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Item 118 (d) of the preliminary list*

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of members of the Human Rights Council**Letter dated 23 February 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly**

I have the honour to inform you that the Government of the State of Qatar has decided to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the term 2022–2024 at the elections to be held during the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, in 2021

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, I am pleased to transmit herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments of the State of Qatar to the promotion and protection of human rights at the national and international levels (see annex)

I should be grateful if you could arrange for the present letter and its annex to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 118 (d)

(Signed) Alya Ahmed S. Al-Thani
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/76/50

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Annex to the letter dated 23 February 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

[Original Arabic]

Candidature of Qatar to the Human Rights Council

Introduction

Respecting, promoting and protecting human rights is a policy priority for Qatar. We are mindful that human rights, peace and security are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

That priority is reflected in a constitutional and legislative system that embodies the principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and respects and protects everyone. In institutional terms, it is reflected in a range of human rights institutions and agencies that contribute effectively to the promotion and protection of human rights.

Respecting, protecting and promoting human rights is a strategic choice underpinning the Government's comprehensive reform process. Human development and the protection and promotion of human rights are at the forefront of the country's priorities. Such an approach is highlighted in the Qatar National Vision 2030, an overarching vision for development that addresses key human rights dimensions in such areas as education, health, the environment, labour rights, the empowerment of women, children's rights. It also features prominently in the first (2011–2016) and second (2018–2022) national development strategies. The Government of Qatar considers the promotion and protection of human rights to be the cornerstone of its foreign policy.

It has therefore adopted a forward-thinking policy to consolidate a culture of human rights. Its approach is focused on the rule of law, transparency, justice and human dignity. Over the last few years, Qatar has adopted a wide range of specific, tangible and ground-breaking measures with a view to mainstreaming human rights at the domestic and international levels.

Accordingly, Qatar has sought to become a member of the Human Rights Council since its establishment. Qatar believes in the important role of the Council as the primary organ of the United Nations for the promotion and protection of human rights. It hopes to continue playing an effective, positive and constructive role on Council, as it has done at the current and previous sessions. To that end, it is submitting its candidature for membership of the Council for the term 2022–2024.

Efforts and achievements of Qatar during its previous terms as a member of the Human Rights Council

Throughout its membership of the Human Rights Council, Qatar has cooperated actively and constructively with Member States in order to enable the Council to fulfil its mandate in the best possible way and achieve the noble aims for which it was established.

The Government of Qatar has decided to submit its candidature because it is convinced of the need to continue working through this important international forum. It has taken that decision in the knowledge that it has fulfilled its national and international obligations and continues to make progress towards meeting the commitments that it undertook on being elected to the Council for the period from

2015 to 2020 The most significant steps taken by the Government during the past term are as follows

International contributions, pledges and obligations

International level

- Because respecting and upholding human rights is among its main goals, Qatar has acceded to seven of the nine core human rights conventions, in addition to many of the protocols additional thereto. The most significant instruments to which it has acceded are as follows
 - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, by virtue of Decree No. 40 (2018)
 - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, by virtue of Decree No. 41 (2018)
 - Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, by virtue of Decree No. 28 (2009)
 - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, by virtue of Decree No. 28 (2008)
 - Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, signed in 2007
 - Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, by virtue of Decree No. 15 (2003)
 - Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, by virtue of Decree No. 27 (2001)
 - Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict
 - Convention on the Rights of the Child, by virtue of Decree No. 45 (1995)
 - International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, in July 1976
- During the period 2018–2020, Qatar acceded to other international conventions on the promotion and protection of human rights, including the following
 - Agreement for the Establishment of the International Anti-Corruption Academy as an International Organization, by virtue of Decree No. 11 (2019)
 - International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999), by virtue of Decree No. 20 (2018)
 - International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (1997), by virtue of Decree No. 21 (2018)
 - Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled, on 17 September 2018
 - Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports Serving International Civil Aviation, by virtue of Decree No. 63 (2017)
- In recent years, Qatar has adopted a strategy of withdrawing or reviewing its general reservations and declarations in respect of human rights conventions,

and amending its national laws accordingly. This has been done with the Convention against Torture, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

- Qatar has endeavoured to submit reports under the human rights conventions to which it is party. In a review of the timely submission of reports by States parties to the human rights treaty bodies, Qatar was found to have a 100 per cent compliance rate, the highest possible rating (see the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) entitled "Reporting compliance by State parties to the human rights treaty bodies", 2017–2019)¹
- Qatar was one of the first countries to extend an open and standing invitation to the special procedure mandate holders, in June 2010. As a result, Qatar welcomed five special procedure mandate holders during the period 2017–2020, as follows:
 - The Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity, from 2 to 11 September 2019
 - The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, from 3 to 14 November 2019
 - The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, from 24 November to 1 December 2019
 - The Special Rapporteur on the right to education, from 8 to 16 December 2019
 - The Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, from 1 to 12 November 2020
- Qatar has been listed in the reports of OHCHR as one of the top providers of voluntary contributions: it was ranked 17th in 2017², 13th in 2018³ and 47th in 2019⁴
- Qatar is convinced of the importance of the universal periodic review, and of the role of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review in helping countries to enhance and strengthen the fulfilment of their obligations under international human rights law. Accordingly, it is committed to submitting its national reports to the Working Group in a timely manner. It submitted its third national report to the Working Group and the Human Rights Council in May 2019. The report was adopted in September 2019. The interactive dialogue showed that Qatar has worked tirelessly to advance human rights and fundamental freedoms and has placed considerable emphasis on following up on the findings and recommendations of the second universal periodic review through a range of steps at all levels.
- Qatar has consistently been committed to strengthening its strategic partnership with the United Nations and effectively contributing to the realization of the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva. It provided 22 million Swiss francs towards the refurbishment and modernization of Room XIX of the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The new design is intended to

