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**Promotion et protection de tous les droits de l'homme,  
civils, politiques, économiques, sociaux et culturels,  
y compris le droit au développement**

## Visite au Qatar

### Rapport de la Rapporteuse spéciale sur le droit à l'éducation\* \*\*

#### Résumé

La Rapporteuse spéciale sur le droit à l'éducation, Koumbou Boly Barry, s'est rendue au Qatar du 8 au 16 décembre 2019. L'objectif de sa visite était de recueillir des informations à la source sur l'effectivité du droit à une éducation gratuite, de qualité et inclusive pour tous, de nouer un dialogue à ce sujet avec le Gouvernement et les autres parties prenantes et de leur faire des recommandations pertinentes.

La Rapporteuse spéciale félicite le Qatar de la priorité qu'il a accordée à la mise en place d'une éducation de qualité pour tous, et des nombreuses mesures et programmes adoptés dans ce sens. Elle a particulièrement apprécié la volonté manifestée par de nombreuses parties prenantes « de mettre en place un système d'éducation moderne de classe internationale qui offre aux élèves un enseignement de premier ordre, comparable à celui offert partout dans le monde », dans le cadre de la Vision nationale 2030. Elle se félicite également du rôle important joué par le Qatar dans la coopération régionale et internationale en vue de promouvoir le droit à l'éducation pour tous. Le travail crucial effectué par la fondation Education Above All et la Fondation du Qatar pour l'éducation, la science et le développement communautaire fait une réelle différence pour de nombreuses personnes au Qatar et à l'étranger.

Néanmoins, la Rapporteuse spéciale a recensé un certain nombre de défis à relever, compte tenu de la récente adhésion de l'État aux deux pactes internationaux relatifs aux droits de l'homme. Bien qu'elle félicite le Qatar pour le maintien et la valorisation de ses écoles publiques, la Rapporteuse spéciale s'inquiète de ce qui semble être une dépendance excessive et croissante vis-à-vis du secteur privé, notamment en ce qui concerne l'éducation des enfants des travailleurs migrants. En outre, l'éducation n'est pas gratuite pour une très grande proportion des enfants résidant au Qatar, en particulier les enfants non qatariens, en violation des dispositions du droit international des droits de l'homme.

\* Le résumé du présent rapport est distribué dans toutes les langues officielles. Le corps du rapport, annexé au résumé, est distribué dans la langue de l'original et en arabe seulement.

\*\* Le présent rapport a été présenté après la date limite afin que des renseignements sur les faits les plus récents puissent y figurer.



## Annexe

### Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education on her visit to Qatar

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## **I. Introduction**

1. The Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Koumbou Boly Barry, carried out an official visit to Qatar from 8 to 16 December 2019, at the invitation of the Government.
2. During the visit, the Special Rapporteur met with senior government officials, in particular the Minister of Education and Higher Education and the Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs. She spoke with officials from various ministries and institutions, including foundations such as the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development and Education Above All, as well as representatives of the Central Municipal Council. She also met with the National Human Rights Committee – the national human rights institution, and with bilateral and multilateral institutions, including United Nations specialized agencies.
3. In Doha and Al Wakrah, the Special Rapporteur visited primary, preparatory and secondary schools for girls and boys, in the public and the private sectors. She also visited the First Ihsaan Charity School, and held meetings at Qatar University and the College of the North Atlantic. This allowed the Special Rapporteur to discuss issues with pupils, teachers, school principals, administrative staff, teacher trainers and academics.
4. The Special Rapporteur expresses her gratitude to the Government for its invitation and the full cooperation extended throughout the visit. She appreciates having received useful comments on her end of visit statement from the Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, which functions within the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. She thanks all stakeholders for their insights, time and availability.

## **II. General context**

### **A. International legal framework and international cooperation**

#### **1. International legal framework**

5. Qatar must be congratulated for the significant progress it has made in adhering to international human rights standards. Major steps include the gradual ratification of many international human rights instruments, particularly the accession in 2018 to the two International Covenants on Human Rights; the partial and progressive lifting of problematic reservations; the recent invitation to many special procedures of the Human Rights Council to visit the country; the continued dialogue established with treaty bodies; and the growing presence of United Nations specialized agencies in the country. Qatar also demonstrates a strong commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 4 – to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
6. Qatar is a party to a number of international human rights instruments that are key to the promotion and protection of the right to education for all, particularly the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Special Rapporteur was pleased to learn that the Government is considering adhering to the Convention against Discrimination in Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of 1960.
7. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the withdrawal by Qatar of the general reservations it initially made to international human rights instruments concerning any provision incompatible with Islamic law. Nevertheless, she is concerned that some of the remaining reservations and statements might have a negative impact on the enjoyment of the right to education. She understands that the withdrawal of reservations is accompanied

by a process of national legislative review, and that a commission has been appointed to undertake such a review following the State's accession in 2018 to the two International Covenants on Human Rights.

8. The Special Rapporteur particularly highlights the statement on article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, relating to the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment, according to which Qatar shall interpret the term "punishment" in accordance with the applicable legislation of Qatar and the Islamic sharia. While she received assurances from several stakeholders that corporal punishment was not tolerated in schools, she underlines that such a statement, together with the reservations to articles 1 and 16 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, impede the establishment of a coherent legal framework on the matter.

9. Furthermore, the statements Qatar made on article 8 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights concerning the right to form and join trade unions are too broad. These provisions are crucial to enable the full participation of teachers in all discussions concerning the education system, their rights, status and conditions of work.

10. The numerous reservations to and statements on the principle of equality between men and women can have a significant impact on the rights of girls and women in the area of education, including when it comes to the role they are assigned in society through education.

11. Reservations to and statements on provisions protecting the rights to freedom of religion and belief (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 18, and Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 14) impede the implementation of an important dimension of the right to education – the liberty of parents to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

## **2. International cooperation**

12. The Special Rapporteur commends the significant commitment of Qatar and its foundations to regional and international cooperation in the field of education. The crucial work of the Education Above All foundation and the Qatar Foundation is making a real difference for many people.

13. The Special Rapporteur notes, for example, Education Above All programmes such as Educate a Child, which provides education opportunities to about 7.5 million out-of-school children across the world, with commitments to reach 10.4 million children; Al Fakhoora, which promotes the right to education for marginalized young people in conflict and post-conflict States; Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict; and Reach Out to Asia.

