



General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 November 2009
English
Original: Arabic

Human Rights Council
Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review
Seventh session
Geneva, 8–19 February 2010

National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 (a) of the Annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1*

State of Qatar

* The present document was not edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

1. Introduction

The present national report on the human rights situation in the State of Qatar has been prepared in accordance with paragraph 5 (e) of United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/251 establishing the Human Rights Council and in conformity with the guidelines set out in Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 on institution-building of the Council. It reflects the extent to which Qatar has been able to demonstrate its respect for human rights principles in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international conventions to which Qatar is a party and international humanitarian law.

It seeks to provide a comprehensive, transparent picture of the human rights situation in Qatar, and of achievements in promoting human rights on the ground. At the same time, it highlights the difficulties and challenges facing Qatar in realizing a greater number of those rights, as requested; it also indicates the future steps that Qatar envisages, which include considering the ratification of a number of conventions that it has not ratified.

2. Methodology and process for preparing the report

Based on the criteria, bases, objectives and principles of the universal periodic review mechanism as defined by the Human Rights Council, Qatar formulated a plan to draft a report that primarily reflects its commitment to and actual application of best practices, in accordance with its international obligations, so as to promote and expand the horizon of human rights. The report reflects Qatar's willing assumption of its responsibilities through expanded cooperation and partnership with all sectors of society and all stakeholders concerned.

The action plan included the following elements:

- Establishment of a national commission, pursuant to a decision of the Council of Ministers issued at its sixth ordinary session, on 11 February 2009, to be chaired by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and with members from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Justice, the Advisory Council, the Supreme Council for Health, the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage, the Supreme Council for Education, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, the Qatar Foundation to Combat Human Trafficking and the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women.
- Familiarization of the relevant stakeholders, including members of the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations and media institutions working in the field of human rights, with the universal periodic review mechanism and the functions of the national commission in order to involve them in the preparation of the national report through consultation and through consideration of their views. The commission invited these stakeholders to provide information on human rights in Qatar relating to their spheres of competence.
- Study and analysis by the commission of the human rights information, which was then recorded in the report in accordance with the criteria and bases of the review.
- Review by the commission of the human rights reports that Qatar has submitted to the committees monitoring the United Nations conventions to which it is a party; review of the resultant recommendations.

- Practical activities by the commission: field visits and engagement with civil and national human rights stakeholders.
- Organization of workshops to offer all stakeholders the opportunity to express their views and observations on the information in the report.
- Creation of an Internet website giving information on the universal periodic review and the preparation of the national report, in order to offer all the opportunity to express any observations or views on human rights in Qatar.
- Production of a pamphlet in Arabic and English on Human Rights Council procedures, the national action plan and the requirements for the preparation of the report, for distribution to all stakeholders and for posting on the website (annex 1).

3. Basic information about the State of Qatar

3.1 Population

According to the most recent estimates by the Qatar Statistics Authority, the total population of the State of Qatar, in September 2009 was 1,623,724 of which 1,248,668 (75.7 per cent) were male and 375,056 (24.3 per cent) female. Expatriate workers represented 84 per cent of the population. The following table shows population growth in the State of Qatar according to the population censuses of 1986, 1997 and 2004, and estimates for 2008.

Table 1
Population growth in Qatar, by sex and broad age group

Year	Male				Female				Total
	0–14	15–64	65+	Total male	0–14	15–64	65+	Total female	
1986	53 038	194 850	2 207	250 095	50 248	70 493	1 595	122 336	372 431
1997	71 753	224 846	4 911	301 510	68 011	111 413	2 889	182 313	483 823
2004	67 912	478 354	6 550	552 816	64 716	139 085	4 329	208 130	760 946
2008	107 990	978 743	10 084	1 096 817	102 420	243 425	5 787	351 632	1 448 449

3.2 Standard of living

The State of Qatar is going through a distinct phase in its history and is making rapid strides towards full and comprehensive development. As a result, it has recorded unprecedented economic growth and recovery rates; the economic growth rate exceeded 14 per cent in 2007 and is expected to rise further. Public expenditure is also increasing; the State budget rose by an estimated 23.6 per cent between 2006–2007 and 2007–2008, from 56,901.80 billion to 72,465.72 billion Qatari riyals. Qatar has one of the highest standards of living in the world and was ranked 33rd in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report 2009. The report indicates that Qatar has broken new ground by rising to 33rd position; this achievement reflects considerable development and steady progress towards human development. The report also indicates that the human development index in Qatar has risen from 0.875 to 0.910, reflecting advances in education, health and gross domestic product (GDP). In education, the report indicates that the illiteracy rate has decreased to 6.9 per cent while the school enrolment rate has increased to 80.4 per cent, as against 77.7 per cent the previous year. With regard to health, life

expectancy has risen to 75.5 years, up from 75 years in the previous year. Per capita income has leapt to 74,882 dollars in 2009.

Human rights in Qatar must be considered in the context of this population structure and standard of living.

4. Constitutional framework and legal protection of human rights

4.1 Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar

Qatar's efforts to protect human rights are based on its Permanent Constitution. This is composed of 150 articles, which are the guiding principles of State policy, emphasize the principle of the separation of powers, respect for the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, and guarantee fundamental rights and freedoms. Chapter II, entitled "Basic components of society", emphasizes that Qatari society is based on the pillars of justice, kindness, freedom, equality and morality. Under the Constitution, the State bears responsibility for upholding these pillars and ensuring security, stability and equality of opportunity, solidarity, and brotherhood among citizens. The Constitution also focuses on the role of the family as the foundation of society, sustained by religion, morality and patriotism, and defines the role of the State vis-à-vis the family; it requires the young to be protected from corruption, exploitation and the ills of physical, mental and spiritual neglect, and provided with adequate conditions in which to develop their abilities. Chapter III is devoted to fundamental rights and freedoms, which will be dealt with in detail later in the section on legislation for the protection of human rights. The Constitution states that Qatar's foreign policy is guided by the principles of consolidating international peace and security, respecting human rights, renouncing violence and the use of force, encouraging the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means, and cooperating with peace-loving nations.

4.2 Organization of powers

The basic principle underlying the organization of powers in the State of Qatar is that the people are the source of all authority, which they exercise in accordance with the Constitution. The system of government is based on the separation of, but full cooperation among, powers. Legislative authority is vested in the Advisory Council, while executive authority is exercised by the Emir, assisted by the Council of Ministers. The administration of justice is the preserve of the courts. The Emir, may God protect him, is the Head of State and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. Respect for him is a duty. The Council of Ministers submits draft laws and decrees to the Advisory Council for discussion. If approved these are submitted to the Emir for ratification and issuance in accordance with the Constitution. The Council of Ministers also approves the regulations and decisions drafted by the ministries, supervises the implementation of laws and oversees the functioning of the State financial and administrative machinery.