¹ https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/HRIndicators/Reporting_Compliance_map.pdf

² https://www2.ohchr.org/english/OHCHRreport2017/allegati/Downloads/1_Whole_Report_2017.pdf

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/OHCHRreport2018.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/OHCHRreport2019.pdf>

minimize maintenance, maximize sustainability and improve accessibility, inclusiveness and comfort. The room now has a circadian lighting system, has high-performance acoustic capabilities, and is wheelchair accessible. It is the first of its kind to offer sign language interpretation facilities. It is equipped with high-resolution screens and audiovisual screens that support advanced interpretation systems to enhance dialogue and exchange among nations.

- In view of the critical role of the Human Rights Council in promoting universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, Qatar effectively participates in a transparent dialogue with States and non-governmental organizations regarding all items on the agenda of the Human Rights Council, especially technical cooperation, capacity building and the protection of journalists. Qatar is a major supporter of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, it provided a total of \$500,000 in the period 2011–2019. It also supports the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, and the core budget of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).
- Qatar has also endeavoured to safeguard the rights of such categories as children, older persons and persons with disabilities. It proposed the declaration of 2 April as World Autism Awareness Day, facilitated the adoption of General Assembly resolution 74/275 and worked towards the adoption of General Assembly resolution 74/275 proclaiming 9 September as the International Day to Protect Education from Attack.
- Guided by the obligations set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, Qatar continues to do its utmost within the international community to address serious crises that impede the realization of peace and stability in the region and the world, through implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations, including those of the Human Rights Council. To that end, it has played an active role in ensuring accountability for the most serious crimes affecting human rights and was a key partner in the initiative that led to the establishment of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. It provided the Mechanism with \$1 million during the period 2017–2018 and an additional \$1 million in 2019.
- Qatar has actively participated in international gatherings and arrangements to confront specific threats to human rights. For instance, it is a member of the Group of Friends for Gender Parity and the Empowerment of Women and has facilitated consultations to convene a high-level meeting marking the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. It is a member of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking, the Group of Friends of Older Persons, the Group of Friends of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, the Group for the Dialogue on Humanitarian Partnership in a Changing World, the Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect, the Group of Friends of Accountability and the Group of Friends of Persons with Disabilities. Qatar also works to promote closer ties between cultures and peoples by participating actively in the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.
- Convinced of the importance of training, documentation and capacity-building in human rights at the national and regional levels, Qatar has since 2009 provided support for the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region in Doha.

- The National Human Rights Committee and non-governmental organizations in Qatar, such as the Qatar Social Work Foundation, the Silatech Foundation, the Education Above All Foundation and the Doha International Family Institute, have actively participated in the work of the Human Rights Council and its subsidiary bodies and mechanisms. The following are some examples:
 - The National Human Rights Committee made a voluntary contribution to OHCHR in 2018
 - The National Human Rights Committee organized an international conference entitled "National, regional and international mechanisms to combat impunity and ensure accountability under international law", which was held in April 2019 in cooperation with OHCHR, the European Parliament and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions
 - The National Human Rights Committee participated in the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was organized in 2019 by OHCHR in cooperation with the Committee on the Rights of the Child
 - In February 2020, the National Human Rights Committee, in cooperation with OHCHR, the European Parliament, the International Federation of Journalists and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, organized an international conference on the theme "Social media challenges and ways to promote freedoms and protect activists"
 - In 2019, the Education Above All Foundation and the Silatech Foundation signed a memorandum of understanding with OHCHR with a view to strengthening cooperation to protect the right of young people to education as a priority, with an emphasis on providing the necessary support for the economic and social empowerment of young people
 - Also in 2019, the Silatech Foundation organized the Silatech High Level Forum, with high-level participation from OHCHR, the European Union and United Nations entities active in the area of socioeconomic development
 - The Education Above All Foundation participated in the 2019 Social Forum convened by the Human Rights Council, focusing on the promotion and protection of the rights of children and youth through education. The purpose of the meeting was to protect access to education as a basic human right. The Foundation advocated for the proclamation of the International Day to Protect Education from Attack. The relevant resolution was adopted in May 2020, thanks to an initiative led by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser
 - The Education Above All Foundation organized a global event on the protection of education from attack on 9 September 2020, in a bid to put an end to attacks on education and to prompt world leaders to protect that basic human right, especially in conflict areas and fragile States. The event was attended by a group of heads of State and leaders, in addition to OHCHR.
 - The Education Above All Foundation organized a side event on the margins of the fortieth session of the Human Rights Council, entitled "Education in the 2030 Agenda – leaving no one behind", which focused on ensuring the right to education for children living in conflict situations and insecurity

