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National report submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21*

Qatar

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



I. Introduction

1. The State of Qatar hereby submits its fourth national report to the universal periodic review mechanism, in accordance with the general guidelines of the Human Rights Council and the guidelines for drafting reports for the universal periodic review mechanism.
2. Qatar submitted its third national report under the universal periodic review mechanism in May 2019, during the thirty-third session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. The report of the Working Group on Qatar was then adopted in September 2019, during the forty-second session of the Human Rights Council, when Qatar accepted 178 of a total of 270 recommendations.
3. The present report – which is being submitted in the context of the fulfilment on the part of the State of its obligation to promote and protect human rights and its positive interaction with civil society – describes the efforts made by Qatar to follow up on and implement the recommendations it accepted.
4. Qatar looks upon the universal periodic review mechanism as an opportunity to identify and assess important challenges, best practices and other experiences with a view achieving further progress in the promotion and protection of human rights.

II. Methodology for following up on the review and process for drafting the fourth national report

A. Methodology for following up on the review

5. A standing national committee for drafting reports under the universal periodic review mechanism, discussing those reports with the Working Group and following up on recommendations was reconstituted under a decree issued by the Council of Ministers at its sixteenth ordinary meeting of 2023, held on 3 May 2023. The newly reconstituted committee is headed by the Minister of International Cooperation and has members from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Social Development and the Family, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, the Ministry of Municipalities, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.
6. The standing committee classified the recommendations that Qatar had accepted during the review of its national report then referred them to the authorities competent for their implementation. Qatar has embraced an approach characterized by continuity in fulfilling the obligations that emerged from the discussion of its first, second and third national reports and in maintaining constructive dialogue with the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review.

B. Process for drafting the report

7. The standing committee drew up the fourth report of Qatar under the universal periodic review mechanism, in line with the standards, goals and principles of the review process and with the general guidelines (including updates) relative to the preparation of the information required in the context of the universal periodic review.
8. The committee sought the views of relevant parties in the judiciary, the executive and the legislature, in quasi-governmental and non-governmental bodies and in media groups and civil society institutions. They were all asked to provide data and information relative to human rights in the country, each in their own particular area. This was a way of ensuring that all sectors of society were involved in the drafting of the report.
9. The committee then studied data, information and statistics on human rights, reports of civil society organizations in Qatar and the visit reports of the following special procedure

mandate holders: the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity (2019), the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (2019), the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (2019), the Special Rapporteur on the right to education (2019) and the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights (2020). The committee also reviewed the recommendations made to Qatar by the United Nations committees that oversee the implementation of the treaties to which the State is a party.

10. The present report was drafted after Qatar had discussed its second periodic report before the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (seventy-third session, July 2019), its initial report before the Human Rights Committee (134th session, March 2022), its initial report before the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (seventy-fourth session, October 2023) and its combined twenty-second and twenty-third periodic reports before the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (112th session, April 2024).

11. In September 2023, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa and the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab region, a workshop on best practices in the field of human rights was organized for members of the committee charged with drafting the fourth national report under the universal periodic review mechanism.

12. A series of consultations was held in February 2024 with stakeholders including civil society, the Shura Council, academics and academic institutions to review the draft of the report and to hear their comments.

13. The report was published on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to enable anyone who so wished to examine it. In addition, the final draft of the report was submitted to the National Human Rights Committee so that its views could be taken into account. The definitive text was then presented to the Council of Ministers for approval.

III. Implementation of the recommendations accepted by the State

14. The State has been taking consistent steps to implement the recommendations it accepted, and this section will focus on the measures taken in that regard, dividing the recommendations into thematic categories, including the national human rights framework and international cooperation; the promotion and protection of human rights for specific groups; economic, social and cultural rights; civil and political rights; and overarching human rights issues.

A. National human rights framework and strengthening international cooperation

1. Accession to international treaties

15. A committee has been formed to examine the possibility of acceding to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

2. National laws and legislation

16. In line with the guarantees enshrined in the Constitution, the State of Qatar is constantly reviewing and developing its legislative system in order to fulfil all the international obligations arising from the international treaties and instruments to which it has acceded, with a view to achieving peace and justice and building robust institutions within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. A number of pieces of

legislation have been enacted since Qatar submitted its third report in 2019, including the following:

- Act No. 20 of 2019 promulgating the Anti-Money-Laundering and Financing of Terrorism Act
- Act No. 27 of 2019 promulgating the Anti-Terrorism Act
- Act No. 9 of 2020 amending certain provisions of Decree-Law No. 17 of 1990 concerning the prevention of infectious diseases
- Act No. 17 of 2020 regarding a minimum wage for workers and domestic workers
- Decree-Law No. 21 of 2020 concerning private associations and institutions, which aims to encourage partnership and cooperation between State bodies and private associations and institutions
- Act No. 6 of 2021 regarding elections to the Shura Council
- Act No. 7 of 2021 regarding the Shura Council, under which the Council is granted financial and administrative independence
- Act No. 10 of 2021 regarding the measures to be taken to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022
- Act No. 11 of 2021 regarding the protection of trademarks, copyrights and neighbouring rights of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)
- National Healthcare Act No. 22 of 2021
- Decree-Law No. 19 of 2021 amending certain provisions of Act No. 20 of 2019 promulgating the Anti-Money-Laundering and Financing of Terrorism Act
- Act No. 1 of 2022 promulgating the Social Insurance Act
- Act No. 2 of 2022 regarding military pensions
- Act No. 5 of 2022 regarding the protection of victims, witnesses and persons of similar status
- Act No. 9 of 2022 regulating the right of access to information
- Act No. 6 of 2023 amending certain provisions of Act No. 18 of 2017 regarding public hygiene
- Act No. 8 of 2023 promulgating the Judiciary Act
- Act No. 9 of 2023 promulgating the Statutes of the Public Prosecution Service
- Council of Ministers Decree No. 12 of 2019 defining the categories able to benefit from political asylum
- Council of Ministers Decree No. 13 of 2019 specifying norms and conditions to regulate the rights and privileges enjoyed by political refugees
- Council of Ministers Decree No. 27 of 2019 specifying norms and conditions whereby holders of a permanent residency card can gain access to medical treatment and education
- Council of Ministers Decree No. 40 of 2019 regarding leave to care for a parent or relative
- Council of Ministers Decree No. 41 of 2019 promulgating the implementing regulations to the Anti-Money-Laundering and Financing of Terrorism Act
- Council of Ministers Decree No. 33 of 2020 establishing the Minimum Wage Committee, approving its internal regulations and setting levels of remuneration
- Council of Ministers Decree No. 16 of 2023 amending Council of Ministers Decree No. 26 of 2019 regarding the creation of the National Committee for Women, Children, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities

- Decree No. 310 of 2020 of the Minister of Municipalities and the Environment regarding air quality
- Decree of the Minister of Health promulgating the implementing regulations to the National Healthcare Act No. 22 of 2021
- Decree No. 8 of 2022 of the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change amending certain provisions of the implementing regulations to the Environmental Protection Act, regarding monitoring stations for water quality in the marine environment
- Decree No. 9 of 2022 of the Minister of Health specifying the rights and duties of patients that are to be observed when receiving healthcare services
- Decree No. 7 of 2023 of the Minister of Culture promulgating the statutes of the Qatar Cultural Centre for Blind Persons
- Decree No. 8 of 2023 of the Minister of Culture promulgating the statutes of the Qatar Cultural Centre for Deaf Persons
- Decree No. 60 of 2024 of the Minister of Commerce and Industry reducing – in some cases by as much as 90 per cent – the fees for services provided by the Ministry to the trade and industrial sectors as well as to business development and consumer protection sectors, with the aim of promoting economic growth.

