



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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## Committee on the Rights of the Child

### Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Qatar\*

#### I. Introduction

1. The Committee considered the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Qatar<sup>1</sup> at its 2892nd and 2893rd meetings,<sup>2</sup> held on 21 and 22 May 2025, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 2906th meeting, held on 30 May 2025. In the present document, the Committee uses the term “child” to refer to a person who is under 18 years of age.
2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of the State Party, under the simplified reporting procedure,<sup>3</sup> which allowed for a better understanding of the situation of children’s rights in the State Party. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the constructive dialogue held with the multisectoral delegation of the State Party.

#### II. Follow-up measures taken and progress achieved by the State Party

3. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved by the State Party in various areas, including the establishment of the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking in 2017 and the National Committee for Women, Children, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities in 2019, the setting up of the Ministry of Social Development and the Family in 2021, the adoption of the national policy for young persons in 2023 and the adoption of the third national development strategy 2024–2030. It also welcomes the increase in budgetary resources for health and education.

#### III. Main areas of concern and recommendations

4. The Committee reminds the State Party of the indivisibility and interdependence of all the rights enshrined in the Convention and emphasizes the importance of all the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations. The Committee would like to draw the State Party’s attention to the recommendations concerning the following areas, in respect of which urgent measures must be taken: legislation (para. 8); non-discrimination (para. 20); the right to life, survival and development (para. 23); birth certificate and nationality (para. 26); aims and coverage of education (para. 43); and administration of child justice (para. 51).

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\* Adopted by the Committee at its ninety-ninth session (12–30 May 2025).

<sup>1</sup> CRC/C/QAT/5-6.

<sup>2</sup> See CRC/C/SR.2892 and CRC/C/SR.2893.

<sup>3</sup> See CRC/C/QAT/QPR/5-6.



5. The Committee recommends that the State Party ensure the realization of children's rights in accordance with the Convention, the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, throughout the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It urges the State Party to ensure the meaningful participation of children in the design and implementation of policies and programmes aimed at achieving all 17 Sustainable Development Goals as far as they concern children.

#### **A. General measures of implementation (arts. 1, 4, 42 and 44 (6))**

##### **Reservations and declarations**

6. The Committee, in line with its previous recommendations,<sup>4</sup> urges the State Party to consider withdrawing its reservations to articles 2 and 14 of the Convention.

##### **Legislation**

7. The Committee is seriously concerned that:

(a) There is no comprehensive legal framework on children's rights and that the Children's Act has still not been adopted;

(b) There is no unified definition of the child in existing laws.

8. The Committee recalls its previous concluding observations<sup>5</sup> and urges the State Party:

(a) To promptly adopt the draft children's act and ensure that it is in line with the Convention;

(b) To continue to review its existing laws related to children's rights to ensure that they are in full compliance with the principles and provisions of the Convention, including with regard to the definition of the child and the best interests of the child.

##### **Comprehensive policy and strategy**

9. While noting the adoption of the third national development strategy and the formation of the social development and family cohesion team for its drafting, the Committee is concerned that the strategy is not directly focused on children's rights and recommends that the State Party:

(a) Develop a comprehensive policy on children that encompasses all areas covered by the Convention and, on the basis of that policy, develop a strategy with the elements necessary for its application, supported by sufficient human, technical and financial resources;

(b) Extend the national policy for young persons to all children living in the State Party, including children who do not have Qatari nationality;

(c) Provide the National Committee for Women, Children, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities with a clear mandate with respect to the promotion and protection of children's rights and with adequate resources to carry out its mandate.

##### **Coordination**

10. Noting the creation of the National Planning Council and the steps taken to operationalize the National Commission for Childhood, the Committee recommends that the State Party ensure that said bodies are provided with the human, technical and financial resources necessary for their effective operation.

<sup>4</sup> CRC/C/QAT/CO/3-4, para. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., paras. 6 and 12.