- Qatar is convinced of the importance of interactive dialogue between United Nations mechanisms and the range of stakeholders, including grassroots organizations. For that reason, it has participated actively in the sessions of the Social Forum since 2012. For instance, it supported and actively participated in the 2018 Forum, focusing on the possibilities of using sport and the Olympic ideal to promote human rights for all and to strengthen universal respect for them, supported the 2019 Forum focusing on promotion and protection of the rights of children and youth through education, and contributed to the printing and publication of the recommendations issued by the Forum in 2015, 2018 and 2019.
- Qatar is listed third among Arab States and 41st worldwide in the 2019 human development report issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and entitled "Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today: Inequalities in human development in the 21st century"⁵. In the report, an overview is provided of the most significant developments in Qatar based on indicators and statistics pertaining to social, economic and environmental development. Qatar endeavours to assess its progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. To that end, it issued a report in July 2019 emphasizing its commitment to achieving the targets related to the Goals order to improve living standards in Qatar. Great strides have been made towards achieving the Goals.
- Qatar takes action to help strengthen the capabilities of the United Nations and the international community in order to face global humanitarian and development challenges. In December 2018, it pledged to provide \$500 million in funding for United Nations entities, as follows:
 - \$16 million towards the core resources of UNDP for 2019–2020. A grant agreement was also signed with UNDP for \$20 million to support the Sustainable Development Goals Accelerator Labs Network for 2019–2022.
 - \$16 million towards the core resources of OHCHR for 2019–2020. A grant agreement worth \$4 million was also signed in December 2019 to support projects that help Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon to face the winter.
 - \$8 million towards the core resources of the United Nations Fund for Children (UNICEF) for 2019–2020.
 - \$16 million towards the core resources of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for 2019–2020. In addition, a contribution agreement worth \$20,720,502 was signed to support Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.
 - \$1,500,000 towards the core resources of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for 2018–2020.
 - \$75 million towards the core resources of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, for 2019–2023, in annual instalments of \$15 million.
 - \$2 million towards the Special Purpose Trust Fund to backstop the Resident Coordinator system for 2019–2020, as part of the reform of the sustainable development pillar and the restructuring of the United Nations system.
 - \$40 million towards the core resources of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for 2017–2020. Another

⁵ <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019.pdf>.

agreement worth \$5,200,000 was made with the Office to support country-based pooled funds in Jordan, Lebanon, Nigeria and Syria

- \$5 million as a contribution to the Central Emergency Response Fund for 2017–2021. Qatar contributed a total of \$16,150,000 to the Fund between 2006 and 2020
 - \$1,500,000 towards the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations for 2020–2022, to enable the Alliance to fulfil its mandate effectively
 - \$4 million in voluntary contributions to OHCHR for 2016–2018. A total of \$3 million was pledged for 2019–2021
- Qatar is committed to strengthening its strategic partnership with the United Nations and actively helping the Organization to achieve its noble goals of maintaining international peace and security, cultivating friendly relations among nations, promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, fostering international cooperation to tackle socioeconomic, cultural and humanitarian problems, and finding appropriate solutions to the challenges and crises facing the world. Accordingly, Qatar is in the process of establishing the United Nations House, which will host representative offices of a number of international organizations and agencies and United Nations entities in order to enhance their ability to implement their regional and international activities and programmes. For example, Qatar has signed agreements to establish an analysis and communications centre under the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and to open offices of UNDP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. A declaration of intent has been signed with a view to opening an office of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

National level

- Qatar has continued to adopt or amend laws and local regulations with a view to providing a legal framework for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and ensuring consistency with the relevant international instruments. Since the submission of the 2017 pledge document, the following laws have been adopted:
 - Act No. 5 (2020) amending certain provisions of Act No. 15 (2011) on combating human trafficking
 - Act No. 1 (2019) regulating the investment of non-Qatari capital in economic activities
 - Act No. 20 (2019) on combating money-laundering and the financing of terrorism
 - Emiri Decision No. 47 (2019) establishing and forming a high-level committee to prepare for the Shura Council elections
 - Prime Ministerial Decision No. 29 (2019) amending certain provisions of Decision No. 28 (2018) on establishing a standing committee for general oversight and follow-up on the implementation of national development strategies
 - Cabinet Decision No. 26 (2019) establishing the National Committee on Women, Children, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities

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- Cabinet Decision No 9 (2019) amending certain provisions of Decision No 8 (2010) establishing the Qatari Committee for the Alliance of Civilizations
 - Decision No 51 (2019) of the Minister of Culture and Sports establishing the Qatari Publishers and Distributors Forum and approving its foundational document and statute
 - Act No 11 (2018) regulating political asylum
 - Act No 10 (2018) concerning permanent residency
 - Act No 2 (2018) amending certain provisions of Act No. 17 (2002) on the protection of society
 - Act No. 13 (2017) amending certain provisions of the Labour Code promulgated pursuant to Act No 14 (2004), and of Act No 13 (1990) promulgating the Code of Civil and Commercial Procedure
 - Decree-Law No. 11 (2017) amending certain provisions of Act No 3 (2004) (the Counter-Terrorism Act)
 - Emiri Decree No 22 (2017) appointing four women to the Shura Council
 - Cabinet Decision No 40 (2017) establishing the National Committee for Drug Control
 - Cabinet Decision No 15 (2017) establishing the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking
 - Act No. 15 (2016) promulgating the Civil Service Human Resources Act
 - Act No 14 (2016) amending certain provisions of Act No. 24 (2002) on retirement and pensions
 - Emiri Decision No 19 (2016) establishing the National Committee for Information Security
 - Emiri Decision No. 12 (2016) regulating the Primary Health Care Corporation
- Legislative and procedural measures have been taken at various levels to protect and promote labour rights and the rights of migrant workers. These include the following:
 - The technical cooperation agreement concluded in October 2017 between the Government and the International Labour Organization (ILO) for the period 2018–2020. Under the agreement, ILO is to provide technical advice on improving the systems for wage protection, inspection, and occupational health and safety
 - Article 17 (2020) stipulating a minimum wage for labourers and domestic workers
 - Act No 18 (2020) amending certain provisions of the Labour Code (Act No 14 (2004)). The new laws are intended to make it easier for workers to change employers during their stay in the country in a way that protects the rights of both parties
 - Decree-Law No 19 (2020) amending certain provisions of Act No 21 (2015), which regulates the entry, exit and residency of migrant workers, so as to abolish the right of the current employer to object to a change of workplace

