



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child Seventy-fifth session

Summary record of the 2205th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 22 May 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Winter

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties *(continued)*

Combined third and fourth periodic reports of Qatar (CRC/C/QAT/3-4; CRC/C/QAT/Q/3-4 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Qatar took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Al-Hamadi** (Qatar) said that the report of Qatar (CRC/C/QAT/3-4) had been drafted by a national committee made up of representatives from ministries, the armed forces and the judiciary as well as from the National Human Rights Committee, the Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking, the Qatar Foundation for the Protection of Children and Women and other bodies. His delegation believed that an objective, transparent and non-politicized interactive dialogue with the Committee represented a precious opportunity to highlight areas of strength and weakness with a view to improving Qatar's implementation of the Convention which, like other ratified international treaties, had force of law under the Constitution.
3. Human rights, and the rights of children in particular, were a major priority in the national development planning strategy for both the public and the private sector. In fact, human rights were at the heart of the constitutional, economic, social, cultural and educational reforms being contemplated by the State, and the human rights infrastructure at both the legislative and the institutional level had been reinforced. The Qatar National Vision 2030 also included important human rights initiatives in the fields of education, health care, the environment, the rights of migrant workers, family cohesion, the empowerment of women and the rights of children.
4. Under the Constitution and the law, children were protected from all forms of violence and exploitation and were guaranteed health and social care and education. Over recent years, the State had expanded primary health care and established a network of maternal health centres. Education at all levels was universally available and all groups in society, including children, enjoyed greater prosperity and social welfare. Those achievements were reflected in the indicators. For example, 95 per cent of children under 1 currently received basic vaccinations, and mortality for that age group had fallen from 10 per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 4.6 in 2015. Rates of enrolment in all levels of education had also improved among both males and females. For example, in 2015, 95.4 per cent of children between the ages of 4 and 5 had been enrolled in kindergartens.
5. Great efforts had been made to give effect to the recommendations that had emerged from the Committee's examination of the second periodic report in 2009. Those efforts had created greater public awareness of the Convention and improved knowledge on the part of State officials of the scope and extent of children's rights, which previously had been confined to the fields of education and health care. New voluntary organizations working with children had been established and existing ones consolidated while policies affecting children had been reviewed.
6. Qatar had 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 had partially withdrawn its general reservation to the Convention itself. Moreover, it had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women without entering any general reservations. Since the consideration of its previous periodic report, it had adopted a wide range of legislative amendments regarding the promotion and protection of children's rights, details of which were contained in the report and in its replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/QAT/Q/3-4/Add.1).
7. The State's concern for families and children was not limited to legislative reform but also extended to institutional and policy initiatives aimed at putting legislation into effect. In that regard, the Department of Family Matters had been created within the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs as the first line of defence for families, mothers and children in Qatar. Its functions included raising awareness about the challenges of family-related and social issues and their impact on

society, building capacity among women, acting to prevent juvenile delinquency, protecting children of unknown parents and monitoring and licensing care homes and kindergartens. The Department also had strategies catering for the elderly and persons with disabilities and it organized conferences, seminars and workshops with other government agencies.

8. Since the presentation of the previous periodic report, a number of child welfare institutions had been created. They included the Qatar Foundation for Social Action which, in the light of the Qatar National Vision 2030, monitored and supported the work of civil society organizations such as the Qatar Foundation for Protection and Social Rehabilitation, the Qatar Orphans Foundation, the Qatar Foundation for the Care of the Elderly and the Shafallah Centre for Children with Special Needs. Act No. 15 of 2016 had increased safeguards for breastfeeding mothers, extended maternity leave and made provision for children with disabilities. Moreover, in March 2017, the Council of Ministers had approved the creation of a committee to draw up a national human rights action plan and a committee to combat human trafficking. The 2016 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had praised Qatar for its social, economic and environmental advances and ranked it first among Arab States and thirty-third in the world in terms of human development.

9. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** (Country Rapporteur) said that Qatar was to be commended for the progress it had made in its implementation of the Convention. However, he was concerned by the fact that it continued to maintain its reservation to articles 2 and 14 of the Convention, particularly in the light of article 34 of the Constitution, which prohibited all forms of discrimination. Other States in which Islamic sharia was the basis of legislation had withdrawn their reservations to those articles and he wondered whether Qatar also had plans to do so. He also wished to know if it intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.

10. The Qatar National Vision 2030 was a general strategy that did not seem to have been drafted with a specific focus on children's rights. In its concluding observations on the previous periodic report (CRC/C/QAT/CO/2), the Committee had called for a comprehensive strategy covering all the rights of children under the Convention, and he wished to know if there were plans to adopt such a strategy. Qatar was one of the richest countries in the world and clearly allocated considerable resources to child rights. Nonetheless, in the absence of precise information regarding what the money was being spent on, how and with what results, he was unable to determine if it was being used in line with the Committee's general comment No. 19 on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights (CRC/C/GC/19), which required financial resources to be mobilized, allocated and spent in an accountable, effective, efficient, equitable, participatory, transparent and sustainable manner.

11. He would be interested to hear if there were any plans to establish standards regarding the social responsibility of private sector companies vis-à-vis children, in accordance with the Committee's general comment No. 16 on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights (CRC/C/GC/16). He had examined Qatari corporate social responsibility standards and had been unable to find that they made any reference to children at all.

12. Girls faced various forms of legally sanctioned discrimination, notably in inheritance rights and marriageable age, which was two years lower for them than for boys. He wished to know if the State intended to amend the Civil Code to eradicate that inequality and if it was seeking to make religious leaders and society in general more aware of the issues involved. Was the concept of equality taught in schools? Did girls have the same access to education as boys and were there plans to eliminate gender-segregated schooling? Furthermore, he would be interested to hear about any steps being taken to eliminate the stereotypes that led to de facto discrimination against children with disabilities, children born outside wedlock or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) children.

13. Although the State party had provided useful information on certain legal criteria it applied — for example, in selecting appropriate foster families for orphan children — he wished to know if it intended to establish norms to ensure that children's best interests were always taken into account in decisions affecting them. Were impact assessments carried out

to determine how new legislation would affect the best interests of children and what measures were taken to ensure that the views of the child were taken into consideration?

14. Were there plans to amend the Criminal Code so that offenders would be treated as children until they reached the age of 18? Although the State party had not applied the death penalty since 2003, the Committee was deeply concerned that it remained in force and could be applied to children as young as 16. He wondered if there were plans to abolish the death penalty for any and all offences committed by children.

15. **Mr. Pedernera Reyna** (Country Rapporteur) said that he wished to know exactly what status the Convention had in domestic law and whether it could be invoked directly before national courts. Could the delegation clarify when the proposed Children's Bill would be enacted and provide further information about the changes it would bring to existing legislation, also in the light of the Committee's concluding observations on the previous periodic report? Could it tell the Committee when the Government intended to ratify the remaining human rights treaties?

16. Members had been pleased to hear about the establishment of the National Human Rights Committee and would be interested to learn how many complaints regarding violations of children's rights it had received and how they had been resolved, particularly since the creation in 2010 of the Unit for the Rights of Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities. He would appreciate more information about the staffing and budget of the Unit and the obstacles it faced in carrying out its duties.

17. He wished to know how the human rights groups in schools were formed, how children learned about them and were able to participate in them and what resources they had. Although the issue of children's privacy had not been raised in the Committee's previous concluding observations, he wished to thank the State party for the information it had provided in that regard and would be interested to hear in what ways the privacy of Qatari children was violated and what remedies were available to them. What measures were in place to ensure that children could access information in child-friendly language that stimulated their critical thinking?

18. The Committee welcomed recent legal reforms that had brought the definition of torture in domestic law into line with international standards and would be interested to know how many complaints the legal system had received following those reforms. Did law enforcement officials receive adequate training on torture and ill-treatment of children? Were families duly informed that torture was a crime and were they able to file complaints easily and safely? Was economic redress and psychological support available for child victims of torture?