3. Policies and strategies to promote and protect human rights

17. Qatar is continuing to develop national policies and strategies the purpose of which is to realize the goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030. These include medium-term national development strategies, the first of which covered the period 2011–2016 and the second 2018–2022. The third strategy, which has been launched for the period 2024–2030, will be the final strategy before the realization of the Qatar National Vision 2030. The strategies were developed with the broad and effective participation of government, the private sector, civil society organizations and other stakeholders. The priorities of the third national development strategy include seven key outcomes: sustainable economic growth, financial sustainability, a future-ready workforce, a cohesive society, high quality of life, environmental sustainability and outstanding government institutions (annex QNDS3).

18. The aim of the Qatar National Vision 2030 is to build a society that promotes justice and equality, and embodies the principles of the Permanent Constitution of Qatar which protects public and private freedoms; promotes moral and religious values, customs, traditions and cultural identity; and guarantees security, stability and equality of opportunity. The Vision has four key areas of focus: human development, social development, economic development and environmental development.

19. To achieve those four goals, the Qatar National Vision 2030 incorporates a number of sub-strategies. These include the Qatar Government digital strategy 2023–2025, which aims to promote efforts to pursue the digital transformation that is affecting the daily interactions of citizens, residents, businesses and government bodies in Qatar. Another initiative is the sustainable urban environmental quality strategy, which aims to achieve water security. For its part, the Qatar youth policy aims to address issues of concern to young persons, to identify their priorities and needs, and to involve them in decision-making processes. At the same time, the Family Charter has been launched under the slogan “families are the wealth of a nation” to consolidate family values and to uphold the role of the family in building a strong and sustainable society. All these national policies and strategies are part of the Qatar National Vision 2030, and are consistent with many of the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. Promoting international cooperation and interaction with international mechanisms

20. Qatar gives high priority to international cooperation and development partnerships as part of its outreach at the local and international levels, in line with its commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Under the Qatar National Vision 2030, in fact, international cooperation is seen as an integral part of the national development process and emphasis is laid upon the status of Qatar as “a responsible member of the international

community that will contribute to global peace and security through political initiatives and developmental and humanitarian aid”. Thus, Qatar has continued to consolidate its regional and international standing and to enhance international cooperation frameworks at both the bilateral and multilateral levels by supporting international and regional initiatives, promoting international development partnerships and programmes and pursuing efforts towards reconciliation and conflict resolution.

21. The Qatar Development Fund helps alleviate human suffering and invests in education and economic empowerment as one of the most important means of combating terrorism and violent extremism. The Fund, which seeks to support relief and development efforts while fulfilling the State’s international development commitments, has made rapid strides through support and financial grants for projects in more than fifty locations around the world.

22. The Qatar Fund for Development provided more than \$6 billion in aid to a number of countries between 2012 and June 2023, targeting vital sectors such as education, healthcare, economic development and relief. This has contributed significantly to highlighting the effective role that Qatar plays on the international stage in areas such as charity work, development aid, humanitarian assistance and human rights, with the aim of achieving equality and non-discrimination while protecting rights (annex QFFD report).

23. The Qatar Fund for Development has signed a five-year strategic framework agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the period 2024–2028 and has renewed its contribution in support of the Programme’s core resources. The funding is part of a \$500 million pledge announced at the 2018 Doha Forum to support the core resources of United Nations agencies.

24. One of the priorities of Qatar in the field of development cooperation is to help countries achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 3 on good health and well-being and Goal 17 on partnerships to achieve the Goals. To this end, it provides official development assistance in the form of international aid to friendly countries, covering 13 sectors, with governmental support for foreign aid covering more than 70 per cent. It also provides economic and commercial assistance as it trades freely with all countries. Qatar, moreover, has been a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) since 1996 (annex QFFD report).

25. During the coronavirus disease COVID-19 pandemic, Qatar provided emergency assistance to 88 countries to help them respond to the crisis. In all, governmental and non-governmental assistance amounted to more than \$256 million. Moreover, a total of \$20 million was allocated to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and \$10 million to support the Thirteenth General Programme of Work of the World Health Organization (WHO).

26. In March 2023, Qatar hosted the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, under the title “from potential to prosperity”. Moreover, the Doha Declaration was adopted, which serves to reinforce the international community’s commitment to the Doha Programme of Action (2022–2031) on behalf of the 46 least developed countries in the world. Under the Programme, stakeholders from countries and from international bodies and institutions made financial commitments in excess of \$1.3 billion in the form of gifts, investments, loans, aid or development projects, in addition to providing technical support. The overall aim is to positively affect the lives of around 1.2 billion people living the least developed countries. For its own part, Qatar announced a financial package of \$60 million, of which \$10 million to support the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action and \$50 million to help build resilience in the least developed nations. Qatar has also pledged \$12 million for humanitarian aid in the Horn of Africa.

27. The Education Above All Foundation has supported a number of projects during times of conflict and catastrophe. These include a project to rebuild and refurbish educational institutions damaged by the Beirut port explosion and an emergency education programme the Foundation is running in Ukraine, as well as the Foundation’s “Zaha Hadid Tent” for refugees in Pakistan and its “Zaha Hadid Tent” for refugees in Syria. The total amount of aid provided in 2023 amounted to 34 million Qatari riyals (QR) (annex 1).

28. Qatar is committed to upholding the right to education for all children, especially migrant children. The most significant initiatives in this regard include providing

scholarships for the Afghan robotics team, running educational programmes and activities at the local-level to evacuate and educate children – notably Afghan and Palestinian children – from conflict zones and providing Palestinian children evacuated from Gaza with an education during their stay in Doha.

29. Qatar has been able to consolidate its role as a key player in regional and international mediation and peace efforts. Its action in this regard is based on article 7 of the Permanent Constitution, which transforms the State's foreign policy into a strategy for supporting and promoting international peace and security by encouraging the settlement of international disputes via peaceful means, supporting people's right to self-determination, upholding non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and pursuing cooperation with peace-loving nations.

30. Qatar remains determined to abide by the Charter of the United Nations when dealing with external conflicts and to use the methods enshrined in the Charter as part of the comprehensive vision of the country's leadership. Qatar has also contributed actively to enhancing regional and international stability through its mediation efforts to settle conflicts in a number of countries, especially in the Middle East where it has become a trusted mediator. In fact, it has a rich and exemplary record in the peaceful settlement of disputes and in strategic relations with other stakeholders in the international community.

31. The mediatory role played by Qatar, for which it has won international acclaim, has extended to the release and return home of hostages. This came to complement its existing role as mediator, in the course of which it has accumulated great experience in conflict resolution over recent years. The country's principal efforts in this regard during 2023 are as follows:

- Facilitating a prisoner exchange agreement between the United States of America and Iran in August 2023.
- Hosting an international conference on Afghanistan under the auspices of the United Nations, in Doha in May 2023. The conference served to discuss ways to promote stability and multilateral action in Afghanistan as well as the challenges facing humanitarian work and hindering the delivery of aid to the Afghan people. The conference came in the wake of efforts led by Qatar to facilitate the evacuation from Afghanistan.
- Indeed, Qatar facilitated the safe evacuation and transportation of more than 40,000 people from the Afghan capital Kabul to Qatari territory, in coordination with other countries and stakeholders present in Afghanistan. Its efforts during the evacuation came as part of the commitment of Qatar towards the Afghan people and their right to live in dignity and safety. The evacuees included families, women and children as well as members of minorities.
- Qatar hosted meetings between Afghan Taliban officials and a United States delegation in July 2023, during which the participants discussed confidence-building, the lifting of sanctions, removal from blacklists, the unblocking of frozen Afghan financial assets and human rights issues.
- In December 2023, Qatar mediated for the reunification of Ukrainian children with their families in Ukraine. In order to ensure the safety and meet the needs of the children and their families, Qatar provided facilities for them to be hosted at the Foreign Ministry headquarters in Moscow. Qatar also hosted 20 Russian and Ukrainian families, including 37 children, as part of an integrated programme to provide healthcare and comprehensive support. These actions were taken as part of the country's ongoing mediation efforts to reunite families separated by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and to provide them with medical and psychosocial support.
- Qatar was involved in joint mediation efforts that concluded successfully with an agreement for a humanitarian truce between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, in November 2023. The agreement also included an exchange of prisoners and the release of a number of Palestinian women and children held in Israeli prisons. The truce also enabled the ingress of convoys carry aid and relief.