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- Ministerial Decision No 21 (2019) regulating joint worker committees in facilities subject to the Labour Code
 - Decision No 95 (2019) of the Minister of the Interior abolishing the exit permit for employees of ministries and other government agencies, public bodies and institutions, the oil and gas sector and relevant companies, the maritime sector in the territorial waters of Qatar, and agriculture and animal husbandry
 - Act No 17 (2018) providing for the establishment of a migrant workers' support and insurance fund
 - Act No 13 (2018) amending article 7 of Act No 21 (2015) to abolish the requirement for an exit permit
 - Cabinet Decree No 6 (2018) establishing committees to settle labour disputes, setting the rules and procedures to be followed before such committees, identifying the mechanism for implementing their decisions and setting levels of remuneration
 - Act No 15 (2017) (the Domestic Workers Act)
 - Act No 13 (2017) on the establishment of committees for the settlement of labour disputes
 - The National Policy on Labour Inspection, Occupational Safety and National Health Systems, adopted in April 2019
 - Qatar has opened visa centres in six countries of origin in order to enhance the protection of workers from all potential abuses and violations during the recruitment process, and to provide integrated services covering the recruitment process and the signing of work contracts abroad
 - A Humanitarian Care Home has been opened through cooperation between the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking and the Qatar Red Crescent. Its purpose is to provide protection and social care to workers who need it
- Qatar has continued to establish human rights institutions at the governmental level and to encourage their establishment at the non-governmental level. Since the submission of the 2017 pledge document, many such institutions have been established, including the following
- The Standing Committee on Penal Institutions was established in 2020. Its terms of reference include formulating proposals to harmonize national law with international standards related to inmates of penal and correctional institutions
 - The National Committee on Women, Children, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities was established in May 2019. It monitors the situation of women's rights, examines laws related to women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities, and proposes amendments with a view to harmonizing those laws with the international agreements to which the State is a party
 - The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking was established in June 2017 to ensure enforcement of the Human Trafficking Act, coordinate the efforts of entities working to prevent human trafficking, raise awareness of the means of human trafficking, and exchange information and expertise with Arab and international organizations involved in the fight against human trafficking. The Committee approved the National

Plan on Combating Human Trafficking 2017–2022, which serves as a charter for the Committee and for other relevant entities

Human rights: a cornerstone of Qatar's policy and approach

International level

- The Qatar National Vision 2030 and the International Cooperation Sector Strategy 2018–2022 show that Qatar is committed to genuine participation in international cooperation and prepared to play a constructive part in bolstering international peace and security. As defined in the Vision, the most important goals in the area of international cooperation are as follows: promoting the economic, political and cultural role of Qatar at the regional and global levels, particularly in the United Nations system and in regional and international organizations, promoting cultural exchanges with other Arab States and peoples in particular and with other States more broadly, and sponsoring and supporting dialogue between civilizations and promoting coexistence between different religions and cultures.
- Qatar places a significant emphasis on strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation and working with friendly States, global and regional organizations and international entities. It has joined more than 328 Arab, regional and international organizations and entities operating in various social, economic, environmental, political, cultural and academic areas. It uses all means available to support international organizations and United Nations agencies, and to provide the help that they need in order to carry out their activities and achieve the goals for which they were created. Qatar has provided voluntary contributions to a number of United Nations funds and programmes, thereby benefiting around 100 of the Organization's entities.
- One of the priorities of Qatar in the area of development is to help States achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals through international cooperation projects. These include the following:
 - Official development assistance: Qatar provides official development assistance on a voluntary basis as part of its support for the development finance agenda, South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation. It has provided international aid to friendly States in 13 different humanitarian sectors. Government support accounts for more than 70 per cent of foreign aid, the remaining 30 per cent is non-governmental support. Taken together, the governmental and non-governmental foreign aid provided by Qatar was close to the official development assistance share of the developed countries of the North, amounting to an annual average of \$2 billion, taking into consideration the value of aid in certain years.
 - A total of 22,790,949,602 Qatari riyals in assistance was provided in the period 2012–2019. The breakdown by year was as follows:

Table 1: Total governmental assistance, 2012–2019

<i>Year</i>	<i>Amount (Qatari riyals)</i>
2012	2 007 969 847
2013	5 090 072 702
2014–2018	13 586 076 606
2019	2 106 830 447
Total (Qatari riyals)	22 790 949 602