### Allocation of resources

11. Recalling its general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Continue increasing the allocations in the areas of health, education and social protection to adequate levels and, in particular, increase the coverage of child-related subsidies and other protection schemes, including for children of unmarried parents, children with disabilities, migrant children and children belonging to minority groups;

(b) Set up a budgeting process that includes a child-rights perspective, that specifies clear allocations to children, in the relevant sectors and agencies, and that incorporates specific indicators and a tracking system to monitor and evaluate the adequacy, efficacy and equitability of the distribution of resources allocated for implementation of the Convention.

### Data collection

12. Recalling its general comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Expediently improve its data collection system and ensure that data collected on children's rights cover all areas of the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto, with data disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographical location, ethnic and national origin and socioeconomic background, in order to facilitate analysis of the situation of children, particularly those in situations of vulnerability;

(b) Ensure that disaggregated statistical data and indicators on children's rights are shared among the ministries concerned and used for identifying the needs and gaps in health, education, social protection and other sectors relevant for children's rights, as well as for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects for the effective implementation of the Convention;

(c) Continue its technical cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), among other entities, and utilize the finalized data of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys as a basis to develop policies relevant to children's rights.

### Access to justice and remedy

13. The Committee recommends that the State Party:

(a) Ensure that all children, including migrant children, have access to: (i) confidential, child-friendly and independent complaint mechanisms in schools, foster care systems, alternative care settings and detention for reporting all forms of violence, abuse, discrimination and other violations of their rights; and (ii) legal support and age-appropriate information on access to counselling and remedies, including compensation and rehabilitation;

(b) Raise awareness among children of their right to file a complaint under existing mechanisms;

(c) Ensure systematic and mandatory training for all relevant professionals working with children on child-friendly procedures and remedies, children's rights and the Convention.

### Independent monitoring

14. The Committee urges the State Party to strengthen the National Human Rights Commission so that it can effectively and independently discharge its mandate and to consider establishing a children's commission or other body to monitor the implementation of the Convention and act as a mechanism to investigate and address cases related to the rights of children, including migrant children.

### **Dissemination of the Convention and awareness-raising**

15. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Strengthen its awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns, in cooperation with civil society organizations, to ensure that the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto are widely known among government officials and the general public, including media professionals, parents, persons in schools and mosques who work with children, and children themselves;**

(b) **Promote the active involvement of children in public outreach activities, including in measures targeting parents, social workers, teachers and law enforcement officials, and encourage the media to ensure sensitivity to children's rights and the inclusion of children in the development of those programmes.**

### **Cooperation with civil society**

16. **The Committee recommends that the State Party take all the measures necessary to guarantee freedom of action for human rights defenders and civil society organizations, build a climate of trust and cooperation with civil society and systematically involve communities, as well as civil society and children's organizations, in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, plans and programmes related to children's rights.**

### **International cooperation**

17. **While commending the State Party for its investment in international cooperation and support of humanitarian programmes in the field of health and education and taking note of target 17.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee encourages the State Party to meet the internationally agreed target of allocating 0.7 per cent of its gross national income for official development assistance and to prioritize children's rights in its international cooperation agreements.**

### **Children's rights and the business sector**

18. **Recalling its general comment No. 16 (2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, endorsed by the Human Rights Council in 2011, the Committee recommends that the State Party establish and implement regulations to ensure that the business sector complies with international and national human rights, labour, environment and other standards, particularly with regard to children's rights.**

## **B. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12)**

### **Non-discrimination**

19. **The Committee remains deeply concerned that:**

(a) **The grounds for protection from discrimination in article 35 of the Constitution are much narrower than those defined in article 2 of the Convention and that there is a lack of comprehensive legislation prohibiting all forms of discrimination;**

(b) **Girls continue to be subject to multiple forms of gender-based discrimination from the earliest stages of their life and throughout their childhood due to the persistence of adverse and traditional attitudes and norms and that no systematic efforts have been undertaken, including none with religious leaders, opinion makers or the mass media, to combat and change discriminatory attitudes and practices;**

(c) **Children, in particular children with disabilities, children of unmarried parents, children of foreign fathers and children of migrant workers, experience widespread discrimination, including in access to basic social services, such as education and healthcare.**