- The Minister for International Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs travelled to the Gaza Strip as part of a Qatari diplomatic delegation which was supervising the entry of Qatari aid. A total of 2,256 Palestinians were evacuated, including the sick and the persons accompanying them, residents and people who were to reunify with their families. In addition, 4,766 tons of Qatari aid was delivered to Gaza.

32. Decree No. 38 of 2022 ratifies an agreement between Qatar and the United Nations on the establishment of an office of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

33. The “United Nations House” has been opened in Doha in a building which the Government has provided to United Nations agencies in the country, in order to enhance coordination among those agencies and to ensure the effectiveness of their programmes and initiatives.

34. The Analysis and Outreach Hub has been set up in the Qatar office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. An agreement to that effect between Qatar and the office of the Special Representative was duly ratified under Decree No. 33 of 2022.

35. Initiatives by Qatar in the field of restoration of livelihoods and post-conflict reconstruction include the following:

- The 2023 “Women in Conflict Zones” initiative seeks to mobilize efforts and support for the protection of women in areas of conflict, to shield women against violence and to focus humanitarian and development assistance so that they can access finance, education and capacity-building programmes.
- During the Sudan Pledging Conference held in June 2023 – the “Ministerial pledging event to support the humanitarian response in Sudan and the region” – Qatar announced a pledge of \$50 million to support the Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan and the Regional Refugee Response Plan.
- At the 2023 Global Refugee Forum, Qatar pledged to provide an initial package of relief support worth \$50 million in response to the humanitarian situation faced by Palestinians. For its part, the Education Above All Foundation made a pledge to provide 100 university scholarships for students from the Gaza Strip to complete their studies in Qatar.
- Qatar has honoured the pledge it made in December 2023 to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) with a multi-year agreement to fund the Agency with QR 65.7 million for the period 2023–2024.

36. Working with the Qatar Fund for Development, UNDP and the Federal Republic of Germany, Qatar has launched the largest ever global network aimed at finding better ways to solve the complex issues surrounding sustainable development. Qatar itself contributed \$30 million to the initiative and today, in fact, the Accelerator Labs Network is the most influential of all such networks. It currently operates in 115 countries, meaning that it has a global presence, and has rolled out in excess of 400 flexible learning challenges as a way of fostering innovation. The Network has come up with 6,000 grassroots-led solutions covering all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals, it has collaborated with more than 1,500 stakeholders in different sectors and it has tested new sources of data to enable it to make informed decisions.

B. Promotion and protection of the human rights of specific groups

1. Women’s rights

Women in leadership

37. The State has continued to provide support for women to participate in all legislative, judicial, administrative and political fields, both at the international and the local levels. This

is a reflection of the concern the authorities in Qatar have to promote women and to ensure their full participation, in accordance with the Constitution and national legislation and in fulfilment of the international obligations arising from the treaties to which Qatar has acceded. The following actions have been taken in this regard:

- Three ministerial portfolios have been allocated to women in the new Government: the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Development and the Family. This may be accounted a positive step towards the empowerment of women by granting them positions of leadership within the State, in line with Amiri Decree No. 4 of 2021 altering the composition of the Council of Ministers.
- Women can exercise political rights, including the right to vote and run for office in the Shura Council. In fact, in the current make-up of the Council, a woman holds the position of Deputy Speaker.
- The level of labour-market participation among Qatari women reached 49 per cent by the end of 2023, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals on gender equality, decent work and economic growth.
- With regard to the employment of Qataris in the public sector, the level of employment of women stood at 68 per cent in 2022 and at 72 per cent in 2023, while women accounted for 41 per cent of staff in supervisory positions in the 54 institutions subject to the Civil Service Human Resources Act.
- The number of women in the diplomatic corps had risen to 320 by 2023. Female diplomats include the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations and International Organizations in New York and the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations in Geneva.
- Council of Ministers Decree No.13 of 2021 envisages a 50 per cent reduction in the number of working hours per week, with priority in part-time working hours to be given to female staff with children, thereby enabling them to strike a balance between the demands of work and the need to care for their families and children.

Empowering women, combating discrimination against them and promoting gender equality

38. The active participation of women and the promotion of their rights are both enshrined in the Permanent Constitution of Qatar, which upholds the principle of equality in rights and duties, prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex and enjoins equality of access to services and to participation in all fields. The relevant provisions are contained in articles 135, 35 and 46 of the Constitution.

39. The legal framework for the principle of equality and non-discrimination is described in articles 18 and 19 of the Constitution, under the heading “Basic principles of society”. Indeed, the principle of equality is one of the supreme principles, which enjoys constitutional protection and which no law or legislation must contradict.

40. The Constitution of Qatar guarantees equality between men and women with regard to civil and political rights, in particular their right to stand for and vote in elections and referendums, take part in the formulation of policy, hold public office at all levels and participate in public and political organizations and associations. These rights are enshrined in articles 34, 42, 45, 54, 77, 80, 83, 92–95 and 100 of the Constitution.

41. In the context of its second national development strategy 2018–2022, Qatar has rolled out a series of projects aimed at empowering women, combating stereotypes and achieving equality. This is taking place within the framework of a partnership between the public sector, the private sector and civil society to achieve Sustainable Development Goals 5, 8 and 17. The projects, which are being overseen by the Qatar Development Bank, include the following:

- Support for owners of small and micro businesses. The project, which is overseen by the “Nama” Social Development Centre, led to the empowerment of 149 female entrepreneurs between 2022 and 2023 who benefited from the incubation services

offered by the Centre. The purpose of the services is to hone and develop technical and administrative skills, to provide experience in practising commercial activities and to help build public relations with institutions and ministries in the country.

- Around 7,000 Qatari women are full or partial owners of a business activity.

42. The Qatar Development Bank provides direct financing to both male and female entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium-sized enterprises. By the end of 2023, 56 female entrepreneurs had received direct financing from the Bank, with the total value of loans disbursed amounting to QR 661 million.

43. The Qatar Development Bank also gives indirect loans to entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium-sized enterprises via the “Al-Dhameen” programme, which provides the necessary guarantees to partner banks in order for them to grant loans to entrepreneurs. A total of 321 women were benefiting from this service by the end of 2023 with the total loans disbursed amounting to QR 333.5 million. Participants in the loan programme have also benefited from training (annex 2).

44. Since 2019, more than 30 women have benefited from the business incubator and business accelerator programmes offered by the Qatar Development Bank at locations such as the Qatar Business Incubation Centre and Scale7 (a fashion and design business incubator).

45. Microsoft and INJAZ Qatar have launched the Women Technopreneurs project, the aim of which is to empower young women to innovate and lead in the digital world. The project focuses on broadening knowledge and experience in the field of artificial intelligence, thereby enhancing young women’s chances of being able to participate actively in the technical labour market. The project calls for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and is thus aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. It ends with a competition that offers winners a chance to join the accelerator programme at the Qatar Science and Technology Park.

Protecting women and children against violence, including domestic violence, under criminal law

46. Qatar takes an integrated approach to combating domestic violence and protecting women and child victims of violence and family breakdown.

47. The Supreme Council of the Judiciary has set up specialized criminal chambers to deal with different types of crime, thereby effectively contributing to the successful application of justice. Most recently, in 2021, the Supreme Council established a chamber to examine crimes of domestic violence and other crimes that occur between family members. Its purpose in so doing was to achieve peace and justice, which is one of the Sustainable Development Goals.

48. Hearings before the chamber are generally held in camera so as to preserve the confidentiality and privacy of families.