4.3 Advisory Council

The Permanent Constitution indicates a preference for a single legislative chamber with elected and appointed members, but a clear majority of elected members, rather than a bicameral system. Article 77 provides that the Advisory Council shall consist of 45 members, of whom two thirds shall be elected directly by secret ballot while the remaining

third shall be appointed by His Highness the Emir. In accordance with the Constitution, the Advisory Council has legislative authority, approves the general budget and oversees the executive branch.

4.4 The judiciary

The Constitution enshrines the principle of the independence of the judiciary. Article 30 states that “The judiciary is independent; judicial power shall be exercised by the courts of various kinds at different levels.” The Constitution relies upon the honesty and impartiality of judges to ensure people’s rights and freedoms; article 131 stipulates that “Judges are independent and are subject to no authority other than the law. No authority has the right to interfere in the administration of justice.” The independence of the judiciary is also enshrined in Act No. 10 of 2003 through the promulgation of the Judicial Authority Act, article 2 of which provides that “Judges are independent and cannot be dismissed except in accordance with the provisions of this Act. The independence of the judiciary shall not be compromised nor shall there be interference in the administration of justice.” Under the Judicial Authority Act, the national courts consist of the Court of First Instance, the Court of Appeal and the Court of Cassation. The Supreme Judicial Council was established under the Judicial Authority Act to uphold the independence of the judiciary, to express opinions on matters relating to the judiciary, to study and to propose legislation on the development of the judicial system and to express opinions on the appointment, promotion, transfer, secondment and retirement of judges in accordance with the Judicial Authority Act. In addition to those functions, the Council considers grievances relating to the administration of justice, on which its decision is final. The Judicial Authority Act guarantees the financial independence of the courts, by stipulating that the courts’ budget shall be annexed to the State budget.

The Constitution is designed to bring about central control over the constitutionality of laws and has left it to the law to regulate that control. Most modern constitutions also tend to favour that system as it is conducive to achieving a broad balance between the different arms of government. Act No. 12 of 2008 establishes the Supreme Constitutional Court as an independent, independently financed judicial body with the authority to adjudicate in disputes relating to the constitutionality of laws and regulations, in conflicts of jurisdiction and in disputes concerning the execution/enforcement of contradictory final judgements issued by judicial or other competent bodies. It is also competent to interpret laws when their application has provoked controversy and has the required weight to ensure uniform interpretation of the law when requested to do so by the Prime Minister or the President of the Advisory Council. In accordance with the provisions mentioned above, the Constitutional Court is competent to adjudicate in disputes relating to the constitutionality of laws and regulations, on its own motion or at the request of litigants; its judgements and decisions are final, not subject to appeal, and binding on all State authorities and persons in Qatar.

The independence of the judiciary was strengthened and enhanced by the promulgation of Act No. 7 of 2007 on the adjudication of administrative disputes. Under this Act, abuse of power constitutes grounds and justification for revocation of an administrative decision or payment of compensation.

4.5. Legislation for the protection of human rights

4.5.1 Constitutional protection of human rights

Since His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani came to power and adopted a comprehensive policy of reform, he has sought to ensure that human rights are at the core of constitutional, political, economic, social and cultural reform; the development and strengthening of the country's legislative and institutional human rights machinery reflects that concern. Articles 34 to 58 of the 2004 Constitution are devoted to fundamental rights and freedoms. The Constitution embraces the principle that these rights are integrated, interconnected, interdependent and indivisible, and thus guarantees economic, social, cultural, civil, political and collective rights equally. The fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution include equality before the law, prohibition of discrimination, personal freedom, criminalization of torture, freedom of the press and of expression, the right to association, freedom of worship, the right to work, the right to education, and the right to assemble (annex 2). The Constitution emphasizes that these rights must not be restricted or diminished on the pretext that they are being regulated or modified. Article 146 stipulates that the provisions pertaining to public rights and freedoms may not be amended save for the purpose of granting more safeguards of the interest of the individual citizen.

4.5.2 Legal safeguards for human rights

The fundamental human rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution have been promoted through the enactment of a number of national laws, including the following:

- Decree No. 10 of 1992 regulating medical treatment abroad
- Act No. 1 of 1994 on youth
- Act No. 38 of 1995 on social security
- Act No. 7 of 1997 regulating medical treatment in Qatar
- Act No. 25 of 2001 on compulsory education
- Act No. 10 of 2003 promulgating of the Judicial Authority Act
- Act No. 2 of 2004 on persons with special needs
- Act No. 11 of 2004 promulgating the Criminal Code
- Act No. 12 of 2004 on associations and institutions
- Act No. 14 of 2004 promulgating the Labour Code
- Act No. 18 of 2004 on public meetings and rallies
- Act No. 23 of 2004 promulgating the Code of Criminal Procedure
- Act No. 22 of 2005 prohibiting the recruitment, employment, training and involvement of children in camel racing
- Act No. 38 of 2005 on nationality
- Act No. 22 of 2006 promulgating the Family Code
- Act No. 2 of 2007 on housing
- Act No. 12 of 2008 on the establishment of the Supreme Constitutional Court Act
- No. 3 of 2009 regulating penitentiaries and correctional institutions

- Act No. 4 of 2009 regulating the entry and exit of expatriate workers

4.5.3 International treaty guarantees

Qatar has ratified and acceded to numerous international and regional human rights conventions in its efforts to enhance and strengthen the legislative framework for human rights. It acceded to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1976, the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2001 and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict in 2002. It also acceded to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 2001, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in 2008, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in 2009 and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2009. Qatar has ratified numerous International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, including the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) in 1998, the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) in 1976, the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) in 2000, the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) in 2006 and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105) in 2007. It is also considering accession to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. At the regional level, the State of Qatar ratified the Arab Charter on Human Rights in 2009.

4.6 Institutions

The State of Qatar's interest in human rights is evident in the fact that it has established numerous governmental and non-governmental institutions to promote and protect human rights as integrated, interdependent and indivisible. At the governmental level, a number of ministerial human rights departments have been created, including the Office of Human Rights in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Human Rights in the Ministry of the Interior and the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. In addition, special public interest institutions have been established: the Qatar Foundation to Combat Human Trafficking and the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Women and Children. At the non-governmental level, the National Commission for Human Rights has been established, as have a considerable number of civil society organizations concerned with human rights and development. Furthermore, the Department of Labour within the Ministry of Labour has been given a greater role in the protection of expatriate workers in view of the current economic boom and development in Qatar.

4.6.1 Supreme Council for Family Affairs

The Supreme Council for Family Affairs was established by Sovereign Decree No. 53 of 1998, which reflects official concern from an early stage with the need for a high-level national body dealing with the family, its needs and future aspirations. Sovereign Decree No. 15 of 2009 regulating the Supreme Council for Family Affairs was issued in furtherance of this trend, consistent with the overall vision of development set out in the Qatar National Vision 2030. This Decree stipulates that the Council is under the authority of His Highness the Emir and should consist of a President, a Vice-President and no less than five and no more than seven members appointed by Sovereign Decree.

