

Qatar's Planning and Statistics Authority (PSA) responses to questions raised during the submission of Qatar's VNR 2021

(September 2021)

1. What are the specific actions you are undertaking to reduce identified inequality gaps and what is your plan towards 2030 to eradicate all forms of inequality?

The development policy-makers in the State of Qatar realized early on that the prevention of poverty does not only mean policies directed at protecting against income poverty (the economic dimension), but also requires the integration of such policies into the pillars of the Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV-2030) that formed the basis of the first and second National Development Strategies (NDS-1 & NDS-2). The purpose of such endeavor is to achieve social justice and integration of vulnerable groups into society, to ensure that no one is left behind in development.

In this sense, QNV 2030 has provided a framework in which development strategies and national plans can be developed, while directing the state's resources towards the achievement of comprehensive and sustainable development. QNV also aims to promote sustainable economic development by way of achieving equality and social justice, as embodied in the constitution. The policies, programs and projects of the national development strategies aim to improve the well-being of the Qatari society and ensure equal opportunities, regardless of age, gender, race, religion or economic status.

Moreover, the State of Qatar pays great attention to empowering and promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all. This is realistically embodied in The Second National Development Strategy (NDS-2) 2018-2022, which includes a package of effective development projects and initiatives that consolidate the principles of justice and equality in society, in addition to the keenness of the competent authorities to carry out periodic reviews for legislation and relevant laws in order to remove any discriminatory practices or texts. In this context, a number of amendments are proposed to the relevant legislative tools, as well as implementing programs to address some of the imbalances in the management of expatriate labor affairs in order to improve their living conditions and preserve their financial and moral rights. This includes raising the minimum wage, abolishing the sponsorship

system, giving them the ability to change jobs and residence, guaranteeing their freedom of movement, enabling them to open bank accounts, and remitting their savings at the lowest costs.

On the other hand, the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) monitors the humanitarian situation of expatriate workers to determine the extent to which their economic, social and civil rights are affected, such as their access to free health care, and their continued empowerment of work-related rights such as wages and allowances. NHRC receives complaints from the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society, and makes recommendations to enhance their rights, as set forth in national legislation, agreements and international treaties ratified by the State of Qatar in this regard.

As such, the State of Qatar will continue its efforts to eliminate inequalities, within the framework of its successive national strategies and more detailed implementation plans, in order to achieve QNV 2030.

2. What citizen-led engagement strategies have occurred to contribute to the national review process?

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the State of Qatar play a vital and prominent role in implementing the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in partnership with the public and private sectors. NDS-1 (2011-2016) and NDS-2 (2018-2022) both reflect the importance of the role of CSOs in national development, through programs and projects that they implement, whether alone or in cooperation with partners from other sectors.

On that basis, the national team tasked with the preparation of the Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the State of Qatar for the year 2021 has developed an integrated plan of action to involve the concerned authorities in Qatar in the preparation of the said VNR, led by CSOs. The plan has followed a number of technical and administrative procedures and arrangements that can be summarized as follows:

First: Technical Procedures:

- Making use of the report prepared by the Planning and Statistics Authority in the State of Qatar entitled “Aligning SDGs 2030 with the objectives of the Second National Development Strategy of the State of Qatar 2018-2022” in order to identify the

development goals, especially those to be discussed at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2021, and the challenges faced in achieving development aspirations, as well as listing the implementing and supporting agencies for NDS-2 projects, including the relevant CSOs.

Second: Administrative Procedures and Arrangements:

- Coordination was made with CSOs to update them on the State's preparation of VNR report 2021 and inform them of the goals chosen for this year. Furthermore, they were invited to participate in the preparation of related reports and the progress made in those goals, based on their previous experiences in implementing NDS-1 and NDS-2 projects. In addition, there were discussions with them about the challenges they faced in achieving development goals, the effects of Covid-19 pandemic, the actions taken by CSOs, and the lessons learned in order to face future challenges that may come the way of achieving SDGs. The VNR preparation team has used the latest CSOs reports in order to analyze and measure the progress made in achieving the set goals.
- Additionally, the internal work team of the Planning and Statistics Authority that prepared VNR answered the audience's questions received via Twitter.

3. What role and support given for youth civil society organizations in achieving and implementing the SDGs?

Young people in the State of Qatar represent about 12% of its total population. Given the importance of this segment, interest in the growing role of youth has been highlighted through preparing relevant development policies and strategies, taking a number of institutional and legislative measures, and implementing effective projects and initiatives with a view to expand youth participation to advance the achievement of SDGs, as follows:

1- At the level of national policies and strategies

- The youth dimension has been integrated into NDS-1 (2011-2016) and NDS-2 (2018-2022) in many development sectors, and this dimension has also been included in several axes of Qatar Population Policy (2017-2022).