49. The following are the most important national programmes to combat domestic violence:

- “Watad”, a free service which provides consultations on family and child-rearing matters, provided by the Ministry of Social Development and the Family in cooperation with the “Wifaq” Family Counselling Centre.
- The Sidra Medicine child advocacy programme, in which a team of doctors, nurses and social workers provides services including counselling and support to protect children and adolescents from abuse.
- The “Malaz” project, which develops and runs programmes to prevent child delinquency, protect children against drugs and care for and rehabilitate youngsters with behavioural issues. The project also supervises the social welfare homes for young persons.

50. The Community Police Department at the Ministry of the Interior continues to provide psychosocial services, awareness-raising, support in the field and legal assistance to victims

of domestic violence. It has also outfitted shelters to take in people affected by domestic violence.

51. The “Aman” Social Protection and Rehabilitation Centre continues to provide protection and to promote the social rehabilitation and empowerment of women and child victims of domestic violence. It has opened a hotline to receive reports and complaints from persons who have suffered psychological, physical or sexual violence. In addition to this, the “Help me” app for mobile phones and smart devices is designed to provide assistance to children and enable them to report any abuse or violence they may suffer. Furthermore, the “Aman” Centre has offices in hospitals and security departments as well as at the Public Prosecution Service, and it also receives referrals from schools and other parties concerned.

52. Legal, psychological and social counselling and rehabilitation services are available to women and, in age-appropriate ways, to children, as well as to their parents and caregivers.

53. The “Comprehensive Safety Home” – an integrated shelter with an inclusive environment offering social and healthcare services – has been established for the protection and rehabilitation of women and children. After having been given temporary shelter, the beneficiaries of the Home then receive aftercare to ensure that they are able to reintegrate into society and exercise their rights. This care and the follow-up is guaranteed by the State in coordination with partner institutions.

54. Workshops, seminars and awareness-raising campaigns are run for school and university students and for staff at ministries and other State institutions (annex 3).

2. Children’s rights

55. The Ministry of Social Development and the Family was brought into being under Amiri Decree No. 57 of 2021. Part of the structure of the Ministry is the Family Affairs Bureau and part of the structure of the Bureau is the Family Development Department, which also concerns itself with children, as per Amiri Decree No. 43 of 2022 regarding the Ministry’s organizational structure.

56. The “Dreama” Children’s Centre seeks to provide orphaned children with the care they require, to ensure their stability in foster families and to integrate them into society. It also provides psychosocial counselling as well as social, healthcare, educational and legal services (annex 4).

57. The “Wifaq” Family Counselling Centre provides guidance in family and child-rearing matters as well as assistance in psychosocial issues and in sharia and statutory law. It also provides preventive and therapeutic services to children, free of charge and without discrimination, and it shoulders the task of defending the rights and interests of children of divorced parents, to mitigate the negative results of the separation (annex 5).

58. The national health strategy 2018–2022 prioritized “healthy children and adolescents” in the 0–18 age group, with the aim of encouraging them to embrace healthy lifestyles. The programmes associated with the strategy underpin the strategic plan to achieve national goals as well as to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal for good health and well-being.

59. The following action has been taken vis-à-vis international and regional cooperation:

- Qatar has dedicated particular attention to issues affecting children, and its efforts in that regard took concrete form on 29 May 2023, with the opening of a regional meeting on the prevention of grave violations against children in areas of armed conflict. The event was hosted by Qatar in its capacity as Chair of the forty-second session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs, in coordination with the League of Arab States, the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the regional office of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).
- Qatar participated in an international conference on protecting children in armed conflict, which was held in Oslo in June 2023 and organized thanks to coordination between the Government of Norway, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Save the Children, UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Special protection for children

60. The State has laid foundations intended to protect children against domestic violence. These include articles 268 and 269 of the Criminal Code (Act No. 11 of 2004) concerning the endangerment of children and the protection of children from all forms of violence, physical or sexual abuse or unlawful acts.

61. The Ministry of Health has issued Ministerial Decree No. 15 of 2021 which envisages the formation of a national team for the protection of children against violence. The team is pursuing innovation, developing best practices and rolling out a mechanism with which to categorize cases of violence against children, in order to raise awareness and to protect children in Qatar from violence.

62. The Ministry of the Interior seeks to establish communication with all groups in society with a view to preventing crime. As a member of the national team for the protection of children against violence, the Ministry is informed of cases of domestic violence of all kinds and it examines each situation individually, in cooperation with the competent stakeholders. Assistance is then provided by referring the party concerned to the relevant authorities (i.e., the “Aman” Centre). The Ministry continues to monitor the situation to ensure the safety of the person concerned and to assist the authorities to deal with child victims of abuse in accordance with religious and social values, to change communication patterns and to modify negative behaviours and concepts within families.

63. Sidra Medicine has rolled out an online clinical information system, which covers more than 90 per cent of the population. The system also serves to coordinate the care provided by a specially trained group of doctors, nurses, and social workers for children whom it is suspected might be suffering abuse.

64. According to the law, the juvenile courts can sentence a young offender to one of the following measures: enrolment in vocational training; compulsory fulfilment of specific obligations; probation; or placement in a social reform or medical institution.

3. Rights of persons with disabilities

65. The national development strategy 2018–2022 included a project entitled: “Functional and community rehabilitation to raise the capacities of persons with disabilities”. The “Shafallah” Centre for Persons with Disabilities runs a range of programmes and takes measures to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access healthcare, rehabilitation, counselling and protection services, as well as social security. This is a way of achieving equality, fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goal on good health and well-being, ensuring justice and providing the country with robust institutions. The Qatar Rehabilitation Centre also offers comprehensive rehabilitation services, while another important initiative is the early detection and intervention programme, which focuses on the prompt identification of disabilities and the timely provision of support and assistance.

66. A digital inclusion strategy has been rolled out and the “Mada” Assistive Technology Centre has been established to help persons with disabilities achieve their goals, enjoy equality of opportunity in education and employment, and live independent lives.

67. The rights and needs of persons with disabilities have been incorporated into the Qatar National Master Plan and its planning outcomes. This includes their right of access to urban complexes and buildings and their right to adequate housing. The aim is to ensure the integration of that category of persons into society and to achieve equality, while ensuring sustainable cities and communities.

68. In all, there are 86 integrated State-run schools of all levels, where persons with disabilities are educated alongside their peers. In addition to this, there are 8 special schools offering intensive special education for students with intellectual disabilities who require additional support, including those with mild or moderate autism spectrum disorders. The number of students enrolled in integrated schools has increased by 32 per cent with respect to 2022, which will help to ensure the success of their subsequent integration into inclusive schools. Other institutions include the “Shafallah” Centre for Students with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism, the “Nour” Centre for Blind Persons, two schools (one for girls and one for boys) for students with hearing disabilities, 5 specialized private schools belonging

to the Qatar Foundation and 16 private centres of education that provide services for students with disabilities.

69. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education offers training programmes on inclusive education, focusing on how to teach and support children with disabilities and to deal with potential challenges. In addition to this, workshops and training courses are organized for families on how to interact with their children with disabilities (annex 6).

70. At the national level, the strategy is to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in education at various levels, at a rate of 25 per cent annually until 2026, and to increase the number of specialized schools by an average of 3 per cent over coming years. Also, a technical and vocational syllabus has been rolled out for students with disabilities (citizens and residents) at State-run secondary schools.

71. In 2019, the Qatar Foundation launched its “Ability Friendly” programme, which is continuing to grow and allows hundreds of children with disabilities in Qatar to participate in sporting activities. The Foundation has also opened the “Darb” Centre for children and adolescents between the ages of 3 and 18, which undertakes awareness-raising and provides educational assessments and therapeutic services with a view to integrating the youngsters into the labour market in Qatar and the wider region.

72. The “Nour” Centre for Blind Persons provides outstanding educational and rehabilitation services for persons with visual disabilities, and it works to raise awareness about their situation and their rights so as to enable them to live more independent lives and be integrated into society. The Centre works with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to ensure that children with visual disabilities are able to enjoy an adequate standard of living in a stimulating environment (annex 7).

73. The “Shafallah” Centre for Children with Disabilities provides therapeutic and educational services for persons with intellectual disabilities or autism, without discrimination (annex 8).