As the supreme authority on all matters relating to the family, the Council aims to enhance the status of the family and strengthen its role in society, promote the family and family members and ensure that the family remains a strong and cohesive unit that cares for children and upholds moral and religious values and ideals. It has at its disposal all the necessary powers and authority to develop strategies, policies and programmes for improving the quality of life for the family and its members, ensuring that they have social security and stability, and working towards the goals set out in international instruments that deal with family matters. Moreover, the Council follows up on the implementation of international conventions that are concerned with family matters and the rights of children, women, and persons with disabilities to which Qatar is a party and consults on draft agreements on the protection of the family and its members. It endeavours to empower women, enable them to participate in economic and political life and in particular involve them in decision-making, increase employment opportunities for them and support them in their professional lives. It proposes draft legislative tools relevant to the family and its members. In addition, the Council cooperates with international and regional bodies and organizations concerned with family and its members and represents Qatar in regional and international conferences and committees on the family, children, women and persons with disabilities. Moreover, it holds conferences, seminars and panel discussions and conducts research in subjects pertaining to the family.

The Council attaches considerable importance to coordination and cooperation with all government agencies and to the support and participation of civil society organizations. It gives particular attention to volunteer work and encourages the participation of the private sector with effective contribution from target groups, namely, the family, children, women, youth, persons with disabilities and the elderly.

The Supreme Council for Family Affairs was behind the proposal to enact a number of laws in order to make domestic legislation and practices compatible with human rights conventions. The legislation concerned includes the Persons with Special Needs Act No. 2 of 2004, Act No. 18 of 2005 on the establishment of a State prize for children's literature, Act No. 22 of 2005 prohibiting the recruitment, employment, training and involvement of children in camel racing and Act No. 19 of 2008 on gender equality in respect of blood money.

The Council has secured Qatari accession to numerous international conventions including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and has also conducted numerous research projects and studies on the family.

Alongside the legislation that it has helped to implement, in the context of Qatar's fulfilment of its obligations under international human rights conventions, the Council has taken numerous executive decisions and founded a number of institutions concerned with the family, children, women, persons with disabilities and the elderly. These institutions, which will be mentioned at various points throughout the report, are: the Shafallah Centre for Children with Special Needs, founded in 2001; the Cultural Centre for Childhood and Motherhood, founded in 2003; the Family Counselling Centre, founded in 2003; the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women, established in 2003; the Qatar Foundation for the welfare of orphans, established in 2003; the National Office to Combat Human Trafficking, established pursuant to Supreme Council for Family Affairs decision No. 8 of 2005; the Social Rehabilitation Centre, established by the Supreme Council for Family Affairs in 2007, and the Qatar Foundation to Combat Human Trafficking, established pursuant to Supreme Council for Family Affairs decision No. 8 of 2005.

4.6.2 Qatar Foundation to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings

The Qatar Foundation (formerly the National Office) to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings was set up in 2005. Its objective is to propose policies, establish national plans of action, tighten up the laws against trafficking in human beings and oversee the Qatar Shelter and Humanitarian Protection Centre, which was established in 2003 by decision of the Council of Ministers to provide victims of trafficking with support and protection, rehabilitating and reintegrating them into society. The Foundation has run information campaigns to alert the general public to the different aspects of the notion of trafficking in human beings: the campaigns have targeted all groups within society. It has also launched numerous publications and organized meetings and interviews. As regards capacity-building, the Foundation, in conjunction with the competent authorities, has laid on a great many training courses and workshops, chiefly for members of the police force, on the notion of trafficking and on how to identify people who have been trafficked. It has also, in cooperation and coordination with the Ministry of Labour, launched awareness-raising campaigns directed at foreign labourers in Qatar; and it has undertaken to publish the handbook for foreign workers in several languages.

4.6.3 Qatari Foundation for the Protection of Women and Children

The Qatari Foundation for the Protection of Women and Children was established under Act No. 8 of 1998 on private associations and institutions as a private foundation to protect children and women. It was subsequently converted to a private institution of public benefit by Supreme Council for Family Affairs decision No. 4 of 2007. Its broad aim is to protect target groups subjected to violence in the family and society. In particular, the Foundation aims to:

- Assist in the provision of accommodation for target groups and provide them with integrated care
- Protect target groups from deviant practices in the family and society
- Raise awareness of social and legal aspects of human rights among target groups, the family and the community
- Provide legal assistance to those without means in the target groups
- Assist and rehabilitate victims of violence in the target groups and reintegrate them into society

The Foundation provides social services such as information and guidance, in addition to a full range of reintegration and rehabilitation services and programmes for victims of abuse and violence. It also provides legal services, such as legal assistance, and mental health services, such as testing and treatment with cognitive-behavioural and support-group psychotherapy as necessary.

The Foundation has established a number of facilities such as the Dar al-Aman al-Qatariyyah, a shelter for homeless women and children victims of abuse and violence, for a certain period until their situation is resolved. It is also involved in the psychological and social rehabilitation of individual cases. From October 2007 to April 2009, the Foundation received 24 children and 26 women at the shelter. The Foundation has an office in the accident and emergency department at Hamad General Hospital to provide support, care and protection for women and children victims of abuse and violence; during 2008, it received 17 children and 180 women.

With regard to training, the Foundation has organized a number of seminars, workshops and courses for those working in the education, health and security sectors. It has also organized and implemented a number of awareness and education campaigns to

promote a culture of protection in society, raised awareness of the Foundation and the hotlines that it has set up and published numerous booklets, pamphlets and publications, such as the magazine *Aman*.

4.6.4 Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development

The Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development was established in 1995 at the initiative of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned as President of the Governing Council, in order to develop human resources and tap their potential and energies to build sustainable human capital. It focuses on education, scientific research and community development, as these areas are crucial to building a society characterized by growth and sustainability that is where shared knowledge and innovation can raise living standards for all. The Foundation achieves its objectives through a variety of centres and partnerships, which include over 30 organizations and centres. Education City is the Qatar Foundation's most striking educational achievement. Six world-renowned American universities have branches there, namely: the Virginia Commonwealth University branch, opened in 1998; the Weill Cornell Medical College branch, opened in 2002; the Texas A & M University branch, opened in 2003; the Carnegie Mellon University branch, opened in 2004; the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, opened in 2005; and the Northwestern University branch, opened in 2008. In addition, the Science and Technology Park includes a research and development centre. The Doha Debates, a programme that provides a platform to discuss different views on pressing political topics and issues in the region, is also part of the Qatar Foundation. QatarDebate was founded in September 2007 as a national debating organization that aims to develop, support and raise the standard of discussion and open debate among students in Qatar and throughout the Middle East. The television programme "You Decide" is a talk show that follows significant national issues. Furthermore, the Qatar Foundation includes the Qatar Diabetes Association, established in 1995; the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development, the mission of which is to conduct research into and support studies on the legal, social and scientific foundations of the natural family as the basic unit of society, in accordance with article 16 (3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and the Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development, which was established pursuant to the recommendations of the Doha International Conference for the Family, held in November 2004.