20. The Committee recalls its previous concluding observations<sup>6</sup> and urges the State Party:

- (a) To include in its Constitution and legislation a definition of discrimination against children in accordance with article 2 of the Convention;
- (b) To review, as a matter of priority, its legislation and practices, with a view to prohibiting all forms of discrimination based on any grounds, adequately sanctioning perpetrators and providing child victims of discrimination with effective and appropriate remedies;
- (c) To forcefully strive to eliminate gender stereotypes that contribute to discrimination against girls in all areas of life;
- (d) To strengthen the effectiveness of its social protection system for all children in disadvantaged situations and ensure access to all services, including health and education, to all children without discrimination;
- (e) To mobilize communities and the public at large by undertaking systematic efforts, in collaboration with the mass media, social networks and community and religious leaders, to change traditional attitudes, social norms and behaviours that contribute to discrimination against girls, children with disabilities, children of unmarried parents, children of migrant workers and children of foreign fathers; and promote tolerance and respect for diversity.

#### Best interests of the child

21. Recalling its general comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations<sup>7</sup> and urges the State Party:

- (a) To ensure that this right is consistently applied in all judicial proceedings and decisions, including with regard to custody, in matters of national security, family separation and psychological integrity;
- (b) To develop procedures and criteria to provide guidance to all relevant persons in authority for determining the best interests of the child in every area and for giving it due weight as a primary consideration;
- (c) To ensure that all professionals working with and for children receive training on those procedures and criteria.

#### Right to life, survival and development

22. The Committee is seriously concerned that under the principles of Islamic sharia, child offenders can be sentenced to death for murder under *qisas* (retribution).

23. The Committee urges the State Party to continue strictly implementing the prohibition of the death penalty for all persons who were under the age of 18 at the time of the crime, as enshrined in the article 37 of the Convention, and to review all death penalty convictions to ensure that no person who was below the age of 18 at the time of the offence is sentenced to the death penalty.

#### Respect for the views of the child

24. Recalling its general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

- (a) Conduct research to identify the issues that are most important to children, to hear their views on those issues, to find out how well their voices are heard in family decisions affecting their lives and to identify the channels through which they currently and potentially have the most influence on national decision-making;

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., paras. 14 and 16.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., para. 17.

- (b) Conduct programmes and awareness-raising activities to promote the meaningful and empowered participation of all children within the family, community and schools, and in all judicial and administrative procedures concerning them, with particular attention given to girls and children in vulnerable situations;
- (c) Establish a consultative mechanism or structure to involve children in all issues affecting them, including in the design of laws, policies, programmes and services, in order to facilitate children's effective engagement with national processes on issues that affect them.

## C. Civil and political rights (arts. 7, 8 and 13–17)

### Birth certificate and nationality

25. The Committee remains seriously concerned that:

- (a) The Nationality Act does not allow for nationality to be transmitted to children through both maternal and paternal lines, without distinction, in particular for children who would otherwise be stateless;
- (b) Children born to unmarried parents may not be able to obtain a birth certificate owing to the registration office requiring the parents' marriage certificate in order to issue a birth certificate;
- (c) Children born to non-Qatari mothers may be deported or separated from their mothers;
- (d) Members of the Al-Ghufran clan, particularly children, remain without Qatari citizenship.

26. The Committee recalls its previous concluding observations<sup>8</sup> and urges the State Party:

- (a) To amend the Nationality Act and the Permanent Residency Act to allow Qatari women married to non-citizens to transmit without discrimination their nationality to their children from birth, in particular for those children who would otherwise be stateless;
- (b) To ensure that children born to unmarried parents receive a birth certificate and other identity documents and that children born to non-Qatari parents are not deported or separated from their mothers;
- (c) To resolve the stateless status of members of the Al-Ghufran clan, particularly children, by providing a clear path to Qatari citizenship and access to education and healthcare;
- (d) To consider ratifying the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness;
- (e) To seek technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF, among others, for the implementation of these recommendations.

### Access to appropriate information

27. Recalling its general comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

- (a) Ensure that draft laws on access to information and the digital environment adequately protect children from harmful content and materials and online risks, and provide for mechanisms to prosecute violations;

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., para. 20.

(b) Enhance the digital literacy and skills of children, teachers and families, and protect children from information and material harmful to their well-being.