74. The Social Security Department in the Ministry of Social Development and the Family disburses social security allowances to persons with disabilities. The allowance is available for persons with disabilities under the age of 18 whose condition is attested by a report from a competent medical authority and who do not have sufficient income.

75. As part of efforts to ensure job opportunities for all groups in society, 43 persons with disabilities were hired for employment in 2023.

76. The authorities cooperated with the organizers of the FIFA World Cup 2022 to ensure that all stadiums were accessible to blind persons and persons with disabilities.

- Sensory rooms were created in two football stadiums whence persons with autism could follow the games. A sensory room has also been opened at Hamad International Airport and airport staff and aircrew have received specific training on how to interact with persons with autism and their families.
- In collaboration with Qatar Rail, which is responsible for the country’s rail network, a guide written entirely in Braille has been issued with the intention of facilitating the use of the rail and underground networks by blind persons.
- Bonocle, the world’s first Braille entertainment platform with technologies intended to help persons with visual disabilities access digital content, was used to help such persons follow the World Cup matches.

77. The following action has been taken vis-à-vis international and regional cooperation:

- A conference of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs was organized by Qatar and the League of Arab States in June 2023 to consider “the ongoing implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: towards resilient national and regional policies and strategies to overcome challenges”. The conference included – as an initiative intended to foster partnerships to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals – a side event entitled: “The role of technology and digital innovation in supporting reproductive health and full access for persons with disabilities: the vision of Qatar to reach that goal”.

4. Rights of older persons

78. Protection for the rights of older persons is enshrined in the Constitution and national legislation which guarantee their right to protection under the law, to social security, to housing, to work, to healthcare and to integrated home care. Legislators in Qatar have incorporated these aspects into the Family Code and the Labour Code and in laws regulating social security and housing.

79. Qatar has established the “Ihsan” Centre for Empowerment and Care of Older Persons which works so support their involvement across a number of areas and to raise community awareness about their rights and the main issues affecting them. The Centre provides older persons with shelter, healthcare and social services as well as with psychosocial and legal counselling.

80. The Community Welfare Department has been set up as part of the Ministry of Social Development and the Family. It is responsible for proposing amendments to legislation, and for preparing and implementing national strategies, plans and policies affecting older persons. Its actions in this regard, which it undertakes in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental bodies, aim to make society more sensitive to the rights of older persons.

81. The organizational structure of ministries in Qatar envisages special treatment for older persons and persons with disabilities, to help them overcome any issues or difficulties they may face when coming to transact business at public offices. Examples of this include:

- A section for older persons and persons with disabilities has been set up as part of the Public Relations Department at the Ministry of Social Development and the Family. The section is responsible for receiving inquiries and requests from that category of persons, verifying that they meet the required conditions then referring them to the competent administrative units.
- The Ministry of the Interior has opened its first room for older persons and persons with disabilities at its Department for Nationality, Ports and Migrants.
- A fast-track service for older persons, retired persons and persons with disabilities has been launched in all court buildings, and an emergency hotline has been set up at the court for the enforcement of sentences.

C. Economic, social and cultural rights

1. Right to health

82. The second national development strategy 2018–2022 was underpinned by a commitment to increase the well-being of all citizens and residents, to improve public health and to meet the needs of different generations via an integrated healthcare system. The strategy thus sought to provide optimal healthcare, welfare and prevention for all persons, reducing hospitalizations by 15 per cent while also consolidating efforts to support healthy lifestyles in the community, and to reduce the incidence of unhealthy behaviours. One of these is smoking, which the State aims to reduce by 30 per cent over the next five years.

83. Public health indicators point to a significant improvement in the health of the population of Qatar. Average life expectancy rose to 80.3 years in 2021 and the number of patients using healthcare services has increased by 6 per cent since last year, with more than 2.8 million patients visiting health centres by the end of 2023.

84. The Ministry of Health has introduced a number of advanced programmes to help sick persons. These include a smart screening programme, which is one of the goals of the National Healthcare Plan and consists in a general check-up designed to assess a patient’s state of health with a view to preventing future diseases.

85. A health insurance system is gradually being introduced, which will cover all population groups and visitors in Qatar. This is consistent with Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 10 on health and reducing inequalities.

86. Six healthcare centres have been opened since 2019, thereby helping to reduce pressure on existing structures. The new centres – which were opened taking due account of the density and geographical distribution of population – bring the number of health centres in the country to 31, as of 2023.

87. Qatar has received a “healthy city” accreditation from WHO as it has embraced an approach that entails “integrating health into all policies” with a view to creating a healthy environment for residents and visitors in Qatar, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 11. In fact, all eight municipalities in the country have been designated as healthy cities, making Qatar the first country in the world to have all its cities thus accredited by WHO.

88. The national development strategy 2030 emphasizes the importance of preventive healthcare as a key strategy for improving citizens’ overall well-being and health. This fact is duly reflected in the national healthcare strategy and the primary healthcare strategy, while a number of initiatives and projects have been developed that are intended to highlight preventive healthcare and integrate it into public health and healthcare systems. The examples given below show how preventive healthcare has become a key area of focus in Qatar:

- Campaigns have been launched to draw attention to preventive measures and healthy behaviours in relation to a variety of health issues such as diabetes, obesity and cancer. The Ministry of Health has managed to improve the overall health and well-being of individuals, thereby contributing to life quality and increasing people’s motivation to achieve personal and social goals. A national vaccination programme has also been launched, which aims to protect citizens against preventable diseases.
- Initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles, including via regular physical activity and eating a balanced diet, have been introduced into schools, workplaces and public spaces. This has helped to encourage citizens to adopt healthier habits from an early age and thus also contributed to improved general health and well-being.

89. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Qatar provided free healthcare to everyone in the community, without discrimination, including not only citizens but also migrant workers, who received free treatment without need for a health card and regardless of whether or not they had violated residency laws. In addition to this, all migrant workers were offered free vaccinations and urged to make use of the national COVID-19 vaccination programme. As a result of these efforts, Qatar had one of the lowest mortality rates in the world.

90. The National Safety Committee for Injured Workers provides its services to workers who have been injured in accidents or suffered diseases that have led to permanent or semi-permanent disabilities or health conditions that prevent them from performing the functions for which they came to the country. The Committee also looks into the issues such workers have to face and facilitates procedures for transferring them to their countries of origin. The main functions of the Committee are as follows:

- It communicates with the companions of the injured worker in Qatar and the worker’s family outside the country in order to obtain information and to coordinate the steps that need to be taken. In order to facilitate this task, the Committee also cooperates with embassies.
- It proposes and establishes contact with an appropriate medical centre to continue the rehabilitation treatment in the worker’s own country of origin.

2. Right to work

91. The Ministry of Labour was established in 2021, having previously been the Labour Section of the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs. The new Ministry seeks to improve the level of the services it offers and to promote the efforts the State is making to develop a legislative and institutional system to regulate labour that is in line with international standards and with the Qatar National Vision 2030, as well as with the Sustainable Development Goal on decent work and economic growth.

92. The first phase of the Technical Cooperation Programme (2018–2021) between Qatar and the International Labour Organization (ILO) has been completed after having

successfully developed national legislation and practices in line with international labour standards and advanced the Sustainable Development Goals, especially partnerships to achieve those Goals. Over a short period, Qatar has introduced important reforms in the five main areas of the Technical Cooperation Programme: wage protection, labour inspection and occupational health and safety, a contractual employment system to replace the *kafalah* system, combating forced labour and giving workers more of a voice. These achievements drew praise from international trade union federations, the International Organization of Employers and other international stakeholders during the 340th session of the ILO Governing Body.

93. The second phase of the Technical Cooperation Programme was then launched with a view to consolidating the significant gains made during the first phase. New areas of cooperation have been identified, including labour market management, labour migration, law enforcement, access to justice, greater worker participation, social dialogue, international cooperation and exchange of experiences. This was intended to facilitate the transition to a more competitive knowledge-based economy, in line with the objectives of the Qatar National Vision 2030, the second national development strategy 2018–2022 and the third national development strategy 2024–2030.