4.6.5 Social Development Centre

The Social Development Centre was established in 1995 and forms part of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. It aims to develop family and community capacities in Qatar by strengthening the role of the family in society and maintaining its cohesion and social and economic stability. The Centre monitors and conducts empirical studies on various social phenomena, submits related proposals and encourages decision makers to engage with them. It also prepares people to cope with the changes caused by globalization, by holding conferences, seminars, lectures, workshops and training courses and by contributing to raising awareness, enlightenment and education through all media.

4.6.6 Reach Out to Asia

Reach Out to Asia (ROTA) was founded in December 2005 at the initiative of Her Excellency Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, daughter of His Highness the Emir of Qatar. ROTA is a private charity that operates under the umbrella of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development and aims to extend the Foundation's mission to the Asian continent and the Asian expatriate community.

The mission of ROTA is to help local communities overcome obstacles and to establish links that will allow them to achieve good quality basic and secondary education, thus meeting some of the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All goals set by the United Nations and UNESCO; to encourage communities to build human relationships; to create a safe environment for education; and to provide equal educational opportunities and educational aid to areas affected by disasters. The ROTA programme has two main elements, namely, activities within Qatar and activities within Asia and the Middle East. ROTA has considerable achievements, to its credit, which include collecting over 28 million dollars in contributions, providing relief to areas affected by the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005, reconstructing and equipping 18 schools in the Kashmir region of Pakistan and providing educational opportunities to 3,000 children affected by the earthquake. It has also equipped 40 schools destroyed by the Israeli attack against southern Lebanon during the events of 2006, and mounted the “Our Children” campaign to encourage schoolchildren in Qatar to contribute to their counterparts in Lebanon. Moreover, it has constructed and equipped a learning centre in the Aceh region of Indonesia, reconstructed 960 schools in Jakarta, established the Knowledge Network, which provides educational resources to develop communities in Asia with the participation of a number of leading universities worldwide, launched a project in Cambodia to equip a primary and secondary school, and set up a vocational training centre in Vihear Suork commune in Kandal province.

4.6.7 “Your Link” Foundation

As part of Qatar’s efforts to provide effective support and encouragement for academic programmes for young people, in particular in the economic sphere, His Highness the Emir issued Sovereign Ordinance No. 3 of 2008 in January 2008 approving the establishment of “Your Link” as a private institution of public benefit based in Doha. Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned (consort of His Highness the Emir) announced during the Alliance of Civilizations Forum in Madrid that 100 million dollars had been allocated to support “Your Link”, which she described as an all-embracing and universal initiative that aimed to strengthen the link between young people and the labour market and to build bridges between young people of different nationalities and religions, in view of the State of Qatar’s belief in the importance of ensuring and promoting the right to work.

4.6.8 National Committee for Integrity and Transparency

The National Committee for Integrity and Transparency was established by Sovereign Decree No. 84 of 2007 and is under the direct authority of His Highness the Crown Prince, following Qatar’s ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption in 2007. The Chairman is from the State Audit Bureau and the members come from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, Qatar Central Bank, the Office of the Attorney-General and Qatar Petroleum.

The Committee’s mandate is to endeavour to promote compliance with Qatar’s obligations under the United Nations Convention against Corruption, to develop a national strategy to promote integrity and transparency and to propose the legislation needed to prevent and combat corruption, in accordance with the standards and requirements of the Convention. The mandate also includes the development of education and training programmes to raise awareness among civil servants, in particular, train those working in financial institutions, to use sophisticated means to detect corruption. The Committee submits an annual report to His Highness the Crown Prince on its activities and achievements and makes recommendations that it deems appropriate for the achievement of its objectives. It should be mentioned that the State of Qatar will host the third session of

the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption from 9 to 12 November 2009 to review progress made in the fight against corruption. It will also host the Global Forum VI on Fighting Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity from 7 to 8 November 2009 under the banner “Strength in unity: working together against corruption”. The Forum will discuss issues relating to the role of the public and private sectors in the fight against corruption.

4.6.9 National Human Rights Committee

The National Human Rights Committee was established by Sovereign Decree No. 38 of 2002 as an independent national body for the promotion and protection of human rights. The objectives of the Committee are:

- To promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms
- To enrich and spread a culture of human rights derived from Islamic sharia and all international conventions relating to human rights
- To ensure that all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar are realized and promoted
- To eliminate all violations to which persons under the jurisdiction of the State of Qatar may be subjected
- To develop relations and forms of cooperation between the Committee and all international, regional and local organizations, whether governmental or non-governmental

Act No. 38 of 2002 granted the Committee many of the powers referred to in the Paris Principles. Since the human rights infrastructure and civil society in Qatar were new at that time, the Committee was composed of seven members from government bodies and five members from civil society in accordance with article 3. It should be noted here that Act No. 38 of 2002 was amended by Decree Law No. 25 of 2006 to ensure consistency and compatibility with the Paris Principles, such that membership of the Committee now includes no less than seven members of civil society and five representatives from government bodies, without the right to vote. Pursuant to the principle of transparency and in order to raise public awareness of human rights, the National Committee publishes its annual reports on its website (www.nhrc-qa.org). The Government pays the recommendations of the Committee due attention and takes steps to implement them.

4.6.10 Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue

The Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue was established on the recommendation of the Fifth Doha Conference of Interfaith Dialogue, held in May 2007, and was inaugurated in May 2008 during the Sixth Conference. The Centre aims to promote and spread a culture of dialogue and peaceful coexistence.

4.6.11 Arab Foundation for Democracy

In May 2007, Qatar hosted the Second Forum on Democracy and Political Reform in the Arab World, which resulted in the establishment of the Arab Foundation for Democracy based in Doha. The Foundation is the first of its kind in the Arab world and aims to promote the culture of democracy in the region. Qatar has donated 10 million dollars to support the work of the Foundation, which issued its first report on the state of democracy in the Arab world, based on 17 national reports, in 2008.

