it currently has available. The guide – which is aimed at people who work closely with persons with disabilities, relevant institutions, caregivers and families – is currently being translated into Arabic.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 29 of the list of issues

212. There is no discrimination against persons with disabilities in this regard.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 30 (a) of the list of issues

213. Information on this matter is currently unavailable; initiatives to set up such systems are to be developed.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 30 (b) of the list of issues

214. Information on this matter is currently unavailable; initiatives relating to the mechanism in question are to be developed.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 30 (c) of the list of issues

215. Information on this matter is currently unavailable; initiatives relating to the mechanisms in question are to be developed.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 31 of the list of issues

216. Information on this matter is currently unavailable; initiatives relating to the mechanisms in question are to be developed.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 32 (a) of the list of issues

217. The National Committee for Women, Children, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 32 (b) of the list of issues

218. In the context of the National Human Rights Action Plan, a large number of initiatives have been developed which aim to enhance, develop and protect the rights of persons with special needs.

Reply to the questions raised in paragraph 32 (d) of the list of issues

219. The National Human Rights Committee monitors the situation of human rights in Qatar. Among the groups with which the Committee engages and from which it receives complaints are persons with disabilities. The Committee then refers those complaints to the competent authorities.