- Economic and trade assistance. Qatar enjoys an 80 per cent open economy and trades freely with all States. It has signed economic and trade agreements with many countries around the world. It has been a member of the World Trade Organization since 1996 and of the General Agreement on Trade in Services since 1994.
- The Silatech Foundation⁶ has helped to provide employment opportunities to nearly 1 million young men and women since its establishment in 2008, and it aims to provide 2 million jobs in the Arab world by 2020. The Foundation has signed several agreements and memorandums of understanding, including a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre in 2017, and three agreements concluded in 2018 for the economic empowerment of Somali youth through collaboration between the Foundation, the American Refugee Committee and UNHCR.
- Qatar has helped children gain access to education through Education above All, a global initiative comprising four international programmes, namely Educate a Child, Fakhoura, Protecting the Right to Education in Situations of Armed Conflict and Insecurity, and Reach Out to Asia. The Educate a Child programme works with 82 global partners, including UNICEF, the United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization and UNRWA. In 2018, it announced that it would provide education to 10 million children who had been deprived of schooling, and it would be implementing 65 projects in more than 50 countries for a total value of \$1.8 billion, a third of which was contributed by Qatar. The programme has pledged to expand its projects over the next five years.⁷ The Fakhoura programme⁸ has provided 7,883 student scholarships and refurbished 94 educational facilities. The Qatar Fund for Development has made a contribution of 50 million Qatari riyals to UNRWA in order to ensure access to basic education for Palestine refugees. The programme Protecting the Right to Education in Situations of Armed Conflict and Insecurity⁹ is working with a number of global partners, including OHCHR and the Centre for Humanitarian Data of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The programme Reach Out to

⁶ Silatech is an international non-profit social development non-governmental organization based in Qatar that works to connect young people, wherever they are, to the jobs and resources they need in order to establish and develop successful enterprises. In order to do so, it seeks to provide broad and innovative solutions in the employment sector by working with local, regional and international partners. The Foundation promotes large-scale job creation, entrepreneurship, access to capital and markets, and youth engagement in economic development, thereby helping to achieve several of the sustainable development goals.

⁷ Educate a Child represents a firm commitment to help out-of-school children gain access to primary education opportunities.

⁸ Al-Fakhoura was launched in 2009 to address the impact of the conflicts in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, in which many schools and universities had been destroyed. Since then, it has grown into a comprehensive and vital support system for education in Gaza. Its mission is to promote the right to education by unlocking the potential of a new generation of marginalized children and youth to become educated, skilled and inspirational leaders of the future who would guide their families and communities toward cohesion and prosperity.

⁹ The programme Protecting the Right to Education in Situations of Armed Conflict and Insecurity is working with a number of global partners, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Humanitarian Data of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Asia¹⁰ has provided primary education and helped young people acquire skills for employment opportunities. A total of 393,535 people have benefited directly, and 750,000 labourers in the country have also benefited. Qatar supports the Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education for Girls and has pledged to provide education to one million girls by 2021.

- Qatar has helped support the health sector in several countries through projects in cooperation with multilateral organizations and United Nations agencies. Its contributions have totalled \$793,229,671. A 100-bed hospital for rehabilitation and prosthetics has been established in Gaza. Qatar has also contributed \$50 million towards the establishment of the Lives and Livelihoods Fund, which focuses on health and infrastructure projects. Moreover, Qatar has launched the Qatar Creating Vision initiative, which aims to diagnose eye diseases for six million children and provide them with the necessary treatment in cooperation with the Orbis Foundation. Qatar has supported the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. In 2018, it signed a \$5 million agreement with UNICEF to eradicate cholera in Yemen, and \$70 million have been allocated to improving the sanitation and water systems in Yemen.
- In 2012, Qatar hosted the eighteenth session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Participating States successfully embarked on a second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol. The Qatar Foundation and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research announced that they had partnered to establish a Climate Research Centre in Doha with a view to promoting climate change mitigation. Qatar has led an arid land initiative that paved the way for the creation of the Global Drylands Alliance. It has allocated \$100 million to supporting small island developing States and least developed countries in tackling climate change.
- Qatar will host the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Doha from 23 to 27 January 2022. That conference will be an important opportunity to shore up the response to the needs and priorities of least developed countries and support their efforts to fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Qatar is committed to providing humanitarian assistance to help peoples afflicted by crises of all kinds, while abiding by the principles of impartiality and neutrality, in the following ways:
 - Qatar has strengthened its partnership with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to support the Office in fulfilling its mandate of coordinating humanitarian activities in crisis areas. To that end, an agreement was signed on the margins of the seventeenth Doha Forum, held in May 2017, to support the Office's core resources with \$40 million for the period 2017–2020. Qatar has also pledged a total of \$5 million, in annual \$1 million instalments, to support the Office's Central Emergency Response Fund for the period 2017–2021. Qatar will thus have contributed \$16,150,000 from 2006 to now. Since its establishment in 2006, the Fund has proven to be an effective tool in providing immediate funding in emergencies and protracted crises. Qatar is currently chairing the Office's

¹⁰ The vision underlying the Reach Out to Asia programme is to create a world where all young people have access to the education they need in order to realize their full potential and shape the development of their communities. The programme works with partners, volunteers and local communities to ensure that people affected by crisis across Asia and around the world have continuous access to quality education.