4.6.12 Doha Centre for Media Freedom

The media play an important role in Qatar and are an essential component of State policy; freedom of opinion and expression is one of the fundamental pillars of a modern democratic society and is guaranteed by the Constitution. In addition, the media make a significant contribution to promoting dialogue, broadening the scope of mutual understanding, encouraging tolerance and coexistence and creating an environment adverse to the incitement of terrorism and hatred. In this context, the Emir issued a Sovereign Decree in December 2007 reaffirming the role of the media by approving the establishment of the Doha Centre for Media Freedom, as a private institution of public interest. Based on the strategic principles of freedom, credibility, independence, responsibility and transparency, the Centre's objectives are to protect the public information system in accordance with international standards, conduct research and build a database to serve the different media. In addition, the Centre will erect an international memorial to symbolic figures, pioneers and victims in the cause of freedom of information, and will provide assistance to journalists mistreated in the course of their professional duty, in particular during crises. It should be mentioned that the Centre signed a cooperation agreement with Reporters without Borders in January 2008.

5. Promotion and protection of human rights on the ground

5.1 Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women

Since obtaining independence, the State of Qatar has made outstanding efforts to promote gender equality and empower women. Based on the national Constitution and as a manifestation of conscious political will, the State has endeavoured to establish gender equality gradually and systematically, taking into account the tolerant aims of Islam while observing the requirements of openness and development. Qatari women have benefited from a series of positive measures that have enhanced their social status and as a result have made a dynamic entry into education at various levels, especially during recent decades. There has been a clear increase in the proportion of female students at various levels and stages of education (see table below) and women are now in a majority; in higher education, 4,360 out of 5,394 university students or 80 per cent of the student body were Qatari women during the academic year 2007/08. These enrolment levels are extremely high for the region and worldwide and suggest that future generations of Qatari women will soon have access to new opportunities at the various stages of education, in view of Qatar's policy directions and its commitment to achieving universal education for all.

Table 2

Trends in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the State of Qatar, 1990–2007

		Rate			Growth rate	
		1990	2000	2007	1990–2000	2000–2007
Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and higher education	Primary	93.3	98	100.3	0.49	0.33
	Preparatory and secondary	107.9	107.1	104.6	-0.70	-0.34
	University	250.2	245.7	209.3	-0.18	-2.57
Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments			0.0	3.4	-	91.2

Qatar has also endeavoured to provide the appropriate enabling environment for women to engage in the labour market and participate in the production process. More than 50 per cent of all investors and dealers in Qatari shares in the Doha Stock Market are Qatari businesswomen. Businesswomen in Qatar currently own approximately 1,500 companies in fields ranging from industrial investment to banking, tourism and trade. This constitutes a shift in women's traditional investment patterns.

The proportion of seats held by women in the Municipal Council rose from zero per cent in the 1999 elections to 3.4 per cent in the 2003 and 2007 elections, when a Qatari woman won one of the Council's 29 seats. The number of seats held by women is expected to increase with the Municipal Council elections in 2011, as a result of greater awareness of the importance of women's participation in political life and decision-making in Qatar.

Women's rights have grown steadily in recent times, whether through the consolidation of stipulated rights or through the reform of particular laws in women's favour, such as the Housing Act and its implementing decrees and Act No. 19 of 2008 determining blood money payable in cases of manslaughter. The latter Act provides for full equality between men and women in determining the blood money payable in cases of manslaughter, so giving strong impetus to gender equality in respect of civil and political rights. In recent years, women have attained senior constitutional positions and their participation in professional roles has increased. However, more remains to be done to increase the number of women in senior leadership positions, both in the public and in the private sector.

Qatari women have achieved much in education and many areas of economic activity. They have also gained access to the right to political participation. However, they continue to encounter social obstacles to participation in the public sphere, although those are diminishing year by year. Qatar's accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in April 2009 will certainly strengthen efforts to achieve gender equality and empower women.

5.2 Persons with disabilities

Qatar has made sterling efforts at legislative and institutional levels to raise awareness of, promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. Act No. 2 of 2004 on persons with special needs was promulgated (the wording persons with disabilities was subsequently adopted, in accordance with the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). The Act aims to provide special care and appropriate legal protection for persons with disabilities, to oblige the State to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise their rights on an equal basis with their non-disabled counterparts and to impose penalties in cases where provisions prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities are violated. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs set up a committee to review the Act and subsequently issued an implementing regulation after Qatar signed and ratified the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in April 2008.

A number of institutions have been established to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. The Shafallah Centre for Children with Special Needs, a centre of excellence in the provision of educational, training and rehabilitation services at the national, regional and international levels, was established in 1998. The Department for Persons with Special Needs was established within the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2009. In addition, a number of institutions and centres offer services for all types of disabilities to various age groups. Qatar supported international efforts to appoint the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Disability in 2003 and participated actively in the discussions relating to the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which

was adopted in 2006. Qatar is proud that a Qatari woman was elected as a member of the international Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In view of its interest in persons with special needs, Qatar provides education and rehabilitation services for children in this group in accordance with the rights guaranteed under the Persons with Special Needs Welfare Act No. 4 of 2004 and Ministerial Decision No. 6 of 2004 on the establishment of a supervisory committee for the academic integration programme. The aim of the programme is to create a stimulating environment in which to educate, rehabilitate and integrate persons with motor disabilities and learning difficulties into ordinary schools and to improve the professional skills of those who work with people with disabilities, as well as to raise awareness in the community of the importance of academic integration and its various benefits and to create an objective and precise system for evaluating and following up on all aspects of the integration process. The programme includes a number of training courses and workshops for teaching staff and those responsible for implementing the programme in schools, and keeps track of the numbers of students with disabilities in schools and educational centres. A comprehensive survey of students with disabilities in schools was carried out during the academic year 2007/08 in order to provide support programmes for such students. Private schools also cater for the education of children with disabilities, including the school for children with learning and auditory difficulties, the Nur Institute and the Shafallah Centre. During the academic year 2007/08, 952 girls and boys were enrolled in such schools.

5.3 Action against trafficking in human beings

In recent years, Qatar has made considerable efforts at the institutional and legislative levels to combat trafficking in human beings and has sought to raise awareness of the issue. These efforts should be considered in the context of Qatar's general efforts to promote and protect human rights.

Qatar has sought to develop and strengthen its legislative framework in order to combat trafficking in persons. In that context, the Qatar Criminal Code of 2004 makes criminal offences of various acts that amount to trafficking in human beings, as recognized internationally, such as sexual exploitation, prostitution, slavery, slavery-like practices and forced labour. It should be noted that the Code acknowledges international jurisdiction over criminal trafficking in drugs or persons, piracy and international terrorism.

The Labour Code of 2004 reinforces and complements the Criminal Code, covering a number of matters relating to the organization of work, guaranteeing workers' rights and prohibiting the employment of young persons and women in hazardous work.

Act No. 22 of 2005 prohibiting the recruitment, employment, training and involvement of children in camel racing was promulgated as part of Qatar's continuing efforts at the legislative level. Qatar has also acceded to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, in addition to the ILO conventions on forced labour. Moreover, the relevant national authorities are studying a bill against trafficking in human beings and a bill on domestic employees, in the context of promoting and strengthening the legislative framework.