14. She also welcomes initiatives such as the World Innovation Summit for Education, established by the Qatar Foundation in 2009. With a biennial international summit held in Doha and a range of year-round initiatives, the objective of the World Innovation Summit for Education is to investigate and promote new approaches to address pressing global education challenges.

15. The Government should be commended on its willingness to welcome and find solutions for the 531 Qatari students who, during the diplomatic crisis in the region, had to abandon their studies in some neighbouring countries and return home. However, she invites the Government to continue its efforts, particularly by ensuring the validation of the diplomas of students who have continued their education through distance learning.

## **B. National legal and political framework**

16. The Special Rapporteur appreciates the strong emphasis placed on the right to education as a human right at the highest levels of the State, but also at the school level. Many legislative, regulatory, programmatic and financial measures have been adopted, and are to be acknowledged and commended.

17. According to article 25 of the Constitution, education is one of the basic pillars of social progress, which the State should ensure, foster and endeavour to spread. Article 49 states that all citizens have the right to education and that the State should endeavour to make general education compulsory and free of charge, in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations of the State. In accordance with Law No. 25 of 2001 on compulsory education, education is compulsory and free for all children in primary and secondary school or up to the age of 18 years.

18. The National Vision 2030, adopted in 2008, aims to transform Qatar into an advanced country by 2030, capable of sustaining its own development and providing for a high standard of living for all of its people for generations to come. The Vision seeks a response to the challenges currently faced by Qatar, including those posed by the greater freedoms and wider choices that accompany economic and social progress to the deep-rooted social values that are highly cherished by Qatari society.

19. In the area of education, under the human development pillar (one of the four pillars of the Vision), Qatar aims to build a modern world-class education system that provides students with a first-rate education, comparable to that offered anywhere in the world. The objective is to provide citizens with excellent training and opportunities to develop to their full potential, preparing them for success in a changing world with increasingly complex technical requirements. The system also seeks to encourage analytical and critical thinking, as well as creativity and innovation, to promote social cohesion and respect for Qatari society's values and heritage, and to advocate for constructive interaction with other nations. Furthermore, according to the Vision, Qatar will aspire to be an active centre in the fields of scientific research and intellectual activity. The Special Rapporteur congratulates Qatar for having developed those objectives in its National Development Strategies 2011–2016 and 2018–2022, based on efforts to genuinely identify and address challenges.<sup>1</sup>

20. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the ongoing preparation of a national human rights plan.

## C. School system in the national context

### 1. Structure

21. Qatar hosts an exceptionally large migrant population; some estimates put it at 90 per cent of the total population. Consequently, the country has encouraged the development of a wide variety of so-called community or private international schools in order to adapt to the specific and diverse needs of learners. This leads to a great diversity of curricula and pedagogical approaches, which should be considered as an important and positive aspect of the educational system of Qatar.

22. However, a strong distinction is made between Qataris and non-Qataris. In addition, other distinctions are made, on the one hand between the various nationalities of migrants according to their origin (Arab and non-Arab) and language, and also their economic status, and on the other hand between men and women.

23. The education system in Qatar consists of:

(a) Public schools that provide free education for Qatari children and for non-Qataris whose parents are employed in the public service. Non-Qatari children of parents employed in the private sector also have access to public schools, within the limits of available places and provided they pay modest tuition fees. Non-Qatari children in public schools seem for the most part to be Arabic-speaking. Schools are either for girls or boys, and the curriculum is mainly in Arabic. According to statistics provided by the Government, 45.5 per cent of students enrolled in public schools for the academic year 2019/20 were of 95 foreign nationalities;

(b) Private “community schools” established under the sponsorship of embassies, particularly those with large migrant communities in Qatar. The operation of these not-for-

<sup>1</sup> Qatar, Second National Development Strategy (2018–2022), chap. II.

profit schools, established with significant support from the Government of Qatar, is funded by school fees alone. These are often relatively low compared to other private or international schools, although some may be rather high. These schools can have varying degrees of co-education and welcome other nationalities, including Qataris, although they attend in small numbers. The curriculum is that of the country of origin, the general approach being that the children, like their parents, are not destined to remain in the country for a long period of time, and must be able to reintegrate in the school system in their country on their return;

(c) International private, for-profit or not-for-profit schools, which can have very high tuition fees. The curriculum is often international, based for example on the International Baccalaureate. These schools accommodate students of all nationalities, including Qataris, in varying proportions.

24. The distinctions between these types of schools are not always clear. For example, some private schools consider themselves as community schools because they mainly welcome children from one community, teach the curriculum of that community's country of origin, and have a relationship with an embassy but are not sponsored by it. There are also schools of excellence, from many other countries, that have been invited to settle in Qatar under the Outstanding School Initiative and participate in the educational voucher programme.<sup>2</sup>

25. The Qatar Foundation has also established a number of schools, which are not-for-profit, demand tuition fees and operate under the Ministry of Education. These schools are located in Education City in Doha, but also in other towns in the country. Their aim is to foster critical spirit and initiative, and nurture students' own values and openness to those of others. The Qatar Foundation and Education City thus crucially contribute to the education system in Qatar, significantly improving its quality, particularly through the development of new teaching methods, an emphasis on teacher training, cooperation with universities and sharing experience and best practice with public schools.

26. In 2018, there were 307 public schools welcoming about 122,000 students, and 598 private schools welcoming about 196,000 students, about 9,000 of them in private Arab schools, 156,500 in private international schools, and 30,300 in community schools. The private sector accommodates about 60 per cent of the school population, and about 67 per cent of the school population is foreign.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Educational reforms

27. While the education system in Qatar is rather young, with the first boys' school established in Doha in 1948, tremendous progress has been achieved towards expanding schools throughout the territory and improving their quality.

28. Between 2002 and 2004, Qatar engaged in a major educational reform in order to raise student achievement. This led in particular to the creation of a system of "independent schools". Public schools remained under the oversight of the Government, with modified governance, as private local and international organizations were encouraged to operate and manage them within the framework of four principles: autonomy of schools in their hiring policies, curriculum, professional development, pedagogy and internal policies; variety of the programmes or curriculum; choice of parents; and accountability of schools for student outcomes. Curriculum standards had to be implemented by schools with a corresponding set of national assessments at each grade level.<sup>4</sup>

29. The reform faced many difficulties. Teachers felt quickly overwhelmed as they did not have the skills to develop curriculum materials and did not receive proper training to that end. Schools directors and pedagogical teams needed advice and professional training, and directors were overloaded by administrative tasks diverting them away from the core of

<sup>2</sup> See [www.edu.gov.qa/en/Pages/pvschoolsdefault.aspx](http://www.edu.gov.qa/en/Pages/pvschoolsdefault.aspx).