**D. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24 (3), 28 (2), 34, 35, 37 (a) and 39 of the Convention, and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography)**

**Abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and exploitation**

28. The Committee welcomes the establishment of a helpline, the national child abuse registry, specialized training of members of the police force, the National Committee for Women, Children, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities, the national programme for the protection of children from violence and neglect in 2016 and various other measures aimed at the protection of children against violence. In the light of its general comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence and the Committee's previous concluding observations,<sup>9</sup> the Committee urges the State Party:

- (a) To establish a comprehensive legal framework, adopt a national plan of action and create a prevention and protection system to criminalize and combat all forms of violence against children, in particular gender-based and domestic violence and mental abuse;
- (b) To provide sanctions that are commensurate with the gravity of the crime and ensure that penalties applied for sexual offences against child victims are equal, whether the victims are boys or girls;
- (c) To ensure that all cases of abuse of children, including sexual abuse and gender-based violence, are promptly reported and investigated, applying a child-friendly and multisectoral approach with the aim of avoiding the revictimization of the child, that perpetrators are prosecuted and duly sanctioned and that reparations are provided to victims, as appropriate;
- (d) To promptly investigate any cases of alleged torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, punishment or retaliation against children, such as arbitrary detention or separation from the family, in particular in the case of migrant children;
- (e) To provide regular substantive training for judges, lawyers, prosecutors, the police officers and other relevant professional groups on standardized, gender- and child-sensitive procedures for dealing with victims and on how gender stereotyping negatively affects strict law enforcement;
- (f) To establish a comprehensive national child protection system that contains a subsystem protecting against violence and is supported by a national action plan and financial, human and technical resources allocated to its functioning;
- (g) To strengthen the capacity of the police and invest in the professionalization of social services to deal with all types of cases of violence against children;
- (h) To conduct awareness-raising activities to combat the stigmatization of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse and ensure accessible, confidential, child-friendly and effective reporting channels for such violations.

**Corporal punishment**

29. Recalling its general comment No. 8 (2006) on the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations<sup>10</sup> and urges the State Party:

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., paras. 23 and 24.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., para. 22.

- (a) To explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in law in all settings, including in the home, schools, childcare institutions and alternative care settings and in the administration of justice;
- (b) To promote positive, non-violent and participatory forms of child-rearing and discipline;
- (c) To conduct awareness-raising campaigns for parents and professionals working with and for children to promote attitudinal change, within the family and the community, with regard to corporal punishment.

#### **Harmful practices**

30. The Committee remains seriously concerned that, despite its previous recommendations,<sup>11</sup> the minimum age of marriage remains 16 years for girls, with legal exceptions allowing for the marriage of girls under 16 years. It recalls joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices and urges the State Party:

- (a) To amend the Family Act to raise the minimum age of marriage for girls to 18 years of age;
- (b) To develop campaigns and programmes raising awareness of the harmful effects of child marriage on the physical and mental health and well-being of girls, targeting households, local authorities, religious leaders, judges and prosecutors;
- (c) To establish protection schemes for victims of child and forced marriage who file a complaint;
- (d) To take active measures to put an end to child marriage in the State Party.

#### **Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography**

31. Recalling its 2019 guidelines on the implementation of the Optional Protocol and its previous concluding observations on the report of the State Party submitted under article 12 of the Optional Protocol,<sup>12</sup> the Committee recommends that the State Party:

- (a) Classify the crimes of sexual exploitation against children and adolescents appropriately, ensuring aggravated penalties when the perpetrators are parents or guardians;
- (b) Harmonize its legislation in order to remove the requirement of double criminality to ensure extraterritorial jurisdiction;
- (c) Strengthen the capacities of the specialized office for investigating offences involving the sexual exploitation of children and provide adequate resources for its continuous operation;
- (d) Collect data on all areas covered by the Optional Protocol.

### **E. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 9–11, 18 (1) and (2), 20, 21, 25 and 27 (4))**

#### **Family environment**

32. The Committee draws the State Party's attention to its statement under article 5 of the Convention, recalls its previous concluding observations<sup>13</sup> and recommends that the State Party strengthen its efforts to:

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., para. 25.