94. The third phase of the Technical Cooperation Programme was launched in 2024 and will extend through to 2027. It will seek to consolidate achievements and introduce new aspects such as employment policy, a labour market information system and skills development.

95. The State has introduced a body of reforms and legislative developments affecting labour, the most significant of which are listed below:

- Ministerial Decree No. 95 of 2019 abolished exit permits for all categories of worker; Decree-Law No. 19 of 2020 amended certain provisions of the Act No. 21 of 2015 regulating the entry, exit and residency of migrant workers; while Decree-Law No. 18 of 2020 amended certain provisions of the Labour Code eliminating the requirement for employer's consent before a worker can change employment (annex 9).
- Both worker and employer can terminate the employment contract at any time without giving reasons, provided that the notification period is respected.
- Under Act No. 21 of 2015 it is forbidden to seize a worker's passport. The Investigation and Follow-up Department of the Ministry of the Interior has procedures that it follows in the event that a worker's passport is detained by the employer (annex 10).
- The online system used by the Ministry of Labour for recording changes in employment has been made more effective and has been connected to the online system of the Ministry of the Interior, the aim being to prevent employers from taking retaliatory measures against workers who have applied to change employer.
- Act No. 17 of 2020 regarding a minimum wage for workers is applicable to all workers of all nationalities and in all sectors, without discrimination, including domestic workers. The minimum wage itself has been fixed at QR 1,000 per month. This is in addition to workers' right to adequate food and accommodation. Employers who do not provide adequate accommodation or food for their workers are required to pay a minimum housing allowance of QR 500 per month and a minimum food allowance of QR 300 per month (annex 11). A committee has been set up to review the minimum wage, taking due account of economic factors and of the needs of workers and their families, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals, notably those on good health and well-being and decent work and economic growth.
- Decree-Law No. 18 of 2020 envisages more severe penalties for offenders and a wage protection system that is more effective at uncovering violations. Employers who violate the system are now liable to a term of imprisonment of 1 year and a fine of QR 10,000. Moreover, violations have the effect of interrupting the offending employer's dealings with the Ministry of Labour and referring the employer concerned to the competent courts. More than 1.66 million workers (96 per cent of skilled workers) have registered with the wage protection system. The Workers'

Support and Insurance Fund pays workers' dues if the employer is unable to do so, in order to achieve peace and justice as part of the Sustainable Development Goals.

- Decree No. 17 of 2021 concerns the precautions necessary to protect workers in openair worksites from heat stress during the summer, specifically from 10 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. from 1 June to 15 September each year.
- Decree No. 21 of 2019 regulates the conditions and procedures for electing workers' representatives to joint committees. Such committees are seen as the principal channel for social dialogue on labour-related issues within companies. For the first time in the Gulf region, migrant workers have been able to elect their own representatives and a special section to support such joint committees has been set up inside the Ministry of Labour. This too is to be seen as part of efforts by the State to achieve its goals of equality, peace and justice.
- The conditions and procedures for licensing bureaux that recruit works abroad on behalf of third parties were revised under Decree No. 21 of 2021, inter alia by a prohibition on the practice of making workers pay recruitment fees.

96. A labour inspection policy adopted in 2019 focused on evidence-based strategic planning, increased efficiency and sustainable compliance with national and international standards. The policy was based on an assessment of the labour inspection system in Qatar conducted by the Ministry of Labour and ILO. The 2019 annual report of the Labour Inspection Department had the aim of improving the transparency and accountability of inspection services, in line with ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81). In addition to this, a comprehensive training plan was developed for the period 2019–2021 with the provision of specialized training on different subjects for all labour inspectors. Those subjects included labour inspection skills, the Labour Code, forced labour and human trafficking. Furthermore, greater resources have been allocated to the Labour Inspection Department and the number of inspectors has been increased, so as to render inspections more expeditious and effective. The outcomes of the inspections are posted on the website of the Ministry of Labour to uphold transparency and to dissuade employers from committing violations.

97. Qatar has concluded 43 bilateral agreements with countries of origin of migrant workers to ensure that such workers are recruited and employed legally, in a way that protects them and upholds their rights and duties. In addition to this, 22 memorandums of understanding have been signed with 19 States to cooperate and exchange experiences in the field of labour. Since 2019, Qatar has also opened 14 visa centres in 6 countries of origin of migrant workers: Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Nepal and the Philippines.

Strengthening complaints mechanisms and resolving labour disputes

98. The rights enshrined in the Constitution of Qatar – to equal treatment before the law, to justice, to express grievances, to security and to freedom – cover all citizens and residents on national territory. This is evinced by articles that are applicable to individuals in general, without discrimination between citizens and residents (arts. 18, 35, 36, 46 and 135), while article 52 is specifically applicable to residents.

99. In order to strengthen the legal remedies available to workers and to accelerate the resolution of labour-related issues, the number of labour dispute-resolution committees was increased from three to five under Council of Ministers Decree No. 17 of 2022 amending certain provisions of Decree No. 6 of 2018 under which committees for the settlement of labour disputes had been instituted.

100. Migrant workers in Qatar can seek legal remedies by submitting complaints to the National Human Rights Committee, to the Labour Relations Department at the Ministry of Labour, to the labour dispute-resolution committees or to the Human Rights Department at the Ministry of the Interior.

101. The Ministry of Labour has rolled out a package of electronic apps to enable workers in the public and private sectors, and domestic workers, to submit complaints online. There is also a hotline for the same purpose, which is open to receive complaints 24 hours a day.

102. The Labour Dispute Department at the Ministry of Labour provides legal advice to workers free of charge, with the help of an interpreter.

103. The Ministry has set up a special department to receive and resolve complaints from domestic workers.

104. The labour dispute-resolution committees are to settle, within a period not exceeding three weeks, all disputes arising from the provisions of law or of a contract of employment (including those of domestic workers), which are referred to it by the competent department within the Ministry, if mediation by that department has not led to an amicable settlement of the dispute.

105. A humanitarian care facility was established in 2022 thanks to collaboration between the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking and the Qatar Red Crescent Society.

3. Right to education

106. Education is a fundamental right which is protected under the Constitution as an important driver of societal advancement. In fact, Qatar dedicates great attention to education, which is one of the main underpinnings of the Qatar National Vision 2030 and one of the priorities of the strategic development plan. The State seeks to ensure that high-quality comprehensive education is available for everyone, with a view to creating a generation capable of facing future economic, social and environmental challenges. This is in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education, which itself is the main driver for achieving all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

107. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education is determined to achieve gender equality in the development process, also by ensuring equal educational opportunities. In the academic year 2021/22, there were 66,929 girls in State-run schools as compared to 62,320 boys. Also, the Ministry encourages young people of both sexes to enrol in practical subjects. In fact, in the year 2022/23, enrolment rates in secondary-level engineering and science subjects, in the eleventh and twelfth grades at State-run schools, stood at 47.4 per cent of all students, with female students in that field accounting for 48.6 per cent of all female students.

108. Specialized schools have been opened for both sexes and there are two schools each – one for boys and one for girls – on banking, on business administration and on technology.

109. Universities in Qatar give girls the same opportunity as boys to choose which subject they wish to study. Qatar University has more than 100 academic programmes that are open to both sexes and it has well-defined mechanisms to ensure equal access to those programmes.

110. The State seeks to provide a safe and stimulating learning environment for students. It also provides training for teachers, updates school curricula, provides modern technology and educational resources and offers vocational and technical training programmes to give students practical skills that they can use to improve their economic opportunities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the State ensured the continuity of education – and helped to reduce the education gap – by recourse to distance learning.

111. The Qatar National e-Learning Portal was developed as a way of facilitating distance learning. Extensive use was made of Microsoft Teams to run virtual classes, and the Government provided more than 50,000 tablets and internet connections to students from low-income families.