<sup>3</sup> Qatar, Department of Educational Policy and Research, Statistics Section, "Statistical Bulletin of Education November 2018", pp. 7 and 24–25.

<sup>4</sup> Ramzi Nasser, "Qatar's educational reform past and future: challenges in teacher development", *Open Review of Educational Research*, vol. 4, No. 1 (2017).

their professional activity. Some commercial entities managing schools reportedly had no specific expertise in the area of education and were not able to properly manage schools. The reform led to a de facto system of privately managed schools of uneven quality with no harmonization. Parents were dissatisfied and withdrew their children from public schools.

30. After about 10 years, the Government decided to return to the public school system, under strict governmental control, in accordance with Law No. 9 of 2017 regulating governmental schools, which revoked Law No. 11 of 2006 governing local independent schools. Under the more recent law, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education has taken over responsibility for regulating the public schools and appointing their administrative and academic staff.

31. The fact that the Government has assumed more control of these schools has made it possible to ensure that the system is more coherent and that it meets parents' expectations. The Special Rapporteur received numerous reports indicating that the supervision and advice provided by the Government was welcomed by school staff.

32. Nevertheless, although the Special Rapporteur was assured that the autonomy of schools remained a respected principle, particularly with regard to the way in which the standard curriculum is implemented, she is of the view that teachers need greater academic freedom. She learned, for example, that teachers can use only one textbook for each subject. The choice of textbook for each subject is reviewed each year, taking into consideration the views expressed by schools and teachers. Although teachers can use supplementary sources, including e-learning resources, these resources must be selected in consultation with or by the coordinator of the subject. External sources and books available at the school library are reviewed to ensure that they are compatible with religious and cultural values.

33. The Special Rapporteur also notes what appears to be a very strict and centralized system of authorization for schools and teachers to organize activities and attend events outside schools. Schools have to choose from a list of about 10 social, cultural or scientific events selected by the Ministry of Education, all linked to the curriculum. When school staff want to attend an event that is not on the list, they must request authorization from the Ministry of Education. That said, no specific refusal was reported to the Special Rapporteur.

34. Although the reform of the early 2000s establishing independent public schools had to be stopped, it did introduce many positive elements, according to many stakeholders. The Special Rapporteur heard reports of improvements in terms of standardization of curricula, new teaching programmes and handbooks, new accreditation criteria for teachers and school directors, and better organization of teachers' professional training. Education stakeholders in Qatar have engaged in continuous reflection on the functioning, challenges and successes of the school system. The Special Rapporteur welcomes their efforts to find solutions that are adapted to the local context, while interacting with experts from all backgrounds.

### **3. Role of the private sector**

35. While maintaining the public school system, the Government has provided opportunities for the private sector to play a role in the educational system, in accordance with Law No. 23 of 2015 regulating private schools. Under that law, private schools cannot operate without a licence or make any changes to their licence without prior approval from the competent authority in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Any materials, resources and curricula that do not meet formal education standards may be withdrawn or ordered to be changed. In addition, schools are prohibited from receiving funding without the approval of the competent authority.

36. According to many testimonies received during the Special Rapporteur's visit, the Government exercises scrutiny over the private sector, supervising programmes, admission criteria and policies and tuition fees (which may not be raised without authorization), clearing handbooks and controlling school venues. Many stakeholders, particularly those from community schools, informed the Special Rapporteur that the Government exercised a great deal of quality control and provided advice with much benevolence. Audits were

generally reported to be fair and reasonable, the Ministry of Education being generally very supportive.

37. The Special Rapporteur underlines that allowing the private sector to engage in the education sector enables the country to have a wider diversity of schools and to adapt better to parents' choices, in accordance with article 13 (3) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Nevertheless, she recalls that private educational institutions should not supplant or replace public education, but supplement it in a way that is conducive to the realization of the right to education for all, with due regard for cultural diversity. Furthermore, ensuring respect for parents' or guardians' choices should not lead to or maintain disparities of educational opportunity or outcomes for some groups in society that nullify or impair the enjoyment of the rights to equality and non-discrimination, such as a segregated education system. It should not adversely affect or create a foreseeable risk of adversely affecting the capacity of the State to realize the right to free, quality public education.<sup>5</sup>

38. Several elements indicate that some adjustments need to be made in Qatar in this regard. The Special Rapporteur is particularly concerned at reports that the limited availability of places in public schools for non-Qataris and in community schools has resulted in an exponential growth of the for-profit private sector, not always in line with the aspirations of parents and learners (see below).

39. Students who are eligible for public education in State schools may benefit from the Ministry of Education's educational voucher programme, covering tuition fees and school expenses in selected private schools up to a maximum of 28,000 riyals per year, costs in excess of that amount remaining the responsibility of parents. Concern has been expressed that this reform might adversely affect the public sector.

### III. Specific challenges relating to the right to education in Qatar

40. The Education and Training Sector Strategy, which aims to implement the National Vision 2030 in the area of education, identifies many challenges. Despite the progress that has been made, for example, regarding the introduction of the Internet in schools and increases in enrolment rates,<sup>6</sup> and thanks to the deployment of policies to improve the quality of education and teacher training, much remains to be done.

41. As explained in chapter II of the second National Development Strategy (2018–2022) and by several of the Special Rapporteur's interlocutors, the challenges include performance that is not up to expectations, as reflected in students' scores in international exams; low rates of transition from secondary to post-secondary education, especially for males; a lack of harmonization between the qualifications of university and college graduates and the needs of the labour market; difficulties ensuring the recruitment of Qataris in the private sector and attracting and retaining Qatari teachers at post-secondary education level; difficulties ensuring child-centred education with modern teaching methods; the quality of scientific research; and a lack of disaggregated and consistent data.

42. The Special Rapporteur shares her findings on some of the challenges faced by Qatar through the lens of international human rights law. As underlined by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its general comment No. 13 (1999) on the right to education, education in all its forms and at all levels should exhibit the following interrelated and essential features: availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability (para. 6). The Special Rapporteur has the following comments relating to the first three features.