<sup>12</sup> CRC/C/OPSC/QAT/CO/1.

<sup>13</sup> CRC/C/QAT/CO/3-4, para. 26.

- (a) Ensure that mothers and fathers equally share the responsibility for their children in accordance with article 18 (1) of the Convention;
- (b) Ensure that, in the case of parental separation, the mother and father share the parental responsibilities, unless it is not in the best interests of the child, making sure that children's views are taken into consideration, that the best interests of the child are always given primary consideration and that the capacity of the judiciary is built to undertake assessment of those best interests;
- (c) Ensure that all provisions that discriminate against women and negatively affect their children, such as those that authorize divorce, particularly in cases of repudiation, and those that restrict women's ability to act as a child's guardian, be repealed;
- (d) Ensure that decisions on guardianship are primarily based on the best interests of the child and that current laws do not undermine children's access to education, healthcare or their freedom of movement; that a mother can be assigned as a guardian; that a mother, regardless of nationality, can retain custody of the child beyond the age of 7, and that a child cannot be removed from their mother if she remarries.

#### **Children deprived of a family environment**

33. Drawing the State Party's attention to the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations <sup>14</sup> and recommends that the State Party:

- (a) Ensure sufficient alternative family-based and community-based care options for children who cannot stay with their families, including by allocating sufficient financial resources for foster care, regularly reviewing placement measures and facilitating the reunification of children with their families when in the children's best interests;
- (b) Develop a safeguarding policy and clear guidance for all professionals working with families and children, in particular family judges, law enforcement personnel, social workers and service providers, to enhance their awareness of the rights and needs of children deprived of a family environment, and develop compliance monitoring for these professionals;
- (c) Establish quality standards for all alternative care settings, ensure periodic review of the placement of children in foster care and institutions and monitor the quality of care therein, including by providing accessible channels for reporting, monitoring and remedying maltreatment of children;
- (d) Ensure that an online case tracking system for children in care institutions or host families is fully integrated into the national child protection system.

#### **Children of incarcerated parents**

34. The Committee recommends that the State Party give foremost consideration to the best interests of the child by considering alternatives to the detention of mothers and, only if such alternatives are not found, provide all the human and financial resources and support necessary to children living in detention with their mothers. It also recommends that the State Party continue to provide any psychological and other support necessary to children whose parents have been sentenced to death or life imprisonment.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., para. 27.

## F. Children with disabilities (art. 23)

35. Recalling its general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations<sup>15</sup> and recommends that the State Party adopt a human rights-based approach to disability, set up a comprehensive strategy for the inclusion of children with disabilities and:

- (a) Develop operational plans and accountability measures for the implementation of the strategic framework document for the disability sector;
- (b) Enable all children with disabilities living in the State Party, including children with disabilities who do not possess Qatari nationality and those who are stateless, to claim and have access to their rights without discrimination, in accordance with the human rights-based approach to disability, and protect them from all forms of disability-based discrimination;
- (c) Organize the collection of data on children with disabilities and develop an efficient and harmonized system for disability assessment in order to facilitate their access to services, including education and health, social protection and support services;
- (d) Improve identification, evaluation and referral of children with disabilities, including non-Qatari children, children with autism spectrum disorders and intellectual and psychosocial disabilities;
- (e) Ensure that children are not placed in institutions as a result of their disability and strengthen family and community-based care;
- (f) Undertake awareness-raising campaigns aimed at government officials, the public and families to combat the stigmatization of, and prejudice against, children with disabilities and promote a positive image of children with disabilities as rights-holders.

## G. Health (arts. 6, 24 and 33)

### Health and health services

36. The Committee notes the launch of the national health strategy 2024–2030 and regrets that there is no special focus on children and adolescents. Recalling its general comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

- (a) Ensure effective access to the public healthcare system for all children living in Qatar, including non-Qatars;
- (b) Fully implement the Healthcare Services Act No. 22 of 2021 (the Insurance Act) whereby employers are required to enrol into and pay for health insurance policies for their non-Qatari employees and their family members;
- (c) Ensure that children receive all nutrients essential to their development, and monitor any vitamin and electrolyte deficiencies and abnormalities, particularly among those children who regularly drink desalinated water;
- (d) Intensify measures to combat obesity and to raise awareness about healthy nutrition among parents, children and the general public, promote healthy eating habits, in particular among young children and adolescents, and develop regulations regarding the marketing of unhealthy food that has a negative effect on children's health;
- (e) Strengthen its efforts in favour of breastfeeding, including by taking measures to publicize breastfeeding guidelines and fully implement the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, encourage flexible working arrangements and raise awareness among families and the general public, including through the media, of the importance of breastfeeding;

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., para. 29.