Qatar's concern with combating trafficking in human beings is evident in the fact that it has established a number of institutions to combat trafficking and to provide welfare and shelter for victims. Foremost among these is the Qatar Foundation to Combat Human Trafficking (formerly the National Office to Combat Human Trafficking), which was established in 2005. The Foundation aims to propose policies, develop national action plans and implement anti-trafficking legislation, in addition to supervising the Qatari Shelter and

Humanitarian Welfare Home, established in 2003 by decision of the Council of Ministers to provide assistance and protection to victims of trafficking and endeavour to rehabilitate and reintegrate them into society.

The Qatar Foundation to Combat Human Trafficking organizes public information and awareness campaigns throughout the year in order to reinforce the developments described above, using advocacy, the media and capacity-building. The awareness campaigns cover the concept and actual cases of trafficking and target all sectors of society. The Foundation has also issued a number of publications and organizes press, television and radio interviews.

Qatar's record of action against trafficking in human beings is set apart by the fact that although its experience is recent, in that a national strategy for combating trafficking was first approved in 2003, there has been political will at the highest levels to take action. That has been combined with the pivotal role played by the Qatar Foundation to Combat Human Trafficking in building bridges of cooperation and coordination with all the government agencies and civil society organizations concerned. In addition, Qatar has participated actively in regional and international forums and conferences on the subject.

In this regard it should be noted that Qatar participated in the Ministerial Consultation on Overseas Employment and Contractual Labour for Countries of Origin and Destination in Asia (Abu Dhabi Dialogue), held in Abu Dhabi on 21 and 22 January 2008, which emphasized the importance of cooperation between all partners in countries of origin and destination, and the need to pay attention to the core issues relevant to contractual labour and secure the necessary protection at all stages of a temporary contractual cycle. It also participated in the Global Forum to Fight Human Trafficking, held in Vienna from 13 to 15 February 2008. It should also be noted that the Qatar Foundation to Combat Human Trafficking organized the first world conference on the issue, entitled "Human Trafficking: Between Theory and Practice", with the sub-theme "Towards deeper awareness of the problem of human trafficking". The conference was held in Doha from 12 to 13 March 2008 and resulted in key recommendations on combating human trafficking.

5.4 Expatriate workers

The State of Qatar has made considerable legislative and institutional efforts to promote and protect the rights of expatriate workers. In addition to the constitutional protection of labour rights set out in the Permanent Constitution, the Labour Code enacted by Act No. 14 of 2004 guarantees workers a set of rights and privileges, protection from occupational hazards, compensation for injuries at work and the right to voluntarily terminate their contracts and to be compensated for their work. These are minimum labour rights and any compromise or waiver of the rights established under this Act is void.

The Ministry of Labour has issued a series of decisions pursuant to the Labour Code which, in turn, offer greater protection for workers' rights. The most important of these decisions are the following:

- Decision No. 5 of 2005 regulating the work of the conciliation committee and the arbitration committee in collective labour disputes
- Decision No. 6 of 2005 on model labour regulations
- Decision No. 13 of 2005 regulating labour inspections and associated procedures
- Decision No. 15 regulating jobs in which young persons may not be employed
- Decision No. 16 of 2005 regulating medical care for workers

- Decision No. 17 defining suitable housing requirements and specifications for workers
- Decision No. 18 on work-injury and occupational-disease statistics and reporting procedures
- Decision No. 19 on the periodic medical examination of workers at risk of occupational diseases
- Decision No. 20 on the precautions and conditions necessary in the workplace to protect paid workers and visitors from work-related diseases
- Decision No. 16 limiting hours of work in open spaces during the summer

The legislative structure has been strengthened and enhanced by Qatar's ratification of several ILO conventions including the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81) in 1976, the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) in 1976, the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) in 1998, the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) in 2000, the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) in 2006 and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105) in 2007.

Qatar has taken action in a number of ways to provide domestic workers with legal protection, including by monitoring their recruitment and drafting a domestic workers' bill, which is in the process of being enacted. The Qatar Foundation to Combat Human Trafficking has conducted awareness campaigns for employers through radio, television, the press and the mosque. Moreover, the Qatari Shelter and Humanitarian Welfare Home offers protection and welfare services for domestic workers.

In an effort to promote employment and protect workers, to further and promote their rights and to guarantee that they are not exploited, Qatar has signed a number of bilateral agreements with countries of origin regulating the employment and recruitment process and guaranteeing the rights and obligations of both employer and employee.

Alongside the legislative developments that have promoted the rights of expatriate workers, there has been a development at the institutional level. The labour inspection agency within the Ministry of Labour has been transformed into an independent department, which plays a vital role in dealing with discrimination against expatriate workers. Labour inspectors are carefully selected and well-qualified, and experts in various fields may also be engaged as required. They have the status of investigation officers by decision of the Attorney-General, in agreement with the Minister of Labour.

The Labour Inspection Department drafts annual reports documenting its inspections, the number of visits made, contraventions investigated and sanctions imposed.

A Labour Relations Department has also been established to protect workers' rights. It is expected to play a significant role in enforcing the national policy to preserve and protect workers' rights and equality and in resolving labour disputes promptly.

To strengthen the institutional infrastructure for the protection and promotion of workers' rights, the Supreme Judiciary Council has designated two special courts to hear workers' claims and resolve them promptly. Two chambers have thus been created in the Magistrates' Court and the Full Court to dispose of such cases.

It should be noted here that Act No. 4 of 2009 on the entry, exit residence and sponsorship of expatriates permits sponsorship to be transferred under a number of circumstances, including cases of abuse, so giving additional protection to expatriate workers' rights. Under article 22, the competent authority in the Ministry of the Interior is permitted to transfer an expatriate's sponsorship to another employer by written agreement between the new employer and the former employer – subject, in the case of workers to

whom the Labour Code applies, to the approval of the competent authority in the Ministry of Labour. Under article 12, sponsorship of an expatriate worker may be transferred without the sponsor's consent in certain cases, in order to protect the worker's rights. The Minister of the Interior or his representative may transfer the sponsorship of expatriate workers to whom the Labour Code does not apply to another employer in cases where abuse by the sponsor has been established or where doing so is in the public interest. The sponsorship of a worker to whom the Labour Code applies may be transferred to another employer at the worker's request for the same reasons, with the approval of the Minister of the Interior or his representative and with the approval of the Ministry of Labour.