112. Private schools in Qatar offer a variety of options, with 24 global options that include the International Baccalaureate as well as British, American, French and Indian curricula. Some schools apply curricula from Arab States while other communities are also served by their own schools. All this helps to advance progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 8, by qualifying students to obtain decent work, and Goal 9, by promoting innovation. It is also in line with the national development strategy to prepare a future-ready workforce and to achieve sustainable economic growth.

113. A mechanism has been put in place for the integration of children in Qatar who are not enrolled in school. To this end, free specialized schools – known as “Assalam” schools – have been created for children who have been unable to enrol in education or who have stopped attending school for various reasons such as age or language difficulties. Seven such schools have been established to date, of which five have been opened. Home schooling (distance learning) has also been embraced as a way of enrolling the largest possible number of students in school. It should be noted that some of the “Assalam” establishments are vocational and technical schools.

114. Qatar is a leader in the field of information and communication technology. It ranked first globally and regionally among 137 States in the second Digital Accessibility Rights Evaluation Index published by the United Nations-backed Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies.

115. The Reach Out to Asia (ROTA) programme has enjoyed numerous successes over the past 15 years, during which time it has sought to promote a sense of global citizenship among young persons and to build their capacity to participate in a sustainable future. In that connection, it has run 66 projects in 21 countries in Asia and Africa, benefiting in excess of 2 million children and young persons and engaging 7,310 volunteers in community service. The project has also sought to improve the quality of education by providing training to 19,885 teachers and building or refurbishing 336 schools.

116. ROTA has recently launched its “Education for climate action” initiative which aims to integrate education on climate change into secondary schools. Through this initiative, ROTA and its partners seek to engage with the young people most exposed to the risks of climate change, build their capacities and take concrete action towards mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change on their communities. In this regard, it works in areas such as renewable agriculture, afforestation, clean and renewable energy, water conservation, waste management, environmental conservation and recycling. This will further advance progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 17 on partnerships to achieve the Goals.

117. The Doha International Family Institute has launched its “Upbringing” programme in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The programme is designed to build the character of children and ensure that they receive an integrated social upbringing in the early stages of life, as a way of obviating future behavioural issues.

D. Civil and political rights

1. Freedom of opinion and expression

118. Qatar wishes to reaffirm its abiding concern to support, promote and protect the right to freedom of opinion and expression. The State works to ensure that people can exercise that right in line with national legislation, which is consistent with the provisions enshrined in article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

119. Qatar has advanced in the World Press Freedom Index, published by Reporters Without Borders, ranking 84th in the world in 2023, up from 105th in 2022.

120. The right to peaceful assembly is enshrined in article 44 of the Constitution of Qatar and regulated under Act No. 18 of 2004 on public meetings and processions.

121. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, target 16.10 of Sustainable Development Goal 16 enjoins action to “ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements”.

122. Freedom of opinion and expression is a fundamental safeguard for the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and a key factor in sustainable development, as confirmed by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression in the report she submitted to the Human Rights Council, dated 19 April 2023 and entitled “Sustainable development and freedom of expression: why voice matters” (A/HRC/53/25). For its part, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stated in the Riga Declaration – issued to mark World Press Freedom Day 2015 – that

freedom of expression, freedom of the press and the right to information are fundamental rights that enable the enjoyment of all other human rights and serve to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

123. Action to promote freedom of opinion and expression has contributed to the realization of some of the Goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including:

- Goal 5 on gender equality and empowering women and girls. Here, freedom of opinion and expression has helped to combat cultural and traditional stereotypes about women in society. In this connection, educational spaces for women have served to underline women’s achievements across a number of fields and to draw attention to the leadership roles they occupy, thus underscoring women’s status as active players in society.
- By thus promoting freedom of opinion, Qatar has made important progress towards achieving Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda, including 13 out of the 14 indicators under that Goal, according to the 2022 national report on the implementation of the Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. Here, freedom of opinion and expression has helped to strengthen rule of law thanks to the existence of numerous channels for reporting instances of corruption and of free spaces for citizens to criticize and assess the policies of public State institutions. This helps to improve the standing, effectiveness and transparency of those institutions.
- The promotion of freedom of opinion and expression has also helped the State to achieve target 16.10 of Sustainable Development Goal 16 concerning public access to information. This has been achieved thanks to support for the press, both by providing facilities for the press to operate freely and by enhancing the economic environment for the press sector in order to stimulate investment and support pluralism. This has helped Qatar to advance 21 places in the World Press Freedom Index, where it ranks eighty-fourth globally in 2024.

2. Combating hate speech

124. Through its general legislation, the State has sought to provide safeguards to protect and promote human rights across all fields, also by combating hate speech. To this end, it has endeavoured to close off the wellsprings that nourish racism and discriminatory practices of any kind, notably by means of the following:

- Article 256 of the Criminal Code (Act No. 11 of 2004)
- Article 47 of the Printing and Publishing Act No. 8 of 1979
- Cybercrime Act No. 14 of 2014.

125. Qatar is also committed to encouraging dialogue between civilizations and coexistence among religions and cultures. To that end, it has developed a plan for the Alliance of Civilizations (2023–2027), which is underpinned by the directives of the country’s political leadership, the Permanent Constitution of Qatar and the Qatar National Vision 2030. The plan – which emphasizes the importance of “fostering and supporting dialogue among civilizations and coexistence among different religions and cultures” – envisages programmes and activities in the four areas covered by the Alliance: education, youth, migration and media.

126. The role of the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue is to promote the effective exercise of freedom of religion and belief by all members of society. The Centre also continues to encourage dialogue between civilizations and coexistence among religions and cultures, to uphold the principles of peaceful coexistence, to pursue dialogue and to turn cultural, civilizational, ethnic and religious diversity into concrete reality.

127. The Centre runs a number of programmes at the local and international levels to discuss issues related to freedom of religion in the country, and it supports activities organized by the various cultural communities. In addition to this, the Centre receives

community and church leaders and heads of the associations and institutions that administer the affairs of the different communities in Qatar with their different religious and ethnic affiliations and cultures. In so doing, the Centre seeks to promote a culture of dialogue and peaceful coexistence (annex 12).

128. The fourteenth Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue was held in 2022 on the theme: “Religions and hate speech between scriptures and practice”. The event was attended by around 300 ulama, religious leaders, researchers, academics and media professionals from 70 countries around the world.

3. Right to a fair trial

129. According to article 60 of the Permanent Constitution of Qatar, governance rests upon the principle of the separation of (and cooperation between) powers in the manner set forth in the Constitution itself. Legislative authority is vested in the Shura Council while His Highness the Amir detains executive authority, assisted by the Council of Ministers, and judicial authority lies with the courts, which issue their rulings in the name of His Highness the Amir.

130. Oversight by the legislature on the actions of the executive derives directly from the constitutional provision that enjoins the separation of powers. The aim is to achieve balance and collaboration between legislature and executive, and thereby ensure that the institutions of government operate under constitutional rules. The legislative authority, in that it represents the people, has the right to guide the executive branch and hold it accountable, which is one of the functions of the legislature under article 76 of the Constitution. In this way, constitutionally mandated institutions exercise their functions while respecting the law and the principle of legitimacy, which underpin the work of those institutions. The scope and form of parliamentary oversight is determined by the Constitution and related laws.

131. The Constitution of Qatar upholds the independence of the judiciary and its separation from the executive and legislative branches. Article 130 of the Constitution reads: “Judicial authority is independent and vested in courts of different types and levels. Courts shall give their judgements in accordance with the law.” Article 31 concerns the independence of judges, which is reaffirmed in Judicial Authority Act No. 8 of 2023.

132. The right to a fair trial and to full legal safeguards guaranteeing the right to a defence is enshrined in article 39 of the Constitution, while article 135 stipulates that “the right of legal recourse is guaranteed for all persons”. A body of fair trial guarantees is also set forth in the Code of Criminal Procedure (Act No. 23 of 2004).