(f) Systematically collect data on nutrition for children, including those relevant to breastfeeding, overweight and obesity, in order to identify the root causes of overweight and obesity;

(g) Regularly monitor and assess the effectiveness of policies and programmes on nutrition, including school meal programmes and programmes for infants and young children.

#### **Mental health**

37. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) Strengthen mental health services and programmes for children, including by allocating sufficient financial, technical and human resources for preventive measures and developing therapeutic community-based mental health services;

(b) Ensure sufficient screening for mental health issues and early prevention services in schools, including by introducing education on mental health in school curricula and training for teachers;

(c) Provide training on identifying and addressing depression, anxiety disorders and suicidal behaviour among children for relevant professionals, including paediatricians, psychologists, care professionals and teachers.

#### **Adolescent health**

38. Recalling its general comment No. 4 (2003) on adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention and general comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations<sup>16</sup> and recommends that the State Party:

(a) Adopt a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health policy for adolescents and ensure that age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education is part of the mandatory school curriculum, provided by specially trained facilitators and targeted at children and adolescents, with special attention given to preventing early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections;

(b) Ensure that all adolescents, including those who are out of school and those in rural areas, receive confidential and age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health information and services, including access to contraceptives;

(c) Decriminalize abortion in all circumstances and ensure access to safe abortion and post-abortion care services for adolescent girls, making sure that their views are always heard and given due consideration as a part of the decision-making process;

(d) Address the incidence of drug use by adolescents by, *inter alia*, providing children and adolescents with accurate and objective information and life skills education on preventing substance abuse – including tobacco and alcohol – and develop accessible and child-friendly drug dependence treatment.

## **H. Standard of living (arts. 18 (3), 26 and 27 (1)–(3))**

39. The Committee recommends that the State Party ensure that all children, in particular migrant children, have access to adequate housing, adequate financial support and free, accessible services without discrimination.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., para. 30.

## **I. Children's rights and the environment (arts. 2, 3, 6, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 24 and 26–31)**

40. Recalling its general comment No. 26 (2023) on children's rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change, and taking note of Environmental Protection Act No. 30, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

- (a) Develop a national plan to monitor children's environmental health, conduct an assessment of risks and of the effects of polluted air, water and soil on children's health as a basis for designing a well-resourced strategy to remedy the situation and strictly enforce the maximum concentrations of air and water pollutants;
- (b) Implement environmental health standards, indicators and definitions set by the World Health Organization;
- (c) Ensure that health professionals receive training in diagnosis and treatment of health impacts related to environmental harm.

### **Impact of climate change on the rights of the child**

41. Noting the launch of the 2024–2030 strategy “Together towards a sustainable environment for a better future”, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 26 (2023), with a special focus on climate change, and recommends that the State Party:

- (a) Develop a child-sensitive action plan in relation to the 2024–2030 strategy that takes into account the needs and rights of children;
- (b) Ensure that child rights impact assessments are conducted to inform the process of development and implementation of policies and programmes to address climate change and disaster risk management and that children are properly consulted in both the assessment and policy development;
- (c) Address the health risks of climate change among children, such as heat-related illnesses and respiratory conditions, as well as long-term impacts, including chronic diseases and mental health challenges;
- (d) Collect disaggregated data identifying the types of risk faced by children with respect to the occurrence of a variety of disasters in order to formulate international, regional and national policies, frameworks and agreements accordingly.