19. The Committee would also like to hear about any steps being taken to combat domestic violence against children, particularly in the light of statistics contained in the State party's report, which seemed to show that the phenomenon was growing. Were there clear legal norms banning corporal punishment in families, schools, childcare centres and places of detention? Finally, the Committee would be interested to know how many children in Qatar were victims of sexual exploitation and abuse and to learn about any measures the State had put in place to help them.

20. **Mr. Kotrane** said that, although the State party had highlighted a number of educational and training activities for childcare professionals, it no longer seemed to be organizing large-scale meetings like its erstwhile conference on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations, which had brought together many other States in the region. Perhaps the authorities should give consideration to organizing further meetings and to raising public awareness on topics such as the Sustainable Development Goals and their impact on children.

21. The Committee remained concerned about the reservations Qatar had entered to articles 2 and 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Those provisions were of particular interest as they touched upon the rights of children, in particular their right to acquire nationality from either of their parents. Were there any plans to withdraw the reservations to that Convention and to other international treaties with provisions affecting children?

22. Although the issue of freedom of thought, conscience and religion had been raised in previous interactive dialogues, the Committee remained concerned that the State party's reservations to articles 2 and 14 of the Convention were still in place. He wished to know what measures the authorities were taking to prevent all discrimination on the basis of conscience or belief and to promote tolerance and dialogue between religions in society. Given the large numbers of migrant workers, there were many children of foreign descent in Qatar and he sought assurances that they were allowed to practise their religion freely in places of worship and that they did not face discrimination in regard to school textbooks.

23. **Ms. Sandberg** said that she understood that children born to Qatari women were able to acquire nationality by some means but that their right was not automatic as it was in the case of children born to Qatari men. She wished to know if any steps had been taken to ensure equality in that regard, as the Committee had recommended in its previous concluding observations. The State party's report did not appear to contain any information about awareness-raising among parents and the general public on the subject of child abuse and neglect, including domestic violence and sexual violence, and she would appreciate any clarification the delegation could provide about measures being taken in that area.

The meeting was suspended at 4 p.m. and resumed at 4.25 p.m.

24. **Mr. Al-Hamadi** (Qatar) said that Qatar's practice had been to enter general reservations out of a sense of caution. However, some reservations had been withdrawn following review, as had happened with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The reservations to articles 2 and 14 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child were periodically reviewed and could be withdrawn once it had been determined that there was no question of conflict with the Constitution or the law.

25. **Ms. Al-Khulaifi** (Qatar) said that the Qatar National Vision 2030 aimed to build a society rooted in social justice and to protect fundamental freedoms while also upholding traditional social and religious values and ensuring equality of opportunity. The National Development Strategies for 2011-2016 and for 2017-2022, by which the Vision was being implemented, took account of the best interests of children and sought to ensure that they were able to lead dignified lives.

26. In fact, children were the focus of initiatives in all sectors of activity, including social development, the economy and the environment. Such an approach enabled Qatar to formulate policies to support children of all ages, improving their individual well-being and the nation's human capital. Each separate sector had its own implementation plan and mechanisms existed to gauge the progress of the National Development Strategies as a whole.

27. Providing children with appropriate care and nutrition was a cornerstone of human development. Accordingly, Qatar invested in numerous programmes to promote the well-being of children in line with the Convention. The Government was responsible for the funding of health care and education. In fact, in 2014, 11 per cent of government expenditure had been allocated to health care and 7.6 per cent to education.

28. **Mr. Al-Hamadi** (Qatar) said that health care and education were provided free of charge to citizens and residents alike. Businesses that employed foreign workers were required to provide them and their families with health insurance and education vouchers.

29. **Ms. Al Abdullah** (Qatar) said that cases involving children were handled by a special prosecutor's office in which the majority of the prosecutors were women, and were heard before juvenile courts. There were no special children's prisons but there were three separate homes that were staffed by trained personnel and provided, respectively, observation, care and guidance.