2- At the institutional level

- Emiri Decree No. 4 of 2016 was issued regarding amending the competencies of ministries, including the Ministry of Culture and Sports (MoCS). The ministry, in cooperation with institutions of the civil society sector, the government sector and the private sector, is implementing 11 projects within its executive strategy for the cultural and sports enrichment in order to achieve the objectives of NDS-2 (2018- 2022). Ministry of Youth and Sport also supports all youth initiatives within the framework of the Youth and Culture National Strategy aimed at developing youth and sharpening their skills by constantly communicating with them through various media, identifying their needs and aspirations and working to achieve them through the implementation of many programs and events. This strategy also works on coming up with effective channels aimed at conveying the voice of young people to decision-making circles at all levels.
 - In a related context, Qatar University is exerting many efforts towards integrating youth in achieving and implementing the SDGs, through organizing conferences and workshops in partnership with United Nations organizations. This is in addition to the efforts of the Center for Sustainable Development at Qatar University, which was established in 2014, to develop sustainable and integrated solutions for pressing issues relevant to Qatar and the region. The center conducts many researches and organizes conferences and workshops aimed at integrating young students into the development process.
 - Qatar Foundation has been founded to be a central umbrella for many academic, developmental and social institutions. A diverse infrastructure of institutions and capacities has been provided for social and rehabilitative service, as well as rehabilitative, cultural and sports initiatives.
 - Accordingly, it can be said that the State of Qatar, today, has a modern and diversified scientific (academic, research, and statistical) infrastructure and a diverse bodies and agencies that provide youth programs, resources and training with a share of credits and facilities for youth programs and projects.
- 3- At the level of youth development initiatives and projects
- Perhaps, one of the most important projects aimed at linking Qatari youth to the SDGs 2030 is the Maker Majlis. It is one of the most important initiatives aimed at supporting young

people in achieving the SDGs. The Maker Majlis initiative is a platform operating under the College of Islamic Studies (CIS) at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) for youth to engage in activities related to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is a space where the young leaders of the world can unleash their creativity and innovative ideas. The Maker Majlis hosts workshops, educational programs, and events focusing on the SDGs.

As a result of the Qatar's efforts to empower and develop young people, the State of Qatar - according to the 2021 Global Youth Development Index Report (YDI) issued by the Commonwealth of Nations - has advanced in the Index ranking, as it was ranked second in the Arab region and 32 globally. YDI measures the status of young people in (181) countries around the world, thus, the State of Qatar achieved a great progress in the new index, advancing 43 places at the global level and two places at the Arab level.

4. What plans does your government have to follow- up the presentation of the VNR at national and subnational levels after the HLPF?

The preparation of Qatar's VNR 2021 was a good opportunity to follow up on the progress we made in implementing the objectives set for review in 2021; and to identify the effects that COVID-19 pandemic has had on the economic, social and environmental spheres of life in the State of Qatar. The preparation of the aforementioned review was a national review of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As we indicated in the VNR document, the Covid-19 pandemic has had impacts and repercussions that have been absorbed thanks to the Response, Prevention and Recovery Strategy adopted by the State of Qatar. The National Development Strategy 2018-2022, which contains a number of projects, has also contributed to strengthening infrastructure, especially in the areas of education, health, decent work, quality of life, transportation, the environment, and small and medium enterprises, with the aim of accelerating the implementation of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Following the preparation of the aforementioned VNR, the state will continue its efforts by focusing on the following:

- Integrating the goals of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into the sectors of the NDS-3 (2023-2027) that is being prepared by the Planning and Statistics Authority in

cooperation with partners in ministries, government agencies, the private sector and civil society organizations, in order to ensure their timely implementation. NDS-3 shall also include all appropriate solutions to meet the challenges mentioned in the VNR.

- Strengthening work with partners concerned with the implementation of goals of the agenda in the public and private sectors, and enabling them to report on progress by providing them with the necessary frameworks, particularly with CSOs, universities and research centers, and using social media to reach them, ensuring their participation in developing ideas and related projects and their implementation.
- Adopting a smart system to monitor and follow up the implementation of the goals and objectives of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, considering it an integral part of monitoring the implementation of the projects of the NDS-3 (2023-2027).
- The State of Qatar will continue its efforts in providing development and relief assistance in order to bring about a sustainable improvement in poor countries and help them recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Strengthening work to achieve security and peace in the Arab region and the world at large, and working to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that ensure equality and social justice, based on respect for human rights, while continuing to work with the international community to resolve conflicts.
- Strengthening work with United Nations organizations and benefiting from the diverse experiences of its experts and establishing partnerships in many projects with specialized and regional organizations.
- Developing and updating the data collection system and preparing the necessary indicators to measure progress using internationally agreed indicators.
- Intensifying work using research, development and innovation in implementing the goals and objectives of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially the projects of NDS-3.