## **J. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28–31)**

### **Aims and coverage of education**

42. Noting the Ministry of Education and Higher Education strategic plan 2024–2030 to strengthen the provision of education for all, the Committee is concerned that:

- (a) There is increasing overreliance on the private sector, particularly with regard to educating children of migrant workers;
- (b) Education is not free of charge for a high proportion of children residing in Qatar, particularly non-Qatari children;
- (c) There are categories of children, such as children with disabilities, undocumented and migrant children and married or pregnant girls, whose access to education is limited or who are out of school;
- (d) There is a lack of opportunities for girls to attend technical and vocational training and education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics;
- (e) There are persistent gender stereotypes in school curricula;
- (f) There is no comprehensive early childhood development policy and public and private providers of early childhood education are not harmonized.

43. **The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

- (a) Make more places available in public schools, particularly to accommodate children of migrant workers and decrease their overreliance on private schools;
- (b) Adopt a detailed plan of measures and specific timelines to achieve the full application of the principle of free primary education and progressively yet rapidly expand free secondary education for all, particularly for non-Qataris, including by covering hidden costs such as transportation, books, stationery, uniforms and exam fees;
- (c) Ensure that undocumented children can access schools without being required to produce a residence permit, and take positive measures to identify them and register them in schools;
- (d) Take all measures possible to ensure that married or pregnant girls continue attending school;
- (e) Collect accurate and disaggregated data on out-of-school children, including migrant children, children with disabilities and married or pregnant girls and use these data to develop a policy;
- (f) Develop and promote equal choice and quality of technical and vocational training for boys and girls and promote the education of girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics;
- (g) Strengthen efforts to eliminate discriminatory gender stereotypes in curricula at all levels of education;
- (h) Develop a multisectoral strategy for early childhood development, develop policies and practices aimed at harmonizing public and private sector providers and increase enrolment rates for early childhood education.

**Inclusive education**

44. The Committee recommends that the State Party intensify efforts to include children with special needs in mainstream schools, ensuring that schools are equipped with trained teachers (including specialized ones), accessible infrastructure and teaching materials adapted to the needs of children with disabilities.

**Human rights education**

45. The Committee recommends that the State Party launch without delay the national plan of action for human rights and ensure that human rights education and the principles of the Convention are integrated into the mandatory school curriculum – extending the obligation to provide such education to private schools – and into the training of teachers and education professionals, taking into account the framework of the World Programme for Human Rights Education.

**Rest, play, leisure, recreation and cultural and artistic activities**

46. Recalling its general comment No 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts, the Committee recommends that the State Party continue providing children, including those with disabilities and children in marginalized and disadvantaged situations, with safe, accessible and inclusive spaces for play and socialization and public transport to access such spaces.

**K. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37 (b)–(d) and 38–40 of the Convention, and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict)**

**Asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children**

47. Recalling joint general comments No. 3 and No. 4 of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families/No. 22 and No. 23 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017) on the human rights of children in the context of international migration and its general comment No. 6 (2005) on the treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin, the Committee recommends that the State Party:

- (a) Fully implement law. No. 11 of 2018 regarding political asylum and consider amending specific provisions to fully align with international standards;
- (b) Ensure that migrant children are not detained on the basis of their or their parents' migration status and that alternatives to detention are available through the timely provision of safe and dignified accommodation;
- (c) Prioritize the immediate transfer of Afghan refugee children and their families out of military bases, provide oversight of these facilities and adopt permanent and sustainable resettlement options for refugees, particularly children and their families, to ensure that they are given lawful stay and reasonable access to employment and other opportunities;
- (d) Facilitate access to the asylum system for children in need of international protection, in line with articles 6, 22 and 37 of the Convention and general comment No. 6 (2005);
- (e) Take all measures necessary to ensure that the principle of family unity is legally available through family reunification to persons granted asylum on humanitarian grounds;
- (f) Consider ratifying the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

**Economic exploitation, including child labour**

48. The Committee recommends that the State Party ensure effective protection of migrant children from exploitation and child labour and keep the sponsorship (*kafalah*) reform laws, aimed at protection of migrant workers and prevention of economic exploitation of children, in place.