30. **Mr. Al-Saad** (Qatar) said that the Family Act set the minimum age of marriage at 18 for boys. For girls the age was 16, but marriage was subject to the approval of the guardian, the consent of both parties and court authorization. Statistics showed that there was no marriage of minor girls in the State party, and indeed girls were protected by law from forced marriage. The Family Act stipulated that both parties must be legally

empowered to conclude a contract of marriage; it also regulated the legal conditions for guardians' approval of the marriage and the legal status of witnesses.

31. The regulations on inheritance were set forth in the Family Act, and were in accordance with sharia law. A sole female heir would receive half of the inheritance. Two or more female heirs would receive two thirds of the inheritance provided there was no male heir, but any male heir would receive twice the amount received by each female heir.

32. **Ms. Hassan** (Qatar) said that the best interests of the child was the supreme principle applied in all relevant legislation. Under the Family Act, fathers were responsible for the protection of their children, boys until they began work, girls until they married. The State was responsible for the upkeep of children whose parents were not known. The Act also made provision for the maintenance of women and children in the event of separation: the court made a determination on maintenance such as to guarantee the best interests of the child.

33. The Family Act covered all aspects of care in the best interests of the child, guaranteeing an appropriate family environment. Care of the children was the responsibility of both parents, and of the mother in the event of separation, although the court had discretion in the awarding of custody depending on the circumstances. The court could also set the level of maintenance, including a rent allocation or an alternative award where the woman lived with her family.

34. The law regulated visiting rights in accordance with the child's best interests. The father's rights were guaranteed and could be agreed in an amicable settlement between the parents or in accordance with the law. The administration of minors' estates was regulated by the General Authority for Minors' Affairs, established under the Trusteeship of Minors' Assets Act (Act No. 40 of 2004). If the relevant provisions were prejudicial to the child, they could be modified by the court at the family's request, and following a hearing. The child's property could be used only subject to a court order. At the age of 16 the child could be given control of the estate but must account for the administration thereof.

35. **Ms. Al Abdullah** (Qatar) said that the General Authority for Minors' Affairs was responsible for protecting children's rights, including their material and property rights and for ensuring that they were properly housed if they had no legal guardian. The Authority guaranteed children's social and economic rights and administered their assets.

36. **Mr. Al-Dosari** (Qatar) said that the Nationality Act prohibited dual nationality; a Qatari woman married to a non-Qatari man could transmit her nationality to the children. The National Human Rights Committee and the Human Rights Department of the Ministry of the Interior were permitted to inspect prisons at any time without prior authorization.

37. **Mr. Aboulenein** (Qatar) said that there had been no cases of the death penalty being imposed on persons under the age of 18. Minors were not liable to the death penalty or to life imprisonment. A child under the age of 16 who committed a crime could be liable to a maximum of 10 years' imprisonment; in one case a prison term of 3 years had been imposed. Between the ages of 14 and 16 special measures, which could include sporting activities, might be ordered. Special measures might be prescribed even for young people over the age of 18, to be carried out in, for example, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs institutions, which could provide a protective environment. Cases involving juveniles were by law heard in closed session; the children were not obliged to attend but could be represented by their parents.

38. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said that the delegation's reply was not consistent with paragraph 71 of the Government's written replies to the list of issues, which stated that children over 16 years of age were liable to the death penalty, imprisonment with hard labour or flogging.

39. **Mr. Kotrane** said that, in view of the delegation's reply, the Committee would need to review the situation if it was to be able to make constructive recommendations.

40. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi**, noting that, according to the State party's report, the National Human Rights Committee was readily accessible, including to children, said that she would be interested to know how many complaints had been received from children and of what

kind, how those complaints had been submitted, whether confidentiality was guaranteed, and what action had been taken on the complaints and with what results.

41. **Ms. Al-Sowaidi** (Qatar) said that the National Human Rights Committee was complemented by the Qatari Foundation for Social Action, which among other things helped to raise public awareness of human rights. The Foundation engaged in capacity-building and empowered people by helping them learn how to articulate their needs and defend them. The National Human Rights Committee, too, actively tried to raise awareness of its role and make itself known through media campaigns, booklets and posters. From its inception it had made efforts to be accessible to all, and particularly to marginalized groups such as children, women and persons with disabilities. Complaints could be submitted by telephone hotline 24 hours a day every day, or by fax or email, or in person, either directly or on another person's behalf.

42. **Mr. Al-Saad** (Qatar) said that efforts were under way to see that the Children's Rights Bill was adopted. The Bill defined a child as "any person under the age of 18".

43. **Ms. Al-Sulaiti** (Qatar) said that all public schools in Qatar had student councils comprising one representative per class, which sought to promote the principles of democracy, tolerance, integrity and respect for others. They also helped introduce students to international instruments, children's and women's rights and human rights in general. There was a special procedure for nominating and electing representatives, administered in each school by a committee of teachers, social workers and parents. Candidates put forward their electoral platform and voting was conducted electronically.

44. Qatar had adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and had embarked upon measures to promote them. In schools and other educational institutions, promotional activities were being carried out by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, along with institutions such as the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. As part of the national strategy, the Sustainable Development Goals were to be incorporated into school curricula. A committee had been formed to develop a plan of action on Goal 4, on quality education for all, paying special attention to marginalized groups. Awareness-raising had first targeted university officials and meetings with students were the next step.

45. There was a clear policy on violence in schools. Corporal punishment was totally prohibited. All schools had a discipline committee, and emphasis was placed on preventive measures, starting with a warning and a reprimand to children who broke the rules. Social workers and teachers were given guidance on how to deal with students and workshops on child behaviour were organized. Penalties for the use of corporal punishment in schools varied according to the seriousness of the offence but could include a police report or dismissal.

46. **Ms. Hassan** (Qatar) said that numerous constitutional and legal measures prevented domestic and sexual violence against children. Under article 22 of the Constitution, children and young people were protected by the State from physical and psychological abuse, while article 68 stipulated that instruments duly ratified by the State, such as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, had the force of law. Under the Juvenile Act (Act No. 1 of 1994), anyone placing a juvenile at risk of committing drug offences, for example, was liable to between 6 months' and 3 years' imprisonment or a fine of up to 3,000 riyals, or both if the perpetrator used force or threats or was a guardian or other person with authority over the juvenile. Anyone having sexual intercourse with a female or a male whom they knew to be under the age of 16 at the time was liable to life imprisonment. A penalty of between 1 and 5 years' imprisonment could be imposed on anyone who induced a female to engage in prostitution and an aggravated penalty of 15 years' imprisonment applied where the victim was under 16 years of age.

47. **Ms. Al-Sulaiti** (Qatar) said that, with regard to corporate social responsibility, several projects for children had been launched or were being sponsored by companies in Qatar. In cooperation with various children's centres and centres for persons with disabilities and the Ministries of the Environment and Labour and Social Affairs, for example, one company had released a smartphone application mapping facilities that

offered full access to children with disabilities. Booklets in Braille were also available. Other initiatives included an educational research project for school students that sought to forge links across various disciplines including science, sport, literature and social services, and the Qatar National Bank contributed to the development of education by means of an annual research fair open to students from all schools, and offered an award for scientific excellence.

48. **Mr. Pedernera Reyna** said that the Committee welcomed the Human Resources Management Act which instituted maternity leave and granted two hours' breastfeeding time for one year from the end of maternity leave. He would like to know whether the Act applied to all women regardless of nationality. With regard to children deprived of a family environment, he would like to know how many children found themselves in that situation and what policies on care were in place to prevent them being placed in institutions.

49. The Committee was particularly concerned about the situation of pregnant women and women with children who were placed in detention because they were unmarried. He would appreciate receiving statistical data on the number of children born or being held in the foreign women's deportation centre, disaggregated by age, sex, origin and detention conditions. He would also like to know whether children being held in immigrant centres had access to legal assistance and could challenge the legality of their deprivation of liberty. He wondered why pregnant mothers and mothers with children were imprisoned rather than being sent to places where they could obtain care, such as shelters, and why detention continued even in cases where the detained immigrant wished to return to their place of origin.

50. The Committee reiterated its previous concern that the minimum age of criminal responsibility was still set at 7. It was also concerned at the fact that it was legally possible to order penalties such as life imprisonment, forced labour and flogging for adolescents aged 16 to 17, and that they were treated as adults in the criminal justice system.

51. Accordingly, the Committee would like to know what steps had been taken to apply its previous recommendations. In particular it would be interested to know what obstacles prevented the raising of the age of criminal responsibility, in accordance with the Committee's general comment No. 10, on children's rights in juvenile justice; whether child defendants were granted adequate legal assistance so as to guarantee them a defence and due process; and whether detention centres in which children were not held separately from adults either in pretrial detention or following conviction had been closed down. He would like to know what measures had been taken to avoid judicial proceedings in criminal cases involving child offenders and to strengthen the policy of non-custodial penalties in such cases and he would appreciate receiving statistics from the delegation regarding the application of such penalties as compared with the use of detention. He also wished to know why the State party had not yet abolished the legal distinction that prevented adolescents aged 16 to 17 from obtaining the same legal protection as children aged under 16.

52. Referring to the Committee's previous concluding observations on the State party's initial report on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC/C/OPAC/QAT/CO/1), he said that he would like to know whether the State party had incorporated into its national strategy consideration of the provisions of the Optional Protocol; what mechanisms it had put in place to identify refugee children who might have been recruited or used in hostilities prior to their arrival in Qatar; and whether such children were provided with multidisciplinary assistance for their physical and psychological recovery and their social reintegration.

53. He would also like to know what steps the State party had taken to ensure that children were returned to their country of origin only when the return was in their best interests, and to systematically gather disaggregated data on child refugees, asylum seekers and migrants within the State party's jurisdiction who might have been involved in hostilities abroad.

54. With respect to violations of the provisions of the Optional Protocol, had the State party established extraterritorial jurisdiction for such crimes when committed by or against a person who was a citizen of or had other links with the State party? What steps had the

State party taken to ensure that military codes, manuals and other military directives were in accordance with the provisions and the spirit of the Optional Protocol?

55. Lastly, he asked whether the State party had taken steps to accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees in order to improve the protection of refugee children who might have been recruited and involved in armed conflict.

56. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said that the State party was to be commended for its observance of the principle of inclusion of children with disabilities and for the action it had taken on behalf of such children. Nevertheless he noted that, according to the State party's written replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/QAT/Q/3-4/Add.1), the number of children with disabilities attending regular inclusive schools was just over 1,000 whereas the number in special centres was almost 10,000. Moreover the number of children with disabilities who were in institutions had doubled between 2015 and 2016. In light of that, he wished to know what measures the State party was taking to deinstitutionalize children with disabilities, either by providing support to their families or by seeking alternative solutions; to prevent stigmatization, particularly in respect of intellectual and psychosocial disabilities; to enable children with disabilities to be heard when decisions concerning them were to be taken; to ensure that all children with disabilities of any kind could attend ordinary schools in which they could obtain quality inclusive education; and to adapt the school system to take account of all the differences to be found among all children living in Qatar.

57. Early marriage of girls clearly still existed in the State party, even if, as the report stated, the rate did not exceed 1 per cent. The State party did not define "early marriage"; the marriageable age of girls was 16 but it was not clear whether marriage at that age was considered "early". He would be grateful if the delegation could say how the State party defined child marriage, what campaigns had been conducted to raise awareness of the harmful consequences of the practice, and how religious and social leaders were being persuaded to assist in such campaigns.

58. Referring to the Committee's general comment No. 18 on harmful practices, issued jointly with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, he said that he would be interested to know whether the State party was considering making polygamy illegal. He would also like to know what specific measures had been taken in relation to HIV/AIDS prevention, notably in schools and in terms of raising awareness of safe practices to avoid infection.

59. With regard to child asylum seekers and refugees, he recognized the contribution made by the State party to international cooperation by funding assistance for large numbers of refugees, most notably Syrians, in several countries. However, the State party maintained that there were no refugee children in Qatar, only children of migrant workers. He would therefore be interested to know whether that meant that no one had ever sought asylum in the State party, or that no unaccompanied child had ever arrived at the border seeking asylum, or that the State party denied entry to asylum seekers. He would like to know what procedure was applied when a person from a country in conflict sought entry to Qatar and whether, if a child from such a country entered Qatar as the child of a migrant worker, any attempt was made to establish whether the child had been psychologically affected by the conflict and whether any rehabilitation measures were taken.

60. As to the economic exploitation of children, he would be interested to learn of any specific prevention and inspection measures that were in place, particularly in respect of domestic work: what penalties applied to the employment of a child as a domestic worker, for example, and how many complaints of exploitation of that kind had been received in recent years?

61. As to children who were victims of crimes, he would like to know what measures were in place to prevent revictimization in the course of proceedings. Was it possible to use pre-constituted evidence so that child victims were not obliged to repeat their testimony at all stages? How did the State party guard against child victims or witnesses coming into contact, even visual contact, with the accused? As to rehabilitation of child victims and witnesses, over and above the training courses for those working with such children, as

mentioned in the report, he would like to know what specific rehabilitation measures were in place for the children themselves.

62. Since the dialogue with the State party on the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2006, the Committee had repeatedly requested an in-depth study on all the issues covered by the Optional Protocol, as well as systematic compilation of data, covering all children under the age of 18 and disaggregated by sex and by those groups of children in need of special protection. He wished to know whether such a study had been carried out and what conclusions had been reached. What was the evidentiary basis for the action described in the State party's report? Lastly, he enquired whether plans had been drawn up to prevent offences under the Optional Protocol being committed in the context of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, which Qatar was to host.

63. **Ms. Khazova** said that she would be interested to learn more about the guardianship system of *kafalah*. She wondered what the procedure was for assigning a guardian or *kafil* to a given child: were the courts involved and was the child's opinion taken into account? She wished to know how the placement was subsequently monitored and whether the child could remain in contact with their biological family or even return to their family should a *kafalah* placement no longer be justified.

64. She asked whether, if the guardian changed religion, the child would be placed elsewhere or be able to stay in the same family. She wondered what would happen to the child if the family went abroad and changed religion there: would the child be taken away from the family once they returned to Qatar?

65. Noting that children in *kafalah* had no right to inherit on the guardian's death, she asked whether there was any mechanism whereby the child's property rights could be balanced with those of the guardian's biological children. Was it possible to inherit from the child's own biological family?

66. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes**, noting that the State party aimed to increase the rate of breastfeeding from 12 per cent to 25 per cent, asked what specific steps it was taking to ensure the success of that plan and what results had been achieved to date. He would like to know what measures were in place in hospitals to enable women to feed their newborn babies immediately after birth. Noting that, according to the State party's written replies, breastfeeding by women in prison was encouraged, he wondered what percentage of inmates breastfed their children regularly. He asked whether the State party had ratified or intended to ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), and whether it had incorporated into its legislation the standards set forth in the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

67. The study on obesity among children referred to in paragraph 309 of the State party's report had revealed that more than half the sample suffered from malnutrition. He would like to know what specific action had been taken to reverse that trend and with what results. He also wished to know how the State party approached adolescent sexual and reproductive health; was the subject covered in the school curriculum?

68. Referring to the Committee's general comment No. 15, on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, he said that he would be interested to know what care was available to adolescents with mental health problems and what protocols were applied in decisions as to internment, hospitalization or psychosocial alternatives in such cases. He also wondered whether schools regularly provided information on the dangers of drug abuse.

69. Lastly, he asked whether the State party intended to decriminalize abortion in all circumstances.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.