<sup>5</sup> Abidjan Principles on the human rights obligations of States to provide public education and to regulate private involvement in education, para. 48.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Klaus Schwab, ed., *The Global Competitiveness Report 2017–2018* (Geneva, World Economic Forum, 2017). See also Qatar, Planning and Statistics Authority, *Education in Qatar 2019 – Statistical Profile* (Doha, November 2019). Available at [www.psa.gov.qa/en/statistics/Statistical%20Releases/Social/Education/2019/Education\\_Statistical\\_Pro%EF%AC%811e\\_2019\\_EN.pdf](http://www.psa.gov.qa/en/statistics/Statistical%20Releases/Social/Education/2019/Education_Statistical_Pro%EF%AC%811e_2019_EN.pdf).



## A. Availability

43. While congratulating Qatar for the measures adopted to foster the establishment of numerous and various educational institutions of quality throughout the country, including at the pre-primary and tertiary levels, the Special Rapporteur stresses that a number of difficulties remain.

### **Availability of school places and the issue of waiting lists**

44. The Special Rapporteur received many reports indicating that public schools cannot accommodate all the non-Qatari students who wish to attend them. Those students are therefore obliged to attend private schools, including community schools.

45. Many community schools, as well as private schools charging modest tuition fees, lack the space and capacity to accommodate all those who would like to enrol in them, as the cheaper schools are preferred by parents. There are sometimes several hundred children's names on their waiting lists. The Government recognizes the existence of the problem, particularly for the Indian and Pakistani communities, although the Special Rapporteur was informed of similar problems for other nationalities, for example Filipinos.

46. Waiting lists may be the result of parents choosing one particular school that they feel is of a higher quality. However, the problem goes beyond this, as parents wish to send their children to less expensive schools, such as community schools, which they find are also of good quality. Telling these parents that they can either send their children to the private sector or send them back home if they cannot afford private schools is not a tolerable solution from the point of view of the right to education.

47. Many of the Special Rapporteur's interlocutors informed her of the difficulties caused by the tightening of certain fire safety regulations in schools, forcing the schools to reduce the maximum number of children on the school roll. While the security of children should be a priority, the Special Rapporteur agrees with many stakeholders that schools should be supported to establish new branches and/or operate afternoon shifts, or that entirely new schools should be created to respond to the demand of parents and learners.

48. The Special Rapporteur was pleased to receive confirmation from the Government that there were no restrictions on the operation of schools in the afternoon, although this was considered to be a last resort. Representatives of the Ministry of Education informed her that measures had been adopted to increase the capacity of schools that had low fees and provided a good education, and that a number of schools had opened new branches and investors had been encouraged to open new private schools.

49. However, while some community schools have been allowed to organize additional classes in the afternoon, sometimes on a temporary basis, others have reportedly not been allowed to do so. According to various sources, that was the case for Indian community schools, for which afternoon shifts were reportedly refused when it was assessed that the demand for private Indian schools would consequently drop significantly.

50. The Special Rapporteur was also informed that, while some communities have established community schools, others have not as that still implies exorbitant costs, despite government support. That is the case, for example, for the Nepalese community. Nevertheless, the Special Rapporteur was happy to learn that discussions were under way with that community to address the issue.

51. The Special Rapporteur is concerned that, submerged with demands from parents, some community schools, for example the cheapest Indian schools, tend to enrol children from their own community first, leaving children from other communities who do not have their own schools with no adequate solution.

### **Need to develop literacy and vocational training programmes for low-wage migrant workers**

52. Another source of concern to the Special Rapporteur relates to low-wage migrant workers, a significant proportion of whom are illiterate or have attended primary school

only. The Planning and Statistics Authority, in the *Labour Force Sample Survey 2017*, indicates that over half of the non-Qatari labour force working in the private sector have a limited skill level. About 65 per cent of men and 50 per cent of women have qualifications that are below secondary education level (pp. 13 and 15).

53. From both a strategic and a human rights perspective, the Special Rapporteur encourages the Government to provide a functional literacy programme for these people in conjunction with vocational training. Developing their vocational training would enable Qatar to train people for the professions needed for the country's continued economic development once the major construction works are complete, and to retain a part of the population already familiar with cultural practices in Qatar. Offering workers professional development opportunities in line with their aspirations and competencies, rather than their origins, would also enable Qatar to take steps to address the concerns expressed by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance following her visit in 2019, relating to the existence of a firm societal association between certain types of work and specific nationalities.<sup>7</sup>

54. Some good practices have been deployed in this regard, for example, by the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, which is responsible for installing the infrastructure for the 2022 World Cup. The Committee has reportedly set up vocational training programmes for personal development and the acquisition of new skills, thereby encouraging professional mobility.

## B. Accessibility

55. In accordance with the accessibility requirement, educational institutions and programmes should be accessible to everyone, without discrimination.

### **Economic accessibility: the right to free education**

56. The right to free education, as enshrined in article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is a crucial component of the accessibility requirement. The Special Rapporteur recalls that, in accordance with those provisions, Qatar has committed to ensure compulsory free primary education for all, and to progressively introduce free education at the secondary and tertiary levels. However, education is not free of charge for many children residing in Qatar.

57. Firstly, fees may be paid for non-Qatari children whose parents work in the private sector to attend public schools. The Special Rapporteur recognizes that those fees, described as "symbolic", are very low, amounting to QR 2,000 (about US\$ 550) per year for transportation if needed, and QR 150 (about US\$ 40) for books. However, some families find it difficult to pay such fees. The Ministry of Education may exonerate them for the fees, and in the absence of a timely response from the Ministry, some schools have decided to exonerate some families from paying book fees.

58. Secondly, the fees charged in community schools are unaffordable or difficult to afford for some families. For example, fees charged by community schools visited by the Special Rapporteur ranged from about QR 9,000 (about US\$ 2,500) to QR 75,000 per year (about US\$ 20,000). In addition, fees do not always cover expenses such as books, uniforms and transportation.

59. The Special Rapporteur recognizes and welcomes the support granted systematically by the Government to community schools, through the provision of land, school buildings, water and electricity, and exemptions from customs duties for books, for example. However, she finds it problematic that the functioning of such schools relies on fees only. That approach has a significant impact on children and their right to education. Despite the support granted by schools and communities to families who are unable to keep up with fee

<sup>7</sup> See her end of mission statement, dated 1 December 2019. Available at [www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25374&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25374&LangID=E).

payments, this is not a sustainable system. Many children of migrants find themselves in a loophole, as neither Qatar, as the host country, nor countries of origin feel obliged to ensure these children's right to free education. The Special Rapporteur, while recognizing the difficulty for the Government of anticipating needs with a fluctuating migrant population, recalls that, under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the main responsibility for the implementation of human rights remains with States on their own territories.

60. According to many testimonies, families unable to pay school fees have made the difficult choice to send their children, or the mother with her children, back to their countries of origin, which has a negative impact on the right to family life, as enshrined in article 10 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Special Rapporteur stresses that parents play a fundamental role in ensuring their children's education, and that this issue must be addressed taking into consideration the significant challenge faced by Qatar when it comes to family reunification. Migrant workers must earn a minimum of QR 10,000 in order to have the right to bring their families to Qatar, making family reunification unattainable for many of them.

61. Some international private schools also charge very high tuition fees. They are reportedly about QR 22,000 (about US\$ 6,000) a year at primary level, and while QR 35,000 (about US\$ 9,600) at secondary level is not unusual, fees may reach over QR 80,000 (about US\$ 22,000) a year.<sup>8</sup> Reportedly, there is a general demand among the population for lower private school tuition fees. The Special Rapporteur was happy to learn that discussions were under way on this issue.

62. Many migrant workers negotiate with their enterprise so that the enterprise covers education costs for their children. However, not all workers are in the same position to negotiate. The Special Rapporteur was informed that, since the diplomatic crisis between Qatar and its neighbouring countries, many companies have reduced the compensation offered to cover educational costs of children. In some schools, the proportion of students whose fees are covered by companies has reportedly diminished significantly.

63. Economic access to university also remains an issue, with average fees reportedly around QR 200,000 (about US\$ 55,000). The Special Rapporteur welcomes the fact that free access to universities is ensured for Qataris, and that a system of scholarships is in place to support non-Qataris based on their economic situation and that of their families. Universities also sometimes assist students to obtain support from charities.

#### **Out-of-school children: economic, administrative and cultural impediments to access**

64. The lack of free education in Qatar results in a number of children not attending school. The Special Rapporteur received reports of children whose parents, grandparents and even great-grandparents had resided in Qatar and had never attended school.

65. According to figures provided by the authorities, some 4,000 children were concerned, although the number might be much greater, according to other interlocutors. Provision has already been made for nearly half of them, thanks in particular to their integration in private and community schools, the creation of two free Ihsaan charity schools operating with the support of the Education Above All foundation, and the support provided to families by the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs. The two schools, one for Arabic speakers, including refugee children, and another for non-Arabic speakers, are completely free. Three more schools may be opened progressively, depending on needs. The Special Rapporteur was informed that waiting lists already existed for the Ihsaan schools, although they still needed to be reviewed at the time of her visit. In this regard, she welcomes the plan to organize afternoon shifts in the First Ihsaan school.

66. Ihsaan schools welcome children of different ages who may attend the same grade, despite their age difference. Ihsaan schools have limited provision for children with special needs. The schools have put specific programmes in place for the oldest children, to

<sup>8</sup> See [www.edarabia.com/qatar-school-fees/](http://www.edarabia.com/qatar-school-fees/).

provide them with accelerated learning before they reach the school age limit, or to enable them to integrate into ordinary schools.

67. Notably, at the time of the visit, digital school projects were planned for young people who are no longer of school age or who cannot attend school because they are caregivers at home, which is the case for girls in particular. The Special Rapporteur is concerned at reports that the Ihsaan schools host a higher number of boys than girls, with a ratio of about 8 to 5 in the First Ihsaan School, which may be a sign of discrimination against girls, particularly those aged 11 to 14, who are required to remain within their families. To address this issue, there are plans to set up a community resource centre to initiate digital learning, backed up by a school visit once or twice a week, and to take steps to convince families of the importance of the compulsory nature of education.

68. These measures are very important and should be welcomed. They have a direct and immediate impact on children's opportunities and future life paths, and represent a great relief for parents. When she visited the First Ihsaan School, the Special Rapporteur was impressed by the quality of the infrastructure, the dedication of the school team and the results that had been accomplished. The school opened in February 2019 and currently has 483 students aged between 5 and 15. Some 85 per cent of them are of Pakistani background and most of them were born in Qatar. According to the authorities, the biggest group of out-of-school children of school age is from the Pakistani community. The Special Rapporteur notes that one matter that has still to be resolved is how to ensure that free school lunches are available for children attending the Ihsaan schools, as some of them come from extremely poor families and have very little to eat.

69. The very restrictive system of residence and family reunification in Qatar is also a root cause of out-of-school children. Several interlocutors referred to the existence of an undefined number of undocumented migrants in Qatar who had lost their permit for various reasons or had arrived in Qatar on a tourist visa. According to the law, schools may only enrol children who hold a Qatari identity card or residence permit. Undocumented children therefore remain out of school, some temporarily but for several months, and some have huge difficulties regularizing their situation. Furthermore, many refugees, particularly those from the Syrian Arab Republic, reportedly do not have refugee status and cannot therefore enrol in a school. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur recalls that, in its general recommendation No. 30 (2004) on discrimination against non-citizens, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination indicated that States "must ensure that public educational institutions are open to non-citizens and children of undocumented immigrants residing in the territory" (para. 30).

70. According to reports, it is possible that some children with disabilities do not attend school owing to their parents' reluctance to send them to school. Efforts are under way to convince all parents of children with disabilities to send their children to school, bearing in mind the law on compulsory education.

71. The Special Rapporteur is also concerned that girls can no longer attend school once they are married or pregnant, although they may pursue their education through evening courses. This regulation is discriminatory and contrary to international human rights standards.

#### **Ensuring that accessibility leads to inclusiveness: children of various nationalities and social backgrounds**

72. The right to education must be understood as the right to free, but also public and inclusive education. It is important to give people, including children of migrant workers, the choice of having access to either public or private schools, depending on their background, aspirations and possibilities.

73. The Special Rapporteur understands the considerations of Qatar in its particular context. While a large proportion of foreigners stay in Qatar only temporarily, and want their children to receive an education that allows them to continue their studies in their country of origin or abroad, the fact remains that others, including non-Arabic speakers, settle in the country for generations. The challenge facing Qatar in these circumstances is that of the adequacy and adaptability of education to the context but also to the aspirations

of learners. The Special Rapporteur considers that it is important to ensure better access to public education for all children residing in Qatar, allowing both a greater social mix and a greater mix between Qataris and non-Qataris, particularly non-Arabic speakers.

74. Many interlocutors spoke about the numerous competitions organized for schools in Qatar, which allow interactions between different types of schools and children of various nationalities and social backgrounds. While some competitions are reserved for Qatari children only, a great number of events are also organized for all. The Special Rapporteur notes the desire expressed by some children for greater interaction.

#### **Inclusive education for children with disabilities**

75. The Government informed the Special Rapporteur about a new policy of inclusion of children with disabilities in the ordinary school system, which started in 2004/05. About 60 public schools and 35 private schools welcome children with disabilities. All schools have ramps at all entrances, toilets and parking lots for persons with disabilities. Schools built after 2000 are equipped with elevators and schools built after 2010 have provisions for the visually impaired and blind. During her visit to schools and universities, the Special Rapporteur was able to see such arrangements.

76. In 2018, a total of 1,453 children with disabilities attended public schools, from pre-primary to secondary education. Some 44 per cent of them were non-Qataris and 40 per cent of them were female.<sup>9</sup> Children with a physical disability are assisted during their stay at school by a dedicated person. In some instances, regular schools also host specialized centres for disabled children within their premises. Various schools for children with special needs have also been established.

77. The Special Rapporteur does not have sufficient data to enable her to assess the level of inclusion in public and private schools, taking into consideration the number of children with disabilities in the country.

#### **Access without discrimination based on sex and gender**

78. The Special Rapporteur notes with satisfaction that, according to governmental data, the total number of male and female students at all educational levels (pre-primary up to university) in Qatar increased from 253,000 in 2012/13 to 350,000 in 2017/18. The percentage of male students was 49 per cent compared to 51 per cent for female students. The female to male ratio amounted to 103 per cent in 2017/18 at all educational levels.<sup>10</sup>

79. Nevertheless, the disengagement and poor performance of boys, especially at tertiary level, reported by many interlocutors is of concern. Governmental data show that in 2017/18, the gross enrolment rate at that level was 8.5 per cent for males and 68.2 per cent for females. Moreover, the gross enrolment rate for females is increasing and is eight times higher than that for males.<sup>11</sup>

80. The Special Rapporteur was concerned to learn that, while women obtained a very high proportion of Qatari scholarships to study at universities inside Qatar (86 per cent) in 2017/18, men obtained about 67 per cent of Qatari scholarships to study abroad.<sup>12</sup>

81. Moreover, girls do not have access to technical secondary schools or science and technological schools, as they are for boys only.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Qatar, Department of Educational Policy and Research, Statistics Section, "Statistical Bulletin of Education November 2018", p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> Qatar, Planning and Statistics Authority, *Education in Qatar 2019 – Statistical Profile*, p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>13</sup> Qatar, Department of Educational Policy and Research, Statistics Section, "Statistical Bulletin of Education November 2018", p. 15.

### **Accessing specific programmes**

82. The Special Rapporteur was informed that human rights education started in public schools in 2009/10, through specific subjects such as social sciences, Islamic studies, values of education and family culture. It has yet to be fully mainstreamed in school curricula. A memorandum of cooperation was signed to that end in October 2019 with the National Human Rights Committee. The Government has adopted a new guide on human rights education, to be disseminated in January 2020, to assist teachers in developing diverse activities in the various subjects. The Special Rapporteur regrets that the guide and the obligation to teach human rights education applies only to public schools. She notes with interest other important activities, such as the national Right to Education Campaign (November 2018–April 2019), which included debates, film screenings, art exhibitions and workshops in schools, colleges and universities.

83. A teachers' guide has also been developed in the area of sexual and reproductive health education to inform children, within the framework of Islamic values and depending on their age, about such issues as puberty, body changes, ethical questions relating to respectful behaviour between people whether of the opposite or the same sex, and sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS. Moreover, awareness-raising information on sexual intercourse and sexually transmitted diseases has also been introduced into the biology curriculum for children aged 15 to 16 years old.

### **C. Acceptability**

84. The acceptability element requires that the form and substance of education be acceptable, meaning that it must be relevant, culturally appropriate and of good quality for students and, in appropriate cases, parents, subject to the educational objectives required under human rights law and national minimum educational standards. The curriculum should be human rights compliant, including being free from stereotypes.

85. The development of student-centred education, creating a participatory environment in classrooms and schools, in which students can express themselves and raise their concerns and expectations, is key to implementing the acceptability requirement. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur notes the existence of students' councils and parents' councils in public schools, and tutorship councils, composed of parents and other representatives of society, where issues related to teaching and education in general are debated with the school staff.

86. The strong political commitment of the authorities at all levels, the educational reforms put in place, the continuous reflexion about the educational system involving many stakeholders, and the emphasis put on the professional training of teachers are among the important elements that should contribute to significantly improving the quality of education in the near future. The role of the Qatar Foundation and of Education City is again to be stressed as a best practice, as it creates a dynamic atmosphere beneficial to the development of new thinking and experiences.

87. The Special Rapporteur was pleased to hear many stakeholders recognizing that the quality of an education system should be measured against students' achievements in the fields of literacy, numeracy and sciences, but not in those fields alone. As underlined in the Education 2030 – Incheon Declaration: Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all, quality education also develops the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions and respond to local and global challenges through education for sustainable development and global citizenship education.

88. The Special Rapporteur presents below a number of issues which she believes should be further addressed to ensure better quality education, students' achievements and the cultural acceptability component of education.

### Professional training and development of teachers

89. Teachers in Qatar are recruited from among graduates of Qatar University College of Education. Teachers who are recruited from abroad must have five years of professional experience and undergo a three-month training course upon arrival to become acquainted with the relevant rules. Great efforts are made in the area of continuous professional training and development of teachers, which is compulsory to some extent and promoted with a system of increases in salary and financial compensation for trainees.

90. The Special Rapporteur had the pleasure to meet with staff of the National Center for Educational Development. The Center was established in 2010 thanks to an agreement between the Ministry of Education and Qatar University, on the premise that educators require continuous learning built on evidence-based research and best practices, and that they need assistance to adopt and implement new practices school-wide. The aim is also to ensure the availability of experts, including from within the country, to lead the process of pedagogical development.

91. The Special Rapporteur was particularly interested to learn about the school-based learning programme, which assists schools with low performance that face significant academic challenges. A team of five persons is in charge of analysing the situation through school visits, interviews and questionnaires, and of setting up a two-year development plan. Various kinds of training are provided, including modelling, workshops, coaching and mentoring sessions, discussion sessions, observation and feedback, educational resources and publications. The programme is now in its ninth year of operation and has reached more than 24 schools, which are all now performing well, according to the Center. Of note also is a programme of knowledge-sharing and sharing of good practices between schools. Many other training programmes in various academic subjects are also in place, giving teachers, whether Qatari or non-Qatari, a wide array of development possibilities.

92. The Special Rapporteur received many positive reports from teachers and school directors about the work of the Center and professional training activities in general, stressing the relevance of training for new pedagogical approaches based on problem solving, practical activities and exercises in classes. According to some information however, supervisors at the Ministry of Education on the one hand, and trainers and teachers on the other, do not always share the same vision of pedagogy and there is a need for supervisors to better understand teachers' realities and expectations.

93. The Special Rapporteur also learned with interest that teachers' learning forums organized by the Qatar Foundation enable teachers and educators to meet and share best practices and to create professional communities to discuss specific issues, such as how to promote critical thinking in schools or how to address burnout among teachers.

### Situation of teachers and academics

94. The quality of education is in part the result of the conditions of work of teachers and professors, and of the level of academic freedom that they enjoy.

95. The Special Rapporteur enquired about the situation of non-Qatari teachers, who constitute about 73 per cent of teachers in public schools,<sup>14</sup> and 100 per cent in private schools. While interlocutors underlined the problem of the high turnover of teachers, it is also true that a number of issues render their situation insecure.

96. The Special Rapporteur is particularly concerned that the *kafalah* (sponsorship) system, under which foreign teachers have to regularly renew their contract with the approbation of the school management, every one to five years, creates instability and fear of reprisals for those wishing to express their views on the school system or their own school. Reportedly, teachers are also under great pressure to give good grades to students, especially in private schools. Such instability is of particular concern when it comes to academics, leading to high levels of self-censorship, as reported by interlocutors, some of whom noted that the exercise of academic freedom should not jeopardize the reputation of

<sup>14</sup> Qatar, Department of Educational Policy and Research, Statistics Section, "Statistical Bulletin of Education November 2018", p. 21.

educational institutions. The Special Rapporteur is of the view that this is extremely detrimental to students' achievements and the quality of scientific research. Furthermore, the development of the creative and critical spirit of learners, which is key to achieving educational and scientific performance, will not be realized if teachers and professors cannot demonstrate that they can fully exercise their academic freedom.

97. A number of teachers also face residence permit issues, when for example female teachers depend on the visa of their husbands to remain in the country. In addition, while some teachers may bring their own family, including children, to Qatar, many others are not able to do so as they cannot reach the revenue threshold of QR 10,000 and/or cannot afford tuition fees for their own children. Average salaries for foreign teachers can be significantly below the threshold, for example about QR 3,500 in Indian schools. The Special Rapporteur draws the attention of the Government to article 7 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights relating to the right of everyone to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work that ensure "a decent living for themselves and their families".

98. The Special Rapporteur was also surprised to learn that foreign teachers and administrative staff in public schools and universities receive about half the salary of their Qatari counterparts, in contradiction with the principle of equal pay for equal work.

### **Cultural acceptability**

99. As explained in the second National Development Strategy (2018–2022),<sup>15</sup> society in Qatar is exposed to many new influences owing to the ever-growing number of expatriates working and living in the country. Despite positive outcomes created by more openness to cultural diversity, this also creates a challenge to "Qatari traditional values established in the Arab and Islamic culture". For this reason, and in line with the National Vision 2030, the teaching of Arabic language and of Islamic history and the history of Qatar have been imposed at all levels of education up to the twelfth grade, in both public and private schools.<sup>16</sup> While welcoming such important measures, the Special Rapporteur also has a number of comments.

100. Firstly, as noted above, only one handbook on the history of Qatar is authorized. While other history courses in community and private schools enable students to adopt a multi-perspective approach to history, this is particularly problematic in public schools where no such approach seems to be adopted. The Special Rapporteur draws the attention of the Government to the crucial importance of ensuring a multi-perspective approach to the teaching of history, and refers it in particular to the report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights on the writing and teaching of history (A/68/296), and to her own report on the role of education in the prevention of atrocity crimes and mass or grave violations of human rights (A/74/243).

101. Moreover, Islamic studies is a compulsory subject in all schools, both public and private, for Qatari, Arab and Muslim students. In private and community schools, non-Muslim students may opt out and study ethics as an alternative. The Special Rapporteur draws the attention of the Government to article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and article 14 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Under these provisions, and the practice of the relevant treaty bodies, the freedom of parents to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions, as well as children's rights to freedom of religion and belief, mean that all children, in all circumstances, should benefit from the possibility to opt out.

102. In addition, the Special Rapporteur underlines that, as mentioned by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its general comment No. 21 (2009) on the right of everyone to take part in cultural life, "cultural life" is to be understood as "an explicit reference to culture as a living process, historical, dynamic and evolving, with a past, a present and a future. The concept of culture must be seen not as a series of isolated

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., p. 185.

<sup>16</sup> Qatar, Second National Development Strategy (2018–2022), p. 185.



manifestations or hermetic compartments, but as an interactive process whereby individuals and communities, while preserving their specificities and purposes, give expression to the culture of humanity” (paras. 11–12). It is therefore important that, in its efforts to promote social values and cultural heritage, Qatar ensures the right of all persons to freely participate in cultural life, including the right to discuss, develop and reinterpret the meaning of cultural practices.

#### **Violence and corporal punishment**

103. Almost all interlocutors denied the existence of corporal punishment in schools. They referred to the strict administrative rules and code of conduct on the matter, stressing that teachers would never dare exercise corporal punishment for fear of being fired. The Special Rapporteur, while welcoming such a strong position, encourages the Government to remain extremely attentive to the matter. She stresses that sometimes, such denial may also be a refusal to closely examine reality or to address an issue publicly.

104. The same is true regarding violence between students and bullying at school. According to some reports, there are cases of bullying, particularly among boys, which are addressed seriously at the school level, in cooperation with parents. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the initiative adopted by the Primary Health Care Corporation to launch a new project to assess more thoroughly the situation and to depart from an ad hoc response system to the development of coordinated policies and plans to address the matter.

## **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

105. **The Special Rapporteur congratulates Qatar for the significant efforts made on all fronts, with many projects under way, to address challenges and ensure the realization of the right to quality education for all. The country has established an educational system that seeks to accommodate the various needs and aspirations of diverse communities, Qatari and non-Qatari, in a particularly challenging context due to the high proportion of migrants in the country.**

106. **The Special Rapporteur appreciates the care taken in matters relating to the quality and safety of school infrastructure and in matters relating to school health; information and communication technologies made available in schools; the many programmes developed for the continuous training of teachers; the assistance provided to schools facing performance difficulties; the continuous efforts to reflect upon and improve the quality of education; the financial support provided for the establishment of community schools; and the systematic monitoring of teaching conditions in private schools.**

107. **Nevertheless, a number of important challenges remain, which should be addressed, bearing in mind the recent accession of Qatar to the two International Covenants on Human Rights.**

#### **Availability**

108. **Qatar should be congratulated for maintaining and valuing its public schools. Nevertheless, the Special Rapporteur is concerned about what appears to be an increasing over-reliance on the role of the private sector, particularly when it comes to educating children of migrant workers. The limited availability of places in public schools for non-Qataris and in community schools has allowed for the exponential growth of the for-profit private sector, not always in line with the aspirations of parents and learners. A better balance needs to be struck.**

109. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that:**

(a) **The Government increase its support for the establishment of community schools, including for those communities that do not yet operate such schools. Community schools should be supported to establish new branches and/or**

operate afternoon shifts, or entirely new community schools should be created to respond to the demand of parents and learners;

(b) More places be made available in public schools for those wishing to attend. The Government may consider, in cooperation with all stakeholders, community schools becoming part of the public sector of education in Qatar, while still ensuring a high degree of autonomy for these schools. The Special Rapporteur underlines in this regard principles 2 and 3 of the Abidjan Principles on the definition of the public sector of education;

(c) Adequate funding of the public sector always remain the priority. Taking note of the educational voucher programme, the Special Rapporteur draws the attention of the Government to the substantive and procedural requirements set out in principles 64 to 74 of the Abidjan Principles regarding the funding of private educational institutions, whether direct or indirect;

(d) The Government ensure that migrant workers on low wages have access to literacy and vocational training programmes during working hours, not only to increase their competencies relevant to their current posts, but also as part of a mobility and upskilling scheme. The Government should consider requiring private companies to offer such programmes.

## Accessibility

110. One major concern is that education is not free of charge for a high proportion of children residing in Qatar, particularly non-Qatari children, in contravention of international human rights law.

111. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the fact that Qatar has already taken a number of steps to remedy this. She encourages the Government to finalize the study on free access to education that is currently under way, and to continue reflecting on possible modalities of payment by private companies of the tuition fees of their employees.

112. Impressed by the significant measures adopted by the authorities to provide free education to disadvantaged children through the establishment of Ihsaan charity schools, the Special Rapporteur invites the Government to quickly find a solution to provide free lunches to children attending these schools. It is also very important to raise awareness among the families of these children about the importance of education and to offer them literacy programmes.

113. Beyond such ad hoc and focused measures, the Special Rapporteur encourages the Government to adopt a longer-term vision, based on the right to free public education. The Government should:

(a) Take all necessary measures to implement article 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and adopt a detailed plan of measures to achieve progressively the full application of the principle of compulsory and free primary education for all, including non-Qataris. The principle of free access should be progressively but rapidly extended to the secondary level of education;

(b) Understand the principle of free education as covering not only school fees, but also so-called hidden costs such as transportation, books and stationery, uniforms, exam entrance fees and invigilation fees;

(c) Eliminate all fees in public schools;

(d) Extend free access to universities to non-Qatari students who have pursued their secondary education in Qatar and/or have had long residence in Qatar, on an equal basis with Qatari students.

114. The Special Rapporteur further recommends that the Government:

- (a) Ensure that undocumented children can access schools without being required to produce a residence permit;
- (b) Intensify efforts towards the inclusion of children with special needs in the regular school system;
- (c) Eliminate any impediment for married or pregnant girls to continue attending school;
- (d) Collect accurate data on out-of-school children, including migrant children, children with disabilities and married or pregnant girls;
- (e) Continue addressing the disengagement and poor performance of boys and their poor enrolment at the tertiary level;
- (f) Ensure that women are offered in practice the same possibilities as men to obtain scholarships to study abroad, and address any impediment to such opportunities. Girls should also be guaranteed access to technical secondary schools and science and technological schools on an equal basis with boys;
- (g) Extend the obligation to teach human rights education to private schools.

### Acceptability

115. The Special Rapporteur recommends that the authorities:

- (a) Continue their work to ensure greater autonomy for public school principals and teachers, a process that requires extensive professional training. A positive first step would be, for example, to offer a wider range of textbooks for teachers and to encourage teachers to make greater use of a variety of sources. More widely, a multi-perspective approach should be adopted in all subjects. More flexibility should also be instilled, whereby public schools would simply inform the Ministry of Education about their outside activities;
- (b) Pursue their efforts in the area of professional training of teachers. Measures should be adopted to solve residence permit issues for teachers and their families, and to ensure that teachers enjoy just and favourable conditions of work that guarantee a decent living for themselves and their families;
- (c) Ensure respect for academic freedom of both teachers and academics. In particular, the *kafalah* (sponsorship) system should be abolished;
- (d) Respect the principle of equal pay for equal work, and ensure that foreign teachers and administrative staff in public schools and universities receive the same salary as their Qatari counterparts;
- (e) In an effort to promote respect for the cultural heritage and social values of Qatar, including through education, ensure the right of all persons to freely participate in cultural life, including the right to discuss, develop and reinterpret the meaning of cultural practices.

116. The Special Rapporteur also recommends that Qatar:

- (a) Ratify the Convention against Discrimination in Education;
- (b) Lift its reservations to and statements on articles 7, 18 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; 1 and 16 of the Convention against Torture; 8 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; 2 and 14 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and all non-discrimination clauses between men and women, as these reservations and statements may significantly impact the right to education;
- (c) Continue its efforts in the field of international and regional cooperation;

(d) **Take into account all the observations and recommendations made by human rights mechanisms in the development and implementation of the national human rights plan currently under preparation;**

(e) **Produce data that are disaggregated not only between Qataris and non-Qataris and men and women, but also between all nationalities.**

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