**Trafficking**

49. The Committee notes a number of memorandums signed to combat trafficking and support victims of trafficking, and recommends that the State Party:

- (a) Allocate sufficient resources for the implementation of various memorandums aimed at preventing child trafficking and supporting child victims of trafficking;
- (b) Ensure the effective provision of referral and support services to children who are victims of trafficking;
- (c) Investigate all cases of child trafficking and bring perpetrators to justice;
- (d) Conduct awareness-raising activities in order to make both parents and children aware of the dangers of trafficking.

### **Administration of child justice**

50. The Committee remains seriously concerned that:

- (a) The age of criminal responsibility is set at 7 years of age;
- (b) Sentences of life imprisonment, hard labour and flogging may be handed down for a number of offences committed by children over 16 years of age;
- (c) The children's court has not yet been established.

51. Recalling its general comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the child justice system and with reference to the global study on children deprived of liberty, the Committee urges the State Party to bring its child justice system fully into line with the Convention and other relevant standards, including international rules and principles. In particular, the Committee urges the State Party:

- (a) To raise the legal age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years of age;
- (b) To ensure that children below the age of 18 are not prosecuted as adult offenders, without any exception, and repeal provisions of the Penal Code that allow for death penalty, life imprisonment, hard labour and flogging for children;
- (c) To expeditiously establish specialized child court facilities and procedures with adequate human, technical and financial resources, designate specialized judges for children and ensure that such specialized judges receive appropriate training;
- (d) To ensure the provision of free and specialized legal aid to children alleged as, accused of or recognized as having infringed criminal law at an early stage of the procedure and throughout the legal proceedings;
- (e) Actively promote non-judicial measures, such as diversion and mediation for children alleged as, accused of or recognized as having infringed criminal law and, wherever possible, the use of non-custodial sentences for children, such as probation or community service, and ensure that health and psychosocial services are provided to such children;
- (f) Ensure that detention is used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time and is reviewed on a regular basis with a view to the release of the child;
- (g) For the few situations where deprivation of liberty is justified as a measure of last resort, ensure that the children are not detained together with adults and that detention conditions are compliant with international standards, including with regard to access to education and health services.

### **Children in armed conflict, including the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict**

52. The Committee recommends that the State Party establish a mechanism for the early identification of children, including asylum-seeking and refugee children, who may have been recruited or used in armed conflicts abroad and provide support for their physical and psychological recovery, rehabilitation and integration into society.

## **L. Ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure**

53. The Committee recommends that the State Party ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on a communications procedure.

## **M. Ratification of international human rights instruments**

54. The Committee recommends that the State Party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, consider ratifying the following core human rights instruments:

- (a) **Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty;**
- (b) **International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;**
- (c) **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;**
- (d) **Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.**

## **IV. Implementation and reporting**

### **A. Follow-up and dissemination**

55. The Committee recommends that the State Party take all appropriate measures to ensure that the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations are fully implemented and that a child-friendly version is disseminated to, and made widely accessible for, children, including those in the most disadvantaged situations. The Committee also recommends that the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports, the written replies to the list of issues and the present concluding observations be made widely available in the languages of the country.

### **B. National mechanism for reporting and follow-up**

56. The Committee recommends that the State Party establish a standing government structure and ensure that it has the mandate and the adequate human, technical and financial resources to coordinate and prepare reports to international and regional human rights mechanisms and to coordinate and track national follow-up to, and implementation of, treaty obligations and the recommendations and decisions emanating from such mechanisms effectively. The Committee emphasizes that such a structure should be adequately and continuously supported by dedicated staff and should have the capacity to consult systematically with the National Human Rights Commission and civil society.

### **C. Next report**

57. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of the State Party in due course, in line with the envisaged predictable reporting calendar, and following the adoption of a list of issues and questions prior to reporting, if applicable, for the State Party. The reports should be in compliance with the Committee's harmonized treaty-specific reporting guidelines<sup>17</sup> and should not exceed 21,200 words.<sup>18</sup> In the event that reports exceeding the established word limit are submitted, the State Party will be asked to shorten the reports. If the State Party is not in a position to review and resubmit the reports, translation thereof for the purposes of consideration by the Committee cannot be guaranteed.

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<sup>17</sup> CRC/C/58/Rev.3.

<sup>18</sup> General Assembly resolution 68/268, para. 16.