Donor Support Group for the period from July 2020 to June 2021. Qatar has also established a standing committee for rescue, relief and humanitarian assistance in disaster-stricken areas of friendly States and has enacted laws on humanitarian and non-governmental organizations and donor institutions. It has provided an urgent relief contribution of more than \$50 million in response to an appeal from Lebanon, and \$25 million in relief aid to the Sudan.

- Post-conflict reconstruction: one aspect of Qatar's strategic plan on international cooperation is to sponsor peace talks aimed at stopping armed conflicts and defusing tension in such countries as Lebanon, Palestine, the Sudan and Yemen. In September 2014, Qatar signed an agreement with the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund, which is administered by UNDP, to provide a \$88.5 million grant for recovery and reconstruction in Darfur.
- Cooperation initiatives with the countries of the South: Qatar provided \$500,000 in financial support towards hosting and organizing the Third South Summit, which was due to take place in Uganda in 2020 but was postponed owing to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.
- Qatar has systematically promoted dialogue through soft power diplomacy in regional and international affairs. The country's international relations have focused on consolidating peace and stability in accordance with the principle of the peaceful settlement of international disputes. The principle of neutrality has helped it to act as mediator and to build platforms for dialogue between different factions. For example, Qatar has acted as a mediator in conflicts in a number of Arab States such as the Darfur region of the Sudan, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen. It has also participated in United Nations peacekeeping forces. Qatari mediation contributed to the signing in Doha in 2020 of the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the United States Government and the Afghan Taliban movement in a bid to end 18 years of war.
- Charities, civil groups and other civil society organizations in Qatar are a major partner in development cooperation, particularly in vital sectors such as health and education. These institutions are in a position to respond quickly to emergencies. For example, Qatar Charity, an international humanitarian and development organization, participates in international efforts to ensure the right to development as a basic human right. It has had consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 1994, has observer status with IOM, and is member of the Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance and the Start Network. Qatar Charity also works through its field offices in 30 countries and implementing partners in another 30 countries. Qatar Charity has now signed 78 cooperation and partnership agreements with United Nations entities and made financial contributions amounting to \$86 million towards humanitarian and development support to vulnerable groups, especially children, internally displaced persons and refugees. In 2019, Qatar Charity spent more than \$390 million on urgent humanitarian relief, social care, water and sanitation, education, health, food security, economic empowerment and social harmony projects, benefiting more than 10 million people in 60 countries. Since 2014, the Qatari Red Crescent has provided its international relief and development services through 20 external offices and more than 250 funding and cooperation agreements with United Nations, international and regional organizations. It is an active member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which includes the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, ICRC and a network of national societies in 192 countries around the

world, in addition to a number of regional and Islamic organizations, such as the Islamic Committee of the International Crescent and the Organization of Arab Red Crescent and Red Cross Societies

- In an effort to fulfil its joint international responsibility and support the fight against the coronavirus, Qatar has recently responded to requests from States and international organizations affected by the pandemic. The following are examples of assistance provided by Qatar
 - Qatar has cooperated with the United Nations to establish air bridges during the pandemic with a view to delivering aid and redeploying United Nations personnel
 - A total of \$88,660,928 in emergency governmental and non-governmental humanitarian aid has been distributed in 78 countries¹¹
 - At the 2020 World Vaccine Summit, Qatar pledged to donate \$20 million to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance
 - Qatar has allocated \$10 million to support the World Health Organization
 - Qatar has contributed \$140 million to support multilateral health-care organizations that develop vaccines or work to ensure the resilience of health care in other States
 - Qatar has provided \$150 million in financial support to the Gaza Strip, part of which was allocated to fighting the pandemic
 - Qatar has established five field hospitals in countries affected by the pandemic
 - Qatar has provided a total of some 535 tons of emergency medical equipment, consisting of medical devices, protective masks and supplies for medical staff

National level

Driven by political will and a climate conducive to promoting and protecting human rights, the Government of Qatar has focused on the institutional consolidation of human rights. To that end, it has taken the following actions

- Qatar has acceded to international and regional instruments, incorporated their provisions into the domestic legal system and formulated laws and regulations consistent with international human rights standards. For that purpose, a committee was established pursuant to a decision of the Cabinet taken at its twenty-seventh ordinary meeting of 2018 to examine the harmonization of national laws with the two international human rights covenants. A National Committee on Women, Children, Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities has been established in order to harmonize national laws with relevant international conventions
- Human rights offices, departments and units have been created within State entities and given the means to fulfil their functions. For instance, Decision No 44 (2017) of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs provides for the establishment of sections within the Human Rights Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including a Section of International Affairs whose tasks include ensuring effective participation in the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, and the Department of Human Rights

¹¹ *The State of Qatar's aid to friendly countries to confront the emerging corona virus "Covid-19"*, International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020

Treaty Bodies, which has the task of formulating proposals to implement the recommendations issued by the human rights treaty bodies