6. Achievements, best practices and challenges

6.1 Education and the integration of human rights in educational curricula

Education plays an essential role in the comprehensive development process. Governments, communities and international bodies therefore make sustained efforts to provide material conditions in which successive generations of girls and boys can enjoy continuing access to education in various regions and at different levels. Participation in basic education and the completion of primary education in particular are considered a minimum among human communities and social groups. In order to achieve that, article 25 of the Constitution of Qatar provides that "Education is one of the fundamental pillars of social progress. The State shall ensure, foster and endeavour to spread it." Article 49 also provides that "All citizens have the right to education and the State shall endeavour to make education compulsory in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations of the State."

In addition, Act No. 25 of 2001 on compulsory education makes education compulsory and free for all children from the start of the primary stage to the end of the secondary stage or 18 years of age, whichever comes first. The Ministry is required to make available the necessary requirements for that purpose.

As a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Qatar is committed to all UNESCO decisions and recommendations including its decisions relating to the Education for All movement and the six goals. Therefore, the National Plan for Education for All was developed in 2003; progress made was assessed in 2007.

Furthermore, Qatar is keen to promote universal (comprehensive) education that includes all pupils without discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion or other grounds.

Since the 1950s, Qatar has sought to modernize its education system and expand coverage of the educational needs of its citizens, boys and girls alike, which explains how the educational map in Qatar has expanded since then. While in the 1950s there were only a few traditional schools, there are now more than 500 public and private schools in the education system throughout the country, covering various stages of education, that are open to all.

The most significant result of that expansion has been the increase in the number of students and the rise in enrolment rates for both sexes (see table below). In addition, enrolment rates have grown steadily in recent decades, indicating that the Government has continued to invest in education and that education has been a priority in recent years. Primary school enrolment rates in Qatar are among the highest in the world; the levels achieved recently make Qatar a world leader in terms of access to basic education

opportunities for boys and girls from various sectors of society, without discrimination or exception.

Table 3

Trends in universal primary education indicators in the State of Qatar, 1990–2007

		<i>Rate</i>			<i>Growth rate</i>	
		<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>1990–2000</i>	<i>2000–2007</i>
Net enrolment ratio in primary education	Males	92.3	96.4	97.9	0.43	0.22
	Females	90.8	97.3	97.3	0.69	0.00
	Total	91.6	96.9	97.6	0.56	0.77
Percentage of pupils starting grade 1 and reaching last grade of primary		-	88	99.7	-	1.39
Literacy rate among females and males aged between 15 and 24 years		96.5	98.0	99.1	0.15	0.16

One indicator of the health and effectiveness of the education system is the primary school dropout rate. The average percentage of pupils having started grade 1 who reach the last grade of primary education has grown steadily in recent years and now almost all students starting grade 1 reach the last grade without difficulty.

There have also been initiatives to establish forward-looking, independent schools that are free to set their own curricula within the framework of the national curriculum, which includes Arabic, English, science and mathematics, add other subjects in accordance with their educational programme and choose the appropriate textbooks in line with their objectives. These schools manage their material and human resources independently and have clear, specific monitoring and accounting mechanisms. An initiative to establish outstanding foreign schools was launched in 2007 by decision of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned, President of the Supreme Education Council, through the formation of an Oversight Committee to attract outstanding foreign schools. This unique programme to meet the growing demand for excellent private education in Qatar forms part of the national education reform known as Education for a New Era. By means of that reform, Qatar is building a world-class education system for a new era based on a set of general principles applicable to both parents and students including diversity and choice. Two outstanding schools were opened in September 2008, and a third in September 2009. The Oversight Committee expects to attract two to three outstanding schools every year over the coming three to five years.

The education system in Qatar has succeeded in keeping girls and boys at school for longer and raising the level of educational attainment in all sectors of Qatari society, in particular among young people, the majority of whom today are fully literate. However, there is no doubt that the requirements of the Qatari labour market, in particular those of the knowledge economy to which Qatar aspires, call for a range of skills and competencies beyond simple literacy: the future challenges to Qatar's education system lie in its ability to meet the needs of a labour market that will require highly-skilled and accomplished people in the coming years.

An endowment fund for education expenditure has been set up from part of the investment in Qatar's gas wealth in order to ensure that education expenditure continues and meets the requirements of the labour market.

Qatar pays considerable attention to the incorporation of human rights into school curricula and the teaching of human rights concepts and principles. Human rights concepts

have been incorporated in the curriculum in a number of forms, as independent themes or concepts, as activities inside and outside the classroom and as visual aids. School curricula and textbooks cover political and civil rights, economic rights, children's rights, women's rights, social and cultural rights, the rights of the elderly, the rights of persons with disabilities and more. The pedagogical approach is values-based, to promote cooperation, compassion, equality, love, peace and tolerance as well as other values associated with social and civic responsibilities, such as respect for the law, good citizenship, participation in the community and community activities, honesty, integrity and reliability. This approach also promotes values associated with respect for Qatar's cultural heritage, such as preservation of cultural heritage and the environment.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education has launched a number of educational initiatives in cooperation with the Supreme Council for Family Affairs to disseminate the Convention on the Rights of the Child and raise awareness of the Convention among students, including a programme for the dissemination of the culture of children's rights in schools. A high-level committee formed to oversee this programme has members from various bodies in Qatar, namely, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and UNESCO. The committee has, in cooperation with UNESCO, developed a national action plan on the design of teaching manuals for use by teachers that present in simple form the rights and principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and contain teaching cards to explain rights and violations to children using real-life stories and colour illustrations. The programme also includes workshops for teaching staff on the use of the manuals in activities in and outside the classroom.

In cooperation with the Qatari Armed Forces and UNICEF, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs began in 2008–2009 to incorporate the rights of the child as a topic into the curricula of the Military College and the Qatar Armed Forces Training Institute.

Outstanding practices in the field of human rights include the formation of student groups, known as human rights groups, to spread human rights principles, concepts and culture among students; student councils provide a new framework for raising students' awareness of their roles, enabling them to express their opinions and develop their communication skills, and giving effect to democratic principles, most notably the enunciation of people's rights and how to claim them.

6.2 Health care

The health-care sector is a priority for economic and social development and Qatar therefore endeavours to provide various necessary basic health services to different sectors of the population, in particular those most vulnerable to disease, such as children. It has done so by expanding the construction of childhood health-care centres, conducting vaccination campaigns against epidemics and infectious diseases, organizing public awareness campaigns and implementing school health programmes in cooperation with the Supreme Council for Health and the Supreme Council for Education.

The health-care system in Qatar has made achievements in the provision of health services, thus improving the health of the population, in particular by reducing the under-five mortality rate, a key indicator for measuring the effectiveness and coverage of the health system. The under-five mortality rate has declined significantly (see table below), from 16 per thousand live births in 1990 to 9.1 per thousand in 2007, approaching the rate in high-income countries where the average is 7 per thousand live births. The infant mortality rate (0–1 year) has experienced a similar decline in recent decades, from 13 per thousand live births in 1990 to 7.46 per thousand in 2007. Qatar has thus achieved one of the greatest reductions in this respect among countries with highly developed health

coverage. These reductions in infant and under-five mortality rates in general can be attributed to the scope of maternal and neonatal health coverage, in particular the design and broad implementation of vaccination campaigns for all newborns against infectious and transmissible diseases.

