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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 3 July 2012, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Koterec . . . . (Slovakia)

Contents

12-40425 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Annual ministerial review: Promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work to eradicate poverty in the context of inclusive, sustainable and equitable economic growth at all levels for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (*continued*)

National voluntary presentations: Kenya, Mauritius and Qatar (E/2012/57, E/2012/54 and E/2012/55)

1. **The President** invited Mr. Carr (Associate Professor of Geography, University of South Carolina) to act as moderator for the national voluntary presentation.

Kenya (E/2012/57)

2. **Mr. Munyes** (Observer for Kenya), Minister of Labour, accompanying his presentation with digital slides, said, with regard to key policy successes and lessons learned, that Kenya's long-term development policy, Vision 2030, aimed to make it a prosperous middle-income country by the year 2030 with a high quality of life for all its citizens, building on a skilled human resource base that could meet the challenges of a rapidly industrializing economy. The development policy had since 2008 produced a number of successes. It had encouraged the development of micro- and small-scale enterprises, which currently employed 74 per cent of the labour force in Kenya, by ensuring technology transfer, capacity-building, project design and development, infrastructural improvement of work sites, and marketing assistance, both nationally and regionally, through the East African Community (EAC). A second achievement had been productivity promotion: government-designed practices and models for both the private and the public sectors and the development of a cadre of technical service providers had increased profitability and employment levels, cut waste and raised the labour productivity index to 2.38 by 2010, consolidated by a national productivity policy drafted in 2012. Employment had also been promoted, and 500,000 jobs annually had been created across sectors, thanks in part to affordable credit from banks, enterprise funds and microfinance institutions; with a national employment policy and strategy drafted in 2012. In addition, Kenya had succeeded in making industrial relations more harmonious by establishing key institutions concerned with occupational safety, wages and labour rules and by incorporating prevailing productivity indexes into the national wage guidelines. The Industrial Court, elevated in the new Constitution to the status of a high court, now heard individual cases directly and arbitrated labour and employment disputes. Furthermore, with the information collected in the 2011 national manpower survey, the Government had succeeded in strengthening the linkages between education, training and industry, and adopted a national policy in 2012 that had successfully provided industrial training and industry internships to thousands of workers. Another advance had been the establishment of an occupational safety and health institute and a national fund and the drafting of a national occupational safety and health policy to integrate those issues into the management systems in both the private and the public sectors. Moreover, with the incorporation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into Kenya's 2010 Constitution and the development of a national social protection policy, a number of welfare measures had been adopted, such as cash transfers to children, a hunger safety net, food subsidies for the urban poor and targeted school feeding programmes. Lastly, Kenya had succeeded in improving its agricultural sector by enacting an agricultural reform law and establishing various targeted farming, dairy and fishery policies and promoting agricultural cooperatives to stabilize the market.

3. As for key policy challenges and constraints, Kenya, despite significant progress in implementing the Millennium Development Goals, had been slow with respect notably to Goals 1 and 3. Achieving employment for all and reducing the proportion of those suffering from hunger under Goal 1 had been hampered by high unemployment (12.7 per cent), especially among the young, delays in adopting appropriate technology, environmental degradation and the effects of climate change, weak marketing and distribution systems for agricultural produce and insufficient access to affordable credit, especially for women. With respect to Goal 3, the gender gap in ownership, economic opportunity and political power had not been overcome; fewer girls than boys moved on to secondary schools and higher education, and cultural and traditional practices still discriminated against women. In order to deal with all the challenges confronting it, the Government planned to implement the new Constitution, the agricultural sector strategy 2010-2020 and the 2010 national climate change response strategy and action plan; develop a

productivity management framework to increase employment, enhance labour-management cooperation and peg wages to productivity; expand its affirmative action policy to ensure at least 30 per cent representation of women in the public sector; use its Enterprise Development Fund to provide equal opportunities to women and young people; devolve funds to local communities to promote equity and community participation in development; encourage public-private partnerships; and use external funding in line with the Government's long-term development strategy.

4. Among the emerging challenges facing Kenya were the impact of climate change, the global financial crisis, high population growth, the huge influx of refugees, and piracy along the Kenyan coastline. On the other hand, new opportunities presented themselves: participation in peace and regional integration initiatives; the possibility of a new national agenda under the 2010 Constitution; the enhancement of public services by means of performance-based management; the discovery of oil deposits; and the expansion of the money transfer service via mobile telephone, which had positively transformed the financial sector. A number of measures were planned, with regional and international support, in the areas of climate change, job promotion, the development of special economic zones and social welfare.

5. **Mr. Singh Puri** (India), reviewer, underscoring Kenya's strong and forward-looking policy framework for accelerated economic growth and development, commended it for the broad array of initiatives it had taken to generate employment opportunities and promote its productive capacity as part of its strong commitment to eradicate poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The presentation had nonetheless not hesitated to portray the scope of the country's development challenges, the most persistent being poverty and high unemployment. His own country had taken a similarly decentralized approach to similar challenges, using devolved funds to involve citizens at the grass-roots level in their own development and growth, and put a similar emphasis on investment in education, vocational training, women's empowerment and micro- and small-scale enterprises. The areas where Kenya had indicated that resources were needed offered a road map for international technical and financial assistance to Kenya. India stood ready to strengthen further its long-standing and robust partnership with Kenya and urged others to support the country's development efforts according to its national priorities. It would be useful, however, to hear more about the kind and focus of support Kenya expected from its international partners, about its plans to improve agricultural productivity, given the sector's importance in the overall economy, and about the strategies that had worked thus far to generate employment and strengthen production as well as those that had not had the desired impact. Kenya had lessons and best practices to share with other countries.

6. **Mr. Munyes** (Observer for Kenya) said that Kenya needed international support in so many areas: youth employment and employment promotion generally; its ambitious Lamu-South Sudan-Ethiopia infrastructure corridor project, which it hoped to expand eventually to West Africa as well; its social welfare programmes; its climate change strategy; its agricultural reform strategy, now devolved to the county level, with special assistance to deal with rising land and fertilizer costs; road and infrastructure improvement; women's enterprises and micro- and small-scale enterprises; information and communications technology and especially the innovative mobile telephone m-Pesa service that had brought the possibility of money transfers down to the smallest farmer in the country and needed improvement.

7. **Mr. Kafeero** (Observer for Uganda), reviewer, said that as a neighbouring country, Uganda could attest to Kenya's remarkable economic growth, projected to reach 5.3 per cent in 2012, despite the challenges of high levels of poverty and unemployment. The lessons learned by Kenya could usefully be emulated.

8. Underlying its significant success were a number of key strategies and targeted interventions in the areas of agricultural productivity, infrastructural investment, public and private productivity practices, small-scale enterprise promotion, skills training, the use of enterprise funds, devolved poverty eradication funds and public-private partnerships, and the mobilization of external resources. The East African Community member States of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi were deepening their integration through the ongoing implementation of a Common Market, which provided opportunities for growth, productivity and job creation.

9. One of the main challenges Kenya had identified was the continuing rise in unemployment, a trend common to many developing countries, which had to be reversed through a combination of national and international efforts. A key lesson to be drawn from the presentation was that even properly targeted strategies, policies and programmes that were yielding desired outcomes required more resources than governments alone could provide and required the cooperation of development partners and all stakeholders.

10. **Mr. Munyes** (Observer for Kenya) reiterated that the new Constitution would be the backbone of all efforts to lift the country out of extreme poverty, for it now enshrined the rights of all the people; and the decentralized legal policy framework would encourage work to be done at the local level. Challenges like piracy or terrorism, on the other hand, needed joint international action.

11. **Mr. Salazar-Xirinachs** (Observer for the International Labour Organization (ILO)), reviewer, said that the ILO had been privileged to work with Kenya in its investment in infrastructure, youth employment, HIV/AIDS mitigation and the expansion of social protections, and it celebrated the strength of both workers' and employers' organizations within the country as a result of its fostering of tripartism.

12. Kenya's presentation (E/2012/57) identified four lessons learned, all of which were quite right: that policies mattered and could lead to improved outcomes, as suggested by many examples; that when there was a disconnect between policies and programme implementation the results were bad or mixed and that policy implementation and coordination were key; that financing was also key, but that while devolved funds were a good method, their impact had to be improved; and that public-private partnerships were essential as a complement to public resources. A further lesson was the link between growth and jobs, and a key policy question would be how growth could be made more job-rich in Kenya.

13. The good news was that Kenya's per capita income was now exceeding $800 for the first time and the country was firmly on the path to middle-income status, while debt levels were below 45 per cent of GDP, giving the country space to undertake higher fiscal effort and maintain public investment and social programmes. On the other hand, the external sector, with a large trade deficit, was a bit out of balance, requiring Kenya to increase its exports of both goods and services. The East African Community was a major source of dynamism that Kenya would be well advised to use to the maximum. East Africa was one of the regions with the fastest economic growth in the world, at 5.8 per cent on average in the past 10 years, just below Southeast Asia. Another fundamental issue was competitiveness. Kenya was ranked 102 out of 142 countries, but its overall competitiveness was undermined by serious health concerns like the prevalence of communicable diseases and also by the security situation in the country. Productivity promotion was also crucial for better jobs and higher standards of living, and Kenya's work in that area, well documented in its presentation, was very strategic and central.

14. The document singled out four best practices: the Constitution, the strengthening of labour market institutions, performance-based management in the public sector, and the introduction of mobile-phone money transfer services. The Constitution was indisputably a major step forward, and the m-Pesa money transfer system, which processed more transactions domestically than Western Union did globally, now accounted for 10 per cent of the Kenyan GDP. It was not so clear from the document, however, what performance criteria and benchmarks made the other two examples cited best practices and he would like more information.

15. In addition to the three major challenges underscored in the document — climate change, inadequate human and financial capacity in some sectors, and uncoordinated, fragmented policies — three others also seemed crucial in Kenya: the need to correct large infrastructure deficits; the need to dramatically expand the education and skills of the labour force; and the need to improve the enabling environment for sustainable enterprises.

16. The three opportunities cited in the document — the national climate change action plan, the implementation of the more than 100 projects under Vision 2030, and further regional integration into the EAC Common Market — could indeed be major sources of growth and employment in Kenya. He asked what the Government was doing to tap the full potential of the EAC. It should be noted that there was one more source of dynamism, namely, Kenya's thriving cooperation with the countries of the East and with others like Brazil, that whole South-South trade,

cooperation and investment relationship that was giving impetus to growth and modernization. In summary, intelligent use of globalization's opportunities, complemented by the right employment, social protection and labour policies internally could be and were already a major source of growth and jobs for Kenya.

17. **Mr. Carr** (Associate Professor of Geography, University of South Carolina), moderator, asked what actual impact a minimum wage policy and occupational safety and health policy could have in a country with such a large informal economy.

18. **Mr. Munyes** (Observer for Kenya) said that Kenya's membership in the EAC had generated much trade and employment, especially as a result of the Common Market Protocol allowing the free movement of workers between member countries, from which all had benefited greatly, as indicated by a useful manpower survey they had carried out jointly. Strong bilateral agreements among them had shored up internal policies. The establishment of an EAC infrastructure and an EAC Court of Justice as a way of improving each national justice system had built confidence and attracted international investment in all their countries.

19. The policy reforms discussed had indeed had a big impact: areas which in the past had lacked government control or support — such as occupational health, performance-based contracting or the rule of law — were now operating according to guiding principles. The performance-based contracting process was a major innovation in Kenya and a model being copied by a number of the EAC countries; the fact that now every public official had to act in keeping with the specific terms of a contract had proved of great benefit to the country.

Mauritius (E/2012/54)

20. **Mr. Bunwaree** (Observer for Mauritius), Minister of Education and Human Resources, said that Mauritius had gained international recognition for achieving an economically vibrant and peaceful society in the absence of any natural resources, such as oil and gold. The key ingredient of that success was a long-standing policy of free access to education at the primary and secondary levels. The Government's vision was to develop a highly skilled and competent labour force and to promote a highly productive, technologically advanced and high-wage economy.

21. Education measures, such as free books and transport for primary school students, aimed at providing equal opportunities to all children, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, disability or socioeconomic status. Universal primary education had been achieved, while at the secondary level, the gross enrolment ratio had increased from 75 per cent in 2000 to more than 90 per cent in 2010. Essential life skills, such as discipline, teamwork and creativity, were considered an integral component of public education with a view to both promoting the holistic development of the individual and creating a workforce that could navigate the rapidly changing labour environment.

22. The growing global pool of highly educated and skilled workers demanded a shift in national labour policy from its focus on reducing the surplus of skilled and unskilled labour to preventing a shortage of skilled labour. That shift would require a commitment to increasing the education level of the traditional workforce and reaching out to those who were traditionally left behind.

23. Government measures to promote pre-primary education, including grants for school attendance, had resulted in an increase in the pre-primary enrolment rate from 89 per cent in 2008 to 95 per cent in 2011. The education system also emphasized multiculturalism and multilingualism, including teaching in native languages, and the use of technology. For example, a project of the Délégation Interministérielle à l'Education Numérique en Afrique (DIENA), an agency established by the French Government, had equipped all grade four and five classrooms with an interactive digital projector and software to support the achievement of Education for All goals through digital empowerment.

24. Having successfully improved access to education, the Government was now focused on improving its quality; the standardization of national curriculums had been an important first step in that process. Some 30 per cent of pupils failed to attain essential learning competencies at the end of the primary school cycle, resulting in a chronic waste of resources. In response, a range of measures had been developed to identify students' strengths and shortcomings, monitor progress and provide remedial education.

25. Over the decades, economic policy had emphasized openness, diversification and the development of the service sector. In 2006, a bold package of policies and institutional reforms had been introduced with the goals of reducing the public sector debt, improving trade competitiveness, fostering investment and democratizing the economy through social inclusion. Implementation of the reforms had resulted in fundamental improvements to the macroeconomic policy framework and the regulatory environment as well as economic recovery and growth in employment. Consequently, investment in social welfare, including free health care and assistance for vulnerable groups, had remained sustainable.

26. The country's human resources were its best resource for achieving economic sustainability. The national human resources policy framework aimed to promote decent work as a source of personal fulfillment, self-reliance and dignity. Investment in training and job creation had continued in the midst of the global economic crisis and an average of 9,400 jobs had been created annually since 2006. However, rapid changes in the workplace made employability a concern. Citizens were supported through job training and lifelong learning programmes in order to match skills with the requirements of the fast-growing economy. A national training fund provided grants to train 10 per cent of the labour force on an annual basis. In addition, in order to prevent a situation of skills mismatch, the Government was working to link the activities educators, curriculum developers and employers through regular labour market surveys. There were also plans to launch a career counselling centre. The Government had introduced a programme that subsidized the recruitment and training of unemployed people for up to six months, while laid-off workers were provided financial relief as well as support in job placement, training and entrepreneurship. All of those strategies had resulted in increased labour productivity, with the rate of real gross domestic product (GDP) per worker increasing from 103.1 in 2001 to 137.9 in 2011.

27. Investments in climate change mitigation and sustainable development included a project aimed at reducing dependency on fossil fuels through a more efficient use of energy and an increased use of renewable energy. Resources for the project were being mobilized through taxes, Government subsidies, carbon credits and support from development partners. The private sector also offered potential sources of funding through initiatives such as carbon footprint offsets in the aviation sector.

28. Efforts to diversify the economy were being vigorously pursued, including through the consolidation of the manufacturing, tourism and agro-industry sectors and the promotion of the information and communications technology, financial services and real estate sectors. The Government also aimed to tap the country's vast marine resources and develop a so-called "blue economy". A 2 million km^2 exclusive economic zone surrounded Mauritius; an additional 396,000 km^2 area outside the continental shelf, to be managed jointly with Seychelles, had been acquired through a historic agreement signed between the two countries in March 2012, which had been accepted by the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

29. Demographic factors, including slow population growth, slow workforce growth and an ageing population constituted the major challenges to job creation and human resources development. The current workforce, policymakers and educators needed to be informed about the changing expectations of future careers. The State's competitiveness, innovation and standard of living would depend on its ability to adapt and increase the competencies of its citizens; that would require a commitment to making the necessary investments in education and training systems.

30. In conclusion, he noted that the experience of Mauritius offered some key lessons in promoting both development and economic growth. States should aim to prepare the workforce for the changing labour market; develop innovative methods for education and training; seek to balance social and economic development; maintain poverty eradication high on the agenda; continuously increase investments in education and training; and promote and develop decent jobs for all. Those strategies had led to significant progress towards achieving most of the Millennium Development Goals in Mauritius, including the achievement of universal primary education and gender equality in schools.

31. **Mr. Pillay** (Observer for Seychelles), reviewer, noted that Mauritius had maintained a remarkably low level of youth unemployment during the global economic crisis and requested information as to how such resilience had been achieved.

32. **Mr. Bunwaree** (Observer for Mauritius), Minister of Education and Public Resources, said that the Government had sought to weather the crisis not only by maintaining its social programmes but also by protecting employers and workers. The Parliament had reformed the labour laws with a view to providing supplementary income and training programmes to workers who had lost their jobs, while employers had been offered stimulus packages and soft loans to help them overcome financial problems and support job creation in sectors like information and communications technology.

33. **Mr. Carr** (Associate Professor of Geography, University of South Carolina), moderator, asked both presenters to describe the concrete ways in which their Governments sought to empower women and link such efforts with the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

34. **Mr. Bunwaree** (Observer for Mauritius), Minister of Education and Human Resources, said that a policy reform process had resulted in the protection of women's equal status by law. Women's political representation was guaranteed; in local elections, a quota law required at least one third of candidates to be women. There was complete equality between the sexes in schools from the primary through the tertiary level, with girls outperforming boys at all levels. The Government was presently assessing the appropriate means to ensure equal pay for women, as wage inequality existed in many sectors; that process would involve coordination between multiple ministries.

35. **Mr. Munyes** (Observer for Kenya), Minister for Labour, said that support for women's access to resources and education had been institutionalized. In addition, the level of women's political participation was carefully monitored. For example, the President's recent appointment of 47 County Commissioners had been challenged in the courts because the principle of gender parity had not been observed.

36. **Ms. Shaban** (Observer for Kenya), Minister for Gender, Children and Social Development, said that Kenyan Government agencies responsible for women's issues had been accorded greater power. The former Ministry of Social Welfare had added gender to its portfolio and had been renamed accordingly, while the National Commission on Gender and Development, which monitored Government activities and promoted gender mainstreaming, was a constitutional commission led by full-time ministers. The Constitution provided that no more than two thirds of either gender could occupy the elected membership of any body. Women's economic empowerment was promoted through funds to support small enterprises, as women often did not have access to commercial loans.

37. **Ms. Kage** (Germany) wondered whether foreign direct investment had a positive or negative effect on employment prospects in Mauritius and Kenya.

38. **Mr. Bunwaree** (Observer for Mauritius), Minister of Education and Human Resources, said that foreign direct investment always had a positive economic effect, as investments that would not result in job creation were not accepted. In fact, much of the Government's economic policy was geared towards encouraging foreign direct investment. A strong infrastructure programme aimed to expand and renovate airport infrastructure, while the country's vast marine resources held a great potential for investment beyond the fishing industry. In addition, double taxation avoidance agreements had been signed with other African States to protect investments.

39. **Mr. Munyes** (Observer for Kenya), Minister for Labour, said that foreign direct investment helped to develop infrastructure, created employment and supported implementation of the Vision 2030 programme. The industrialization of the country depended on bilateral support and agreements.

40. **Mr. Carr** (Associate Professor of Geography, University of South Carolina), moderator, asked the representative of Mauritius to describe the challenges and opportunities related to climate change adaptation activities.

41. **Mr. Bunwaree** (Observer for Mauritius), Minister of Education and Human Resources, said that climate change issues were an integral part of all school curriculums. For example, solar panels were being installed in many schools, while rain harvesting and composting techniques were included in the primary school curriculum. The aim of such initiatives was to instil more environmentally conscious behaviours in the next generation.

42. **Mr. Carr** (Associate Professor of Geography, University of South Carolina), moderator, requested details concerning the shocks and challenges each State had experienced in the process of diversifying their economies.

43. **Mr. Bunwaree** (Observer for Mauritius), Minister of Education and Human Resources, said that his country's economy had been diversifying since it had gained independence in 1968 and sugarcane had been the sole source of income. Tourism, textiles, and financial services had quickly become additional pillars of the economy, while in the past five years, the information and communications technology sector had experienced vigorous growth. The most significant challenge to prevent shocks as diversification continued was to prepare the labour force for potential job prospects in the short and long term. For example, medical tourism was growing; any investment in expanding that sector would require a capable labour force.

44. **Mr. Munyes** (Observer for Kenya), Minister for Labour, said that Kenya's mostly agricultural economy could not support the growing population. The challenge of urbanization required the Government to exploit the country's oil deposits and expand the tourism and information and communications technology sectors.

Qatar (E/2012/55)

45. **Mr. Al Nabit** (Secretary-General of the General Secretariat for Development Planning of Qatar), accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that, between 2004 and 2010, Qatar's economy had grown on average by more than 16 per cent annually in real terms. The country enjoyed the world's highest GDP at purchasing power parity per capita owing to the wise manner in which it exploited its natural resources. It was ranked 14th out of 142 countries in the 2011-2012 Global Competitiveness Index of the World Economic Forum (WEF). In 2011, Qatar had been ranked 37th in the Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as compared to 48th in 2001, and had been ranked 22nd out of 182 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index compiled by Transparency International (TI). The population, including a culturally diverse expatriate community, had grown from 700,000 in 2004 to 1.7 million in 2011.

46. Guided by the Qatar National Vision 2030, the country's long-term national development strategy, the Government sought to establish a society founded on justice, benevolence and equality, and to build a dynamic, diverse and sustainable economy. The National Vision was founded on four pillars: human development, social development, economic development and environmental development. Human development was particularly important to the country's future economic success, which was increasingly dependent on the ability of the Qatari people to function effectively in an extremely competitive and knowledge-based world. To that end, the Government was striving to build modern and comprehensive education and health systems and increase the skill level of its labour force, including by attracting and retaining qualified expatriate workers.

47. A fundamental requirement for achieving the country's human development goals was a modern, world-class education system that could provide students with a first-rate education. Achieving that long-term goal would require the State to develop a network of formal and non-formal education programmes that could endow youth with the skills and motivation they needed to become productive members of society. It must also establish independent, self-managing and accountable educational institutions that operated under central guidance, as well as an effective system for funding scientific research.

48. The National Development Strategy for the period 2011 to 2016 defined a number of programmes and projects aimed at achieving the goals set out in the National Vision, and was the product of broad consultations among all levels of Qatari society. By laying the foundations of sustainable prosperity and supporting the transition to a knowledge-based economy, the Strategy would help the current generation of Qataris meet its needs without compromising the prospects of future generations. It also sought to balance the drive for modernization with the need to maintain traditions, in order to ensure that the country reaped the benefits of development without sacrificing cultural continuity or its national values. The Strategy was based on international best practices, including those of countries that were similar to Qatar in respect of size and challenges and their reliance on a single, diminishing natural resource as the basis of economic activity.

49. One of the key human development challenges facing Qatar was a rapidly growing school-age population that was underachieving in math, science and foreign languages. Attainment in higher education was crucial to building an advanced, successful economy that relied on knowledge-based industries, instead of the exploitation of natural resources or

labour-intensive industries. Unfortunately, despite the high economic returns of education for the individual, there was a lack of awareness among citizens of the benefits of pursuing higher education. The Strategy therefore included a number of initiatives that were specifically designed to encourage students to continue their education beyond the secondary level.

50. In addition, it had been determined that approximately 40 per cent of Qatar Universities students obtained degrees in fields that were not related to a knowledge-based economy. That proportion was significantly higher than it was in developed countries. The country had therefore invited several leading academic institutions from the United States of America and Europe that offered degrees relevant to a knowledge-based economy to establish branches in Doha. To meet the need for technical education and vocational training, the Government had established several vocational and training centres to accommodate adult learners and persons who were unable to pursue higher education.

51. Although young Qataris had unprecedented choices in an expanding labour market, they made up only a small portion of the country's 1.3 million strong labour force. While that could be attributed, in part, to the influx of expatriate workers, young Qataris often lacked the skills required to take advantage of the opportunities available. Youth also needed to be given incentives to seek employment in the private sector; nearly 90 per cent of all university graduates worked in the public sector, while the private sector was dominated by expatriate workers. In addition, less than 2 per cent of youth operated their own businesses. To remedy that problem, the Government had established several programmes to assist young entrepreneurs.

52. While unemployment rates were relatively low in Qatar, first-time job seekers nonetheless found it difficult to enter the labour market. Slightly more than half of all unemployed persons were aged under 25 and had completed only secondary education. In addition, many Qataris left the labour market at a relatively young age. That phenomenon could be attributed, in part, to societal expectations and generous retirement schemes. Although the number of women who were employed had increased greatly between 2001 and 2010, they formed a much smaller proportion of the labour force than in developed countries. The Government had put into place several programmes aimed at increasing the women's' participation in the labour force.

53. Another significant challenge facing was the development of an incentive structure that supported the creation of high-skill labour force. Given that a diversified economy required a diversified workforce, the relevant regulations and legal framework had been reviewed with a view to attracting and retaining the appropriate mix of skilled expatriate workers. Accordingly, the Government would review and amend, as necessary, the labour sponsorship system and the criteria for granting permanent residence to expatriates. It would also strive to provide expatriate workers with advanced social services. New laws and regulations would be promulgated to strengthen labour rights and the country would accede to international instruments relevant to labour rights.

54. A highly skilled and motivated labour force was linked to and had a direct impact on the country's ability to make progress in several other related sectors, and vice versa. Creating such a force was not only vital to sustainable economic development, but also ensured higher productivity, reduced reliance on foreign labour, increased safety and security, and greater family cohesion. It would also help empower women and increase their participation in the labour force, inculcate positive values and work ethics, and enhance environmental sustainability.

55. Guided by the National Vision programme, Qatar was progressively diversifying its economy, increasing its economic competitiveness and expanding the participation of the private sector in economic activity. Education and training were vital to achieving that goal, and several programmes had been launched with a view to creating an educated, capable and motivated workforce. In that connection, it was important to improve training and education outcomes for Qataris and ensure their effective participation in the labour force. Qatar encouraged the development of partnerships that would help it meet its human development goals.

56. **Mr. Hossain** (Bangladesh), reviewer, said that the National Development Strategy was a comprehensive, multidimensional and forward-looking plan that would transform Qatar into an advanced country, ensure sustainable development and provide a high standard of living for its citizens. That the Strategy had helped Qatar make impressive progress towards achieving the

Millennium Development Goals was a testament to the Government's leadership and highlighted its commitment to ensuring a sustainable future for the current and future generations. Moreover, the National Vision defined objectives that were in line with those set out in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The Future We Want".

57. Recalling that Qatar was building advanced health and education systems that met the highest international standards, he wondered how the Government had overcome the obstacles that had stood in the way of its efforts to meet the needs of a rapidly growing school-age population. He was also interested in learning what were the main obstacles that stood in the way of implementing the Government's policy of increasing the participation of Qataris in the labour force while, at the same time, attracting highly-skilled expatriate workers and what measures had been taken to remove those obstacles.

58. Lastly, he noted that, as in many resource-rich countries, the private sector in Qatar had thus far played a limited role in the economy. He therefore wondered what steps had been taken to encourage entrepreneurship, particularly among youth and women.

59. **Mr. Lakhal** (Observer for Tunisia), reviewer, said that the National Development Strategy provided an objective analysis of Qatar's development prospects and the challenges it faced. The Strategy was also in harmony with the country's National Vision, which provided a framework for long-term sustainable development. Most importantly, the Strategy recognized the need to develop a knowledge-based economy in order to achieve sustainable development.

60. Recalling that high youth unemployment plagued many Arab countries, he said that his delegation would welcome further information on the steps the Government had taken to create decent jobs for young people and ensure they had skills that matched the needs of the labour market. It also wished to know how the Government intended to ensure that its financial investments would be productive and meet identified development needs, and that spending would be managed so as not create undue inflationary pressures.

61. **Mr. del Rosario Ceballos** (Dominican Republic), reviewer, said that, by putting people at the centre of its National Development Strategy, Qatar was striving to build a cohesive and inclusive society that could guarantee prosperity for all. The decision to focus on education, health care and job creation initiatives, including for women, while respecting and protecting cultural traditions, was a wise one, because it placed emphasis on those areas that were most directly linked to citizens' well-being and sustainable economic development.

62. There had been great debate in many countries as to whether social investment alone was sufficient for achieving human development. The challenge facing Qatar and its partners was how to ensure that the economic investments called for by the National Strategy would in fact produce a more educated, healthy and developed society.

63. With regard to increasing women's participation in the private sector and the labour force, he recalled that, in his own country's development strategy, the primary goal of projects aimed at creating micro-businesses and small and medium enterprises was to empower women. In fact, in the Dominican Republic, most such enterprises in the informal sector were owned and managed by women.

64. Given that it was vital for Qatar to build modern, efficient and strong government institutions in order to achieve its development goals, he said that he would welcome further information on the Government's efforts in that regard.

65. **Mr. Al Nabit** (Secretary-General of the General Secretariat for Development Planning of Qatar) said that some of the most significant problems facing the education system in Qatar were low awareness of the importance of pursuing higher education and of choosing an appropriate specialization, as well as a lack of capacity in teaching, curriculum development and school administration. The National Development Strategy contained programmes that were specifically designed to overcome those problems, as well as others designed to help students improve their academic performance and increase their motivation to learn.

66. The participation of both Qatari men and women in the labour force could be increased by ensuring that they were equipped with the skills they needed to succeed. The Government was aware that not every individual was capable of obtaining a university degree or had the desire to do so. Accordingly, the Strategy called for increasing the range of vocational training opportunities, so as to give individuals a better chance

of securing employment. The Government had established several vocational schools and community colleges in order to achieve that goal.

67. One of the goals set out in the Strategy was to increase the proportion that women constituted of the labour force, which had stood at 36 per cent in 2010, to 42 per cent by 2016. To that end, the Government was considering amendments to the civil service law in order to remove some of the obstacles that prevented women from joining the labour force and those factors that compelled them to leave it prematurely. While amending the law would be a step in the right direction, it was also important to recognize that the social factors which prevented women's participation must also addressed. In that connection, centres had been established to help women develop their leadership skills and a programme had been launched to counter negative attitudes towards women in the workplace, with a particular focus on the private sector.

68. The Government believed that entrepreneurship was vital to the success of the nation's economy and was deeply concerned by the fact that less than 2 per cent of Qataris ran their own businesses. The Government had therefore established, in 2010, an agency to support entrepreneurs and small and medium businesses. In addition, the Qatar Development Bank and public-sector companies also provided entrepreneurs and business owners with financing, expertise and support.

69. Qatar had made great strides in addressing the problem of youth unemployment, which was one of the greatest problems in the Arab world. It also supported youth employment initiatives the Middle East and North Africa through Silatech, which helped provide youth with the skills they needed to enter the labour market and become leaders of their societies.

70. The Government understood that not every financial investment it made would be productive and meet identified development needs. It therefore sought to supplement those investments with practical measures that supported development needs. For example, in the health care sector, infrastructure investments were being coupled with an increased emphasis on preventive health care and raising social awareness of the dangers of certain types of behaviour. In education, investment in infrastructure was being supplemented by programmes that focused on improving attitudes towards education.

71. Lastly, he said that strong and efficient government institutions were vital to the development of any country. The Government of Qatar was constantly assessing the performance of its various institutions and their relationship to one another. In that connection, the Government had recently restructured its development institutions and agencies, with a view to increasing their effectiveness.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.