- A committee has been established to prepare reports related to the universal periodic review mechanism, discuss them before the working group, follow up the recommendations made, and implement them in accordance with Cabinet Decision No 33 (2010)
- Qatar has put in place broad policies consistent with international human rights standards and has incorporated human rights into the Qatar National Vision 2030. It has also formulated its second national development strategy, for the years 2017–2022. The strategy incorporates workable prospects for economic, social, cultural, humanitarian and environmental development towards realizing the Qatar National Vision 2030
- The National Human Rights Committee was established in 2002 as an independent national institution for the protection and promotion of human rights. It is regulated by Decree-Law No 17 (2010), which was promulgated with the aim of affording it more guarantees and broadening its mandate in compliance with the Paris Principles governing national human rights institutions around the world. The Committee was granted “A” status by the Geneva-based Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions for the first time in 2010 and for the second consecutive time in December 2015. The Committee proposes ways of promoting and monitoring achievement of the objectives of international human rights conventions and instruments to which the State is a party, makes recommendations concerning the State's accession to other human rights conventions and instruments, examines human rights abuses and violations, seeks to resolve human rights complaints reported to it, coordinates with the authorities on the action to be taken, proposes ways of addressing abuses and violations and preventing their occurrence, makes suggestions to the relevant bodies concerning the consistency of current laws and bills with the international human rights conventions to which the State is a party, monitors and prepares reports on the human rights situation in the country and submits such reports, with comments, to the Cabinet, raises awareness of human rights and freedoms, instils human rights principles in both theory and practice, and conducts field visits to penal and correctional institutions, detention centres, workers' accommodation blocks, health facilities and educational establishments in order to monitor the human rights situation
- Qatar has taken action to empower civil society organizations. It is home to numerous human rights non-governmental organizations, including the following:
 - The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, which was established in 2016 with a view to coordinating national efforts to monitor and combat all forms of human trafficking
 - The Regulatory Authority for Charitable Activities, which was founded in 2014 and aims to support, encourage and regulate humanitarian work. It comprises 15 charities, including the following: Qatar Charity, the Qatar Red Crescent Society, the Sheikh Eid Charitable Association, the Sheikh Thani Bin Abdullah Foundation for Humanitarian Services (RAF Foundation), the Qatar Society for Rehabilitation of Special Needs and the Qatar Cancer Society
 - The Qatar Foundation for Social Work, which was established in 2013 as a high-level institution which, through a unified board of directors, oversees and monitors social work bodies in the country. Acting through the centres,

the Foundation seeks to promote human rights by protecting and raising awareness of the rights of the target groups. The Foundation also prepares and develops the plans, programmes, policies and strategies necessary to achieve the goals of civil society institutions and follow up their implementation, in cooperation and coordination with ministries, government agencies, public and private bodies and institutions at home and abroad. The centres focus on protecting the rights of the following groups:

- The Protection and Social Rehabilitation Centre (AMAN), which seeks to protect the rights of women and children who are victims of abuse or exposed to domestic violence and family breakdown
- The Family Counselling Centre (Wifaq), which focuses on family affairs
- The Orphan Care Centre (Dreema), which works to protect children who are orphaned or of unknown parentage
- The Centre for the Empowerment and Care of Older Persons (Ehsan)
- The Shafallah Centre for Persons with Disabilities
- The Social Development Centre (Nama), which works to empower youth
- The Best Buddies Qatar initiative, which aims to secure the participation of persons with disabilities in public life
- The Al-Noor Centre for the Blind, which aims to deliver exemplary services to its client groups and integrate them into the community
- The National Committee for International Humanitarian Law, which was established in 2012 to advise the Government and help it implement and disseminate international humanitarian law
- The Administrative Control and Transparency Authority, which was established in 2011 and seeks to provide oversight, ensure transparency and integrity and combat corruption in all its forms and manifestations
- The National Committee for Occupational Health and Safety, which was established in 2011 through the efforts of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in cooperation with experts from ILO
- The Education Above All Foundation, which was established in 2012 with the aim of providing children in areas affected by poverty or armed conflict with an education
- The Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue, which was established in 2010 and seeks to foster a culture of dialogue and peaceful coexistence among adherents of religions
- The Qatar Committee for the Alliance of Civilizations, which was established in 2010 to combat intolerance and underscore the role of civilizations in promoting dialogue, resolving conflicts, consolidating the values of tolerance, solidarity and peace among the world's peoples, and furthering human development
- The Mada Centre, which was established in 2010 with the aim of strengthening digital inclusion and building an accessible technology community for persons with disabilities and older persons
- The Katara Cultural District, a public body that was established in 2008 and aims to promote cultural life through festivals, exhibitions, seminars,

concerts and all forms of artistic expression. It includes a number of numerous centres and societies, including AlGannas Association, the Children's Cultural Centre, Brooq Magazine, the Poetry Society, the Bedaya Centre, the Katara Art Centre, the Siwar Choir, the Arab Postal Stamp Museum, the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra, Sout at-Khaleej Radio, the Qatar Fine Arts Association, the Qatar Photographic Society, the Visual Arts Centre, the Doha Film Institute, Qatar Museums and the Qatar Society of Engineers