Table 4

Reduction in child mortality rates in Qatar during the period 1990–2007

	<i>Rate per thousand live births</i>			<i>Growth rate</i>	
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>1990–2000</i>	<i>2000–2007</i>
Under-five mortality rate	16.6	13.1	9.1	-2.4	-5.2
Infant mortality rate (0–1 years)	13.0	11.73	7.46	-1	-6.5

The relevant government agencies have sought to improve the quality of life and keep mothers safe before, during and after childbirth. A number of accomplishments in care for women have resulted. Maternal mortality rates during pregnancy, childbirth and after childbirth have decreased significantly (see table below). This decrease can be attributed to comprehensive health coverage for women before and after childbirth, the provision of various methods of care in terms of examinations and vaccinations, and in particular the fact that most deliveries are attended by qualified professional staff in specialized hygienic medical institutions as all births in Qatar take place under the supervision of qualified and experienced medical professionals.

Table 5

Trends in improving maternal health in the State of Qatar, 1990–2007

	<i>Rate</i>			<i>Growth rate</i>	
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>1990–2000</i>	<i>2000–2007</i>
Births attended by skilled health specialists (per cent)	99.84	99.96	100.0	0.01	0.01
Rate of contraceptive use			20		76.8
Adolescent birth rate	31.4	22.1	21.0	-3.51	0.73
Access to health care after childbirth (minimum 1 visit)			100		42.8

The availability of reproductive health services such as contraceptives for family planning remains relatively modest in Qatari society, even though the family health survey conducted in 1998 showed consensus that married women should have access to such services.

Family planning in a country such as Qatar, where nationals are a minority and people are encouraged to have children, does not mean birth control but family planning to protect the health of mothers and children. The decline in teenage birth rates in Qatar should be noted; it is mainly due to changing social values, for early marriage among women is declining, as Qatari girls spend more years in school and increasing numbers of Qatari women are entering work. Even so, unemployment among women remains relatively high.

6.3 International cooperation

6.3.1 Hosting global conferences

Qatar's efforts to contribute effectively to international moves to promote and protect human rights flow from the principles enshrined in the national Constitution and, in particular, from Qatar's commitment to respect international instruments and covenants and endeavour to implement all the international agreements to which it is party. The Constitution requires foreign policy to be guided by the principles of consolidating peace and security, respect for human rights, renunciation of violence and the use of force, encouraging the peaceful settlement of international disputes and cooperation with peace-loving nations.

In this context, it should be pointed out that Qatar has a policy of openness towards hosting global conferences on development issues, democracy, human rights and promoting a culture of peace. It hosted the Second Global Conference on Financing for Development and also hosts the annual Forum on Democracy, Development and Free Trade, the Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue and the US-Islamic World Forum. It hosted the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, the second meeting of the High Level Group for Alliance of Civilizations, the Second Conference of National Human Rights Institutions in the Arab World and the Second Forum on Democracy and Political Reform in the Arab world.

6.3.2 Constructive dialogue with international human rights mechanisms

Qatar's constructive dialogue with international human rights mechanisms flows from the principles enshrined in its Constitution and, in particular, from its commitment to respect international instruments and covenants and endeavour to implement all the international agreements to which it is party. Qatar submits periodic reports to the various monitoring mechanisms (the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee against Torture) as a result of this commitment. It also pays careful attention to the implementation of the recommendations of the monitoring committees. Notable examples of this include the fact that Qatar has withdrawn its general reservation to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and has partially withdrawn its general reservation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child with regard to any provisions inconsistent with Islamic law; hence the reservation now applies only to articles 2 and 14 of the Convention, taking into account the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Qatar's initial report. The competent authorities in Qatar are also considering the possibility of withdrawing Qatar's general reservation to the Convention against Torture and replacing it with a partial reservation. It should be noted that the Council of Ministers has approved the recommendation of the Committee against Torture regarding the adoption of a definition of torture in the Qatari Penal Code that is consistent with the definition given in article 1 of the Convention. Qatar has also taken into account the recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and has, by Decree Law No. 25 of 2006, amended Decree Law No. 38 of 2000 on the establishment of the National Commission on Human Rights in order to ensure consistency and coherence with the Paris Principles: the Commission will henceforward consist of no less than seven members of civil society and five representatives of government agencies without the right to vote.

Qatar agreed to invite the United Nations Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially children and women, to visit the country from 8 to 12 November 2006 out of respect for the special procedures. The Special Rapporteur appreciated the level of transparency, openness and cooperation shown by the Qatari Government during her visit.

She commended the fact that she had been allowed to visit all the institutions and bodies that she had requested and praised the positive advances made by Qatar in respect of the legislative and institutional framework to combat trafficking in human beings.

6.3.3 United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region

In the context of contributing to capacity-building efforts at the international level, the efforts of Qatar and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have led to the establishment of the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region, which was created by United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/153. The Centre aims to promote human rights by means of training, information and documentation, studies and the exchange of experience, through cooperation with Governments on the formulation of policies that promote human rights principles.

A headquarters agreement for the Centre was signed between the Government of Qatar and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Doha in December 2008. The Centre was opened in May 2009 by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Centre is expected to help meet the training needs of the geographical region and build and develop the region's capacities.

6.4 Challenges

The promotion and protection of human rights is a strategic option for Qatar, as it forms the backbone of the comprehensive reform policy (constitutional, economic, social and cultural) that Qatar has pursued since His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani came to power. This was affirmed in the comprehensive vision of development set out in the Qatar National Vision 2030, adopted by Sovereign Decree No. 44 of 2008, which covers the major topics affecting core human rights issues in the areas of education, the environment, migrant workers' rights and the empowerment of women while also reaffirming Qatar's commitment, as set out in the Constitution, to respecting and implementing its international obligations, including its human rights obligations (annex 3).

Although there have been palpable developments in Qatar at the legislative, institutional and awareness levels and although the political will and the financial means exist, some temporary obstacles to the ideal promotion and protection of human rights remain. These include the fact that the legislative and institutional developments are recent and that Qatar has only recently dealt with the international human rights mechanisms. In addition, the technical capacities of the country's human resources are still being developed and built. It is expected that the activities and programmes of the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region which opened in Doha in May 2009 will benefit Qatar and help it to overcome some of these obstacles.

Notwithstanding the progress that has been achieved with regard to women, the greatest challenge remains to boost their role in society, to increase their access to a number of fields, to support their participation in economic activity and to formulate policies that will enhance and develop their capacity to fulfil their responsibilities as key partners in the development process.