Combating trafficking in persons

133. Qatar has issued the following of pieces of legislation, which are consistent with the aims of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. In addition, it has issued its National Plan for Combating Human Trafficking, which is in line with the Qatar National Vision and with the Sustainable Development Goal on peace and justice:

- Act No. 5 of 2020 which amended certain provisions of Anti-Human Trafficking Act No. 15 of 2011. The amendments made the Act more comprehensive via more effective prosecution of offenders and increased penalties for certain offences.
- Ruling No. 37 of 2022 by the President of the Court of First Instance, which changed and redistributed jurisdictions among court chambers, with a chamber in the criminal courts being designated to consider crimes of human trafficking.
- Act No. 2 of 2020 which amended certain provisions of the Criminal Code (Act No. 11 of 2004) in order to address instances of human trafficking. The relevant provisions are contained in article 3 entitled: “Crimes committed by organized criminal gangs.”

134. The National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking acts as a national coordinating mechanism for monitoring, preventing and combating trafficking in persons, prosecuting perpetrators and providing protection to victims via coordination with the

relevant authorities. It pursues its activities by developing and implementing strategic plans and policies (annex 13).

- Qatar signed memorandums of understanding to combat human trafficking with the United States of America in 2018 and with Saudi Arabia in 2023.
- The Government established an anti-trafficking unit in the Ministry of Labour in 2020. In 2021, the unit was allocated resources and given a 50-strong staff.
- An anti-human trafficking department has been established as part of the Criminal Investigation Department in the Ministry of the Interior.
- A memorandum of understanding has been signed with the Qatar Charity organization to support trafficking victims, with the allocation of QR 3 million over 3 years.
- The National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking participates in a strategic dialogue held annually between Qatar and the United States to discuss issues related to trafficking in persons, under a memorandum of understanding signed by the two sides in 2021.
- Thanks to coordination with the Qatar Bar Association, free legal representation is provided in trafficking cases that come before the courts.
- Agreement has been reached to establish a global centre for training and research in the field of combating trafficking in persons, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The proposal is currently being examined in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- In 2022, the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking launched the 16044 hotline and the email ht@mol.gov.qa as direct means for reporting violations related to trafficking in persons.
- As part of its planning, the National Committee conducts periodic reviews of current legislation and the procedures for implementing that legislation. The action plan of the Committee secretariat for 2022 includes the following:
 - Consolidating prevention and protection mechanisms and procedures.
 - Launching the “*Afdal*” communication programme, which helps to promote the rights of migrant workers by providing basic training in information and communications technology. The programme has managed to connect more than 1.5 million migrant workers to digital services, opening up new opportunities for them to learn and work. All this is a reflection of the national resolve to improve conditions for migrant workers and to promote decent work and economic growth, which is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 8.

E. Cross-cutting issues

1. Environment

135. The Ministry of the Environment participated in a meeting of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution. The meeting was held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

136. The Ministry took part in an international conference on climate change and human rights in February 2023.

137. The Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change collaborates on projects with organizations such as the Global Green Growth Institute and the United Nations Environment Programme.

138. Qatar has renewed its support for the UNDP accelerator laboratory network, recently announcing an additional \$10 million contribution which brings its total support for the network to \$30 million.

139. In June 2021, the Qatar Fund for Development signed an agreement with the Adaptation Fund envisaged under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to finance climate change adaptation in vulnerable countries, including least developed countries and small island developing States.

140. An international conference has been organized to draw attention to the importance of recycling and sustainability, with the aim of presenting the latest experiences in the field of waste management and recycling and their role in preserving the environment and reducing the impact of climate change.

141. The Million Trees Initiative (2022–2019), which was carried out with the involvement of all groups in society, aimed to contribute to the implementation of global efforts to reduce temperatures and minimize the perils of carbon emissions. In addition, the Ten Million Trees Initiative, which is to conclude in 2030, has been launched as part of the commitments of Qatar under the Paris Agreement and its international pledges to preserve the environment and reduce climate change, also with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal on climate action.

142. The Ministry is taking part in a regional technical cooperation project with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the use of nuclear technologies to measure plastic pollution in the marine environment. The Ministry has also used the project to train its own staff in the use of such technologies.

143. The Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change is involved in several technical cooperation projects with IAEA to measure and monitor radioactive pollution in the terrestrial and marine environments, in line with the Sustainable Development Goal regarding life on land. With a view to protecting the environment, the public and workers, the Ministry is also using nuclear technologies to measure air pollution and to treat the naturally occurring radioactive matter resulting from oil and gas extraction. Also, a project to measure radioactivity in foodstuffs is being run in cooperation with the food safety laboratory of the Ministry of Health.

144. A national preparedness plan for responding to nuclear and radiation emergencies has been developed. As part of this, the Ministry has begun creating a radiation map of Qatar and installing monitoring stations to measure radiation levels in the air and in the waters of the Gulf.

145. Non-ionizing-radiation monitoring stations have been installed on cell phone towers, with readings being monitored round the clock by a data analysis unit.

146. Qatar implements the Convention on Nuclear Safety. It has submitted its initial report under the Convention and attended review meetings of IAEA member States.

147. The State is collaborating with the European Union centres of excellence on nuclear safety and security and with the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 17 regarding partnerships to achieve the Goals.

148. Qatar took part in the IAEA general conference in September 2023.

149. The Ministry has issued guidelines regarding radiation in fields such as nuclear medicine, diagnostic radiology, industrial radiography, nuclear metrology, boreholes, preparedness for nuclear and radiation emergencies, conditions for the storage of radioactive materials, safe road transportation of radioactive materials and the management and treatment of radioactive matter resulting from oil and gas extraction.

150. Training courses on controlling the import, export and smuggling of radioactive materials have been held for customs officers working at points of entry.

151. A national seminar has been held to raise public awareness about the peaceful uses of atomic energy and the extent of cooperation with IAEA.

F. Training, capacity-building and awareness-raising

152. Awareness-raising and training programmes on human rights principles have been designed and run. These include programmes for law enforcement personnel on the protection and promotion of human rights as well as train-the-trainer initiatives at the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For its part, the National Human Rights Committee has a system of awareness-raising mechanisms and tools which it uses to give concrete form to its mandate to educate and disseminate awareness about human rights values and principles (annex 14).

G. Promoting the work of the National Human Rights Committee (annex 15)

153. The membership of the National Human Rights Committee includes nine representatives from civil society organizations and five from governmental institutions, as per Act No. 17 of 2010 which regulates the Committee.

154. The Committee is involved in discussions on annual reports concerning the human rights situation in Qatar. It also drafts shadow reports on the implementation at the national level of the human rights treaties the State has ratified, as well as the national report under the universal periodic review mechanism.

155. The Committee is also active in the field of legislation, providing opinions and comments on bills before they are passed into law and assessing them against human rights norms to ensure that they are consistent with the relevant international standards (annex 16).

156. The National Human Rights Committee takes the following action to uphold the rights of migrant workers and to act as a channel for recourse:

- Offices for expatriate communities have been opened at the Committee's headquarters. They receive complaints from migrant workers regarding relations between them and their employers, which tend to focus on issues such as changing employer, financial entitlements and other such matters. A total of 8,987 complaints and petitions were received between 2019 and 2023. In addressing those complaints, legal assistance can be provided in critical humanitarian cases via law firms that volunteer with the Committee to defend cases free of charge before the courts.

157. The National Human Rights Committee and the Ministry of Social Development and the Family have signed a memorandum of understanding with a view to establishing an effective partnership to support and empower families, women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities. This is to be achieved via mechanisms of cooperation in legal matters, awareness-raising and the exchange of experiences and best practices.

IV. Challenges and future prospects

158. The third national development strategy 2024–2030 constitutes the final stage towards the achievement of the goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030. The strategy aims to maintain the readiness of Qatar to meet challenges and move the country into the ranks of developed nations by 2030.

159. National human rights mechanisms have continued to review domestic legislation and to propose amendments to bring it into line with international instruments. The mechanisms have also made proposals for laws to provide greater protection for human rights as well as proposals for the State to adhere to international treaties.