- The Silatech Foundation, which was established in 2009 and provides job opportunities for Arab youth
- The Doha International Family Institute, which was established in 2006 with the aim of promoting family-centred policies and programmes
- Qatar has responded to the human rights recommendations put forward by non-governmental organizations. For instance, it approved the recommendation of the National Human Rights Committee that it accede to the Convention against Discrimination in Education. Further to a decision taken by the Cabinet at its second ordinary meeting of 2020, a working group has been established with a view to considering a recommendation regarding accession to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- Qatar is currently developing a national plan of action for human rights on the basis of a decision taken by the Cabinet at its ninth ordinary meeting of 2017. For that purpose, it has established a national government committee chaired by the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and comprising representatives of the relevant ministries. With its clear and practical approach towards the promotion and protection of human rights, this planning exercise is a route to improving the country's human rights situation. The committee has considered the experiences of several States that have previously adopted human rights plans of action in order to identify best practices in that area. It has held a number of consultative meetings with Government agencies, including the National Human Rights Committee and civil society organizations. The national action plan is due to be finalized in the near future.
- Qatar is host to the United Nations House, which will strengthen working channels between government institutions, human rights non-governmental organizations and United Nations entities, and make it easier to exchange experiences, build national capacities and develop civil society in the area of human rights.
- Qatar continues to host international conferences and forums on development, democracy, human rights, and fostering a culture of peace. The Government has convened the Doha Forum, the Conference on Interfaith Dialogue and the US-Islamic World Forum and the World Innovation Summit for Education on an annual basis. It also hosted the Fourth Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in 2011, the executive meeting of the Istanbul Process 16/18, entitled "Advancing religious freedom through interfaith collaboration", in March 2014, and the Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which culminated in the adoption of the Doha Declaration, in 2015. Qatar has, moreover, provided \$49 million to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to implement its training programmes on the Doha Declaration up until 2020. Qatar hosted the United Nations Asia Regional Summit on Business and Human Rights, and a regional conference on the role of OHCHR in promoting and protecting human rights in the Arab

region, in 2016, the fifth Global Conference of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) on Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants, in 2017, and the International Conference on Social Media: Challenges and Ways to Promote Freedoms and Protect Activists, in 2020. In so doing, it has shown the importance of creating effective systems to raise awareness of human rights and strengthen justice, equality and equity.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic

Qatar has taken care to adhere to the highest international standards when promoting and protecting the rights of its citizens and residents in the midst of the current global health crisis caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The right to health is guaranteed under article 23 of the Constitution, which provides that the State shall foster public health and provide the means to prevent and cure diseases and epidemics in accordance with the law. The right to health is also guaranteed under domestic law and the National Health Strategy for 2018–2022, which sets out the State's priorities in protecting the health of its citizens and residents. Qatar has also ratified several international and regional instruments that explicitly or implicitly provide for the right to health. These include the Arab Charter on Human Rights, article 39 of which provides for the universal right to health, including the need to take action to prevent and cure diseases with a view to reducing mortality. The Supreme Committee for Crisis Management has launched a new application known as Ehteraz (Caution) to help contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. The application has features that enable users to identify and improve on preventive measures. It also displays the latest updates and statistics and receives guidance. In response to an appeal from Amnesty International, an updated version of the application has been released in order to ensure user privacy. Amnesty International subsequently commended the State's response to its appeal.

Qatar has also played an active role in confronting the spread of the pandemic at the international level. It takes care not to adversely affect the rights of its citizens and residents, and to ensure that they enjoy all the rights stipulated in international and regional agreements, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Voluntary pledges and commitments made by Qatar

As Qatar hopes to become a member of the Human Rights Council in the period 2022–2024, it pledges to continue making an active contribution to the work of the Council, to support all activities to promote human rights around the world, and to mainstream them into all areas. In that context, it undertakes to do the following:

National level

- To continue considering acceding to the international human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party
- To further develop its national laws and harmonize them with international human rights law
- To disseminate a human rights perspective when implementing the Qatar National Vision 2030 and the relevant national strategies
- To further develop, empower and enhance the effectiveness of national institutions and civil society organizations in the area of human rights, and to continue examining their recommendations with a view to implementation
- To strengthen coordination between national institutions and recently established departments within the State's human rights bodies

- To support public policies that promote the human rights of social groups, women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and migrant workers
- To continue hosting conferences, workshops and training and awareness-raising sessions in the area of human rights for all segments of society

Regional level

- To create incentives to address human rights issues as priority topics in regional forums and mainstream such issues into regional forums, programmes, activities and priorities
- To continue advocating for dialogue and the peaceful settlement of disputes with a view to safeguarding international and regional peace and security in the region
- To continue calling for the establishment of a regional security system to safeguard the security and stability of the Middle East in general and the Gulf region in particular
- To support bilateral and multilateral programmes that contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights among the countries of the region
- To continue playing a constructive, impartial and honest role, notably through mediation, in resolving regional crises from the legal and humanitarian standpoint, in order to protect and address threats to human rights
- To continue providing various forms of support for the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region in Doha

International level

- To use its position as a member of the Human Rights Council in order to preserve the country's effective, constructive and positive role in advancing human rights and fundamental freedoms around the world, as follows
 - Engaging in a constructive and transparent human rights dialogue with States and non-governmental organizations
 - Continuing its cooperation with OHCHR
 - Contributing to the development of the modalities of the universal periodic review and strengthening the institutions of the Human Rights Council
 - Cooperating constructively in the reform of the United Nations treaty body system
 - Maintaining the open invitation extended to the special procedures mandate holders of the Human Rights Council
- To focus on pressing for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly by strengthening international efforts to report on the progress made in implementing Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals
- To continue cooperating and supporting international organizations and United Nations entities related to the promotion and protection of human rights
- To continue confronting threats to human rights that affect international peace and security, including the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic