



IDEAS PROMOTING PEACE,
DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN
RIGHTS

NO.1

QATAR: HOW TO BECOME A WORLD-CLASS CONFERENCE HOST BY NOVEMBER 2025?



I. INTRODUCTION

With the second World Summit for Social Development (WSSD2) in Doha fast approaching in November 2025, and in the wake of Qatar's latest Universal Periodic Review (UPR), this moment offers a timely window to review and assess how Qatar can best prepare itself to host a globally anticipated dialogue on a fairer and more inclusive future. Qatar's fourth UPR cycle provided the international community with valuable insights into where the country stands regarding its progress on human rights commitments and areas for further action. As WSSD2 aims to renew the momentum for the 2030 Agenda, Qatar now has the critical opportunity to demonstrate leadership and agility through concrete steps, thereby reaffirming its pledges, strengthening its internal and external credibility, and setting precedents for others — in the region and beyond.

This paper offers concise guidance rooted in collective action and geared toward building meaningful resonance between two interrelated imperatives: the equal enjoyment and upholding of human rights, and the promotion of social justice and inclusive development. Drawing on the UPR and WSSD processes — both emblematic of exceptionally universal and participative forums — this briefing puts forward actionable and realistic recommendations in the spirit of constructive reflection. Whether as a direct inspiration to devise new policy or as a starting point to refine strategic direction, the objective is to support the Qatari government in utilising this unique opportunity while guiding other Member States in articulating their own contributions in view of the upcoming multilateral Summit.

II. CONTEXT & CONSIDERATIONS

At the occasion of its fourth universal periodic review in November, Qatar received broad commendation for the steps taken since its previous cycle (completed in May 2019), while areas for further development were outlined. Qatar's national report established the range of legislative and institutional reforms undertaken — spanning anti-money laundering, women's empowerment, expanded social services, persons with disabilities and older persons, and migrant workers protections — signaling its firm commitment to align domestic frameworks with international human rights and development obligations.^[1] OHCHR's stakeholders summary drew attention to persistent concerns regarding the situation of migrant workers, labour protections, complaint mechanisms, enhanced recruitment transparency, and legal access.^[2] Meanwhile, submissions from external observers called for enhanced judicial independence, additional safeguards against torture, new assembly and associations laws and frameworks for mental health and environmental rights.^[3] Taken jointly, these perspectives point to key features of effective, rights-based governance and to areas where Qatar's reform trajectory can be reinforced — ultimately reflecting a shared holistic concern for the rule of law, civic space and social prosperity.

In particular, beyond institutional gains, the need for more comprehensive reforms was raised to fully and indiscriminately guarantee fundamental freedoms — notably freedom of expression and association — as well as the specific rights of women and migrant workers. A significant share of recommendations also focused on the ratification of additional UN instruments and protocols, an essential step toward strengthening domestic protections and institutional accountability, while also directly contributing to the deeper reform efforts outlined above. Although Qatar enacted notable formal measures aimed at reducing the human rights impact of the kafala system and raising labour standards, important barriers remain, often limiting their effectiveness in practice and failing to deliver the intended result. Similarly, women continue to face legal and structural

constraints, leaving them especially vulnerable to violence and hindering equal status in areas such as nationality, guardianship, or family law.^[4]

Furthermore, the UPR saw many Member States positively reference the 2030 Qatar National Vision.^[5] Originally launched in 2008 and most recently updated in 2024, the 2030 Vision “for a country in which there is economic and social justice for all”, is underpinned by a Human and Social Development dimensions.^[6] Recognising its people as the “nation’s most valuable resource”, the national strategy outlines essential investments in healthcare and workforce development sectors whilst including a gendered-responsive objective to foster and enhance female participation in economic life.^[7] The empowerment of women is also reverberated within the second social dimension, along with the provision of safeguards for vulnerable groups.^[8] Together with the remaining economic and environmental pillars, the 2030 National Vision represents a holistic roadmap to sustainable future for Qatar and its people in symbiosis with UN human rights and sustainable development agendas.

While the 2030 Qatar National Vision articulates strong principles and sound long-term aspirations, several challenges raised during the UPR reflect a recurring gap between strategic ambition and practical, close-up implementation. Not unlike the UPR outcome itself, the 2030 Qatar National Vision outlines commendable reform pathways at a macro level, yet often lacks the mechanisms to address more granular, real-world remaining disparities — particularly those faced by structurally marginalised communities. As the Qatari government itself has acknowledged, sustainable growth ought to be coupled with equity and collective well-being.^[9] These latter cannot be retrofitted later, and should instead be built into the very foundations of national development. Without the full protection of basic rights — such as access to justice, labour safeguards and non-discrimination — more advanced objectives like skills enhancement, innovation leadership or high-level female representation may remain partial or uneven. Reform efforts must therefore stay rooted in the lived realities of the most vulnerable — migrant workers, women and domestic workers at their intersection — to ensure that strategic frameworks translate into the most meaningful and inclusive progress possible.

Incidentally, many of the foundational values embedded in Qatar’s 2030 Vision, such as human development and social equity, resonate closely with the 1995 Copenhagen Commitments. Both frameworks point to the centrality of inclusive social progress, the importance of individuals’ empowerment, and the need to strengthen social fabric via equitable opportunities and protections for all. More than a narrative alignment, this overlap presents an organic opportunity for Qatar to reflect these shared principles and commitments in practice in preparing for the Summit. Convergence of the two agendas only reinforces the relevance of Qatar’s domestic trajectory within the broader multilateral discourse on people-centred development and the operationalisation of Copenhagen-inspired commitments.

With its upcoming role as host of the WSSD2, Qatar is well placed to demonstrate alignment between domestic priorities and global social commitments. Against the backdrop of widening global inequality and evolving labour markets, the Second World Social Summit seeks to reinvigorate political momentum behind the ten Copenhagen Commitments, while advancing implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In doing so, it also strives to ensure no one is left behind in our complex and interdependent social landscape.^[10] As the Summit will gather international leaders, UN entities, civil society and private sector to turn aspirations into results-driven outcomes, it constitutes a strategic window for Qatar to frame itself as regional leader in inclusive and sustainable social development.^[11] Crucially so, it also allows Qatar to proactively demonstrate how its investments in technology, innovation, and institutional capacity can be channelled toward fast, regular and tangible social progress — thereby creating conditions for sustained international credibility.

III. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite Qatar’s notable reform efforts and its expressed commitment to human rights and inclusive development, a discernible gap remains between strategic ambition and lived reality. As highlighted in the most recent UPR outcomes and echoed by the very genesis of the Copenhagen Commitments, bridging this gap requires not only reaffirming past pledges, but also adapting and finding new ways to translate them into practice through a targeted, people-centric approach. With its own national vision providing a readily supportive framework, complemented by recent constructive external inputs adding valuable perspective, Qatar now stands at a critical juncture. By taking timely, transparent and inclusive action, it can signal its readiness and steadfast commitment to lead with credibility and foresight — setting a powerful example, ahead of the World Social Summit, of how domestic transformation and global engagement can co-evolve and mutually strengthen one another in the pursuit of shared goals.

In view of the above, and inspired by Qatar’s fourth UPR, the Copenhagen Commitments and the SDGs, the following selected short-term and actionable recommendations are suggested:^[12]

1. Ratify at least one additional recommended core UN Treaty (e.g. CAT-OP) or ILO Convention (e.g. ILO C189 on Domestic Workers).^[13]
2. Convene one inclusive civil society consultation on UPR follow-up, to generate shared reflections and targeted action roadmaps.^[14]
3. Amend at least one article of the domestic family law so as to expand women's legal autonomy in line with international recommendations.^[15]
4. Begin publishing quarterly disaggregated data on labour inspections, complaints and dispute resolution outcomes.^[16]
5. Provide accessible translations of standard work contracts into the five major migrant languages to empower workers.^[17]
6. Recruit and increase the number and capacity of labour inspectors by at least 20%, prioritising high-risks sectors, and ensure inclusion of trained interpreters to support inspections and confidential reporting by workers.^[18]
7. Establish at least two in-community and two in-courts pilot free legal centres, clinics, legal aid desk or mobile units to assist workers in navigating complaints, dispute resolutions and access to other remedies.^[19]

These proposed measures, devised for immediate action, are not intended as an endpoint but instead as a foundation from which longer-term, structural progress can be pursued. Their purpose is to initiate positive momentum, build institutional confidence, and create space for further dialogue and accountability. In this spirit, the recommendations outlined above should be viewed as practical entry points into a broader process of inclusive and sustained national development — one that extends beyond the Summit and continues well after its conclusion, addressing the UPR recommendations comprehensively.

IV. CONCLUSION

The high level of engagement from Member States and civil society during Qatar's most recent UPR cycle not only reaffirmed the country's strong diplomatic standing, but also reflected heightened expectations for transparency, accountability, and measurable progress. This recognition carries with it both high expectations and a responsibility — one that Qatar is well positioned to meet. Following a review process marked by both acknowledgement and ambition, the country now has a concrete opportunity to respond to this call for action through inclusive, strategic, and timely reforms.

As Qatar prepares to host the Second World Social Summit — thirty years after the landmark Copenhagen gathering — it can reinforce its commitment to social justice by embedding foundational safeguards at the core of its development model. As articulated by the CESCR Committee, the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work is both a prerequisite for and a result of broader human rights enjoyment.^[20] In that same spirit, ensuring access to justice, labour protections, and non-discrimination is not only a matter of compliance but a cornerstone for inclusive and sustainable progress. Practical safeguards are not standalone — they enable the full realisation of Qatar's national ambitions and its global responsibilities. Delivering on this moment will not only strengthen the credibility of domestic reforms, but help anchor the Doha Summit in substance, legacy, and lasting impact. Swift and decisive action on the selected recommendations will also allow Qatar to assume the role of a world-class conference host come November 2025.

- ^[1] UNGA. (2024, September 26). National report submitted in accordance with Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21: Qatar. A/HRC/WG.6/47/QAT/1.
- ^[2] UNGA. (2024, July 31). Summary of Stakeholders' submission Qatar: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. A/HRC/WG.6/47/QAT/3.
- ^[3] UNGA. (2024, August 2024). Qatar: Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. A/HRC/WG.6/47/QAT/2.
- ^[4] UNGA. (2024, December 23). Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Qatar. A/HRC/58/16.
- ^[5] UN Web TV. (2024, November 12). Qatar Review–47th Session of Universal Periodic Review [video]. <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1d/k1d3keidxa>.
- ^[6] Government Communications Office (State of Qatar). (2024). Qatar National Vision 2030: A Roadmap for Transformation (Our Story). <https://www.gco.gov.qa/en/state-of-qatar/qatar-national-vision-2030/our-story/>.
- ^[7] Government Communications Office (State of Qatar). (2024). Qatar National Vision 2030: A Roadmap for Transformation (Human Development). <https://www.gco.gov.qa/en/state-of-qatar/qatar-national-vision-2030/human-development/>.
- ^[8] Government Communications Office (State of Qatar). (2024). Qatar National Vision 2030: A Roadmap for Transformation (Social Development). <https://www.gco.gov.qa/en/state-of-qatar/qatar-national-vision-2030/social-development/>.
- ^[9] Government Communications Office (State of Qatar). (2024). Qatar National Vision 2030: A Roadmap for Transformation (Social Development). <https://www.gco.gov.qa/en/state-of-qatar/qatar-national-vision-2030/social-development/>.
- ^[10] UNGA. (2024, March 6). Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 26 February 2024: "World Social Summit" under the title "Second World Summit for Social Development". A/RES/78/261; UNGA. (2023, August 18). Twenty-first annual progress report on the implementation of the capital master plan: Report of the Secretary-General. A/78/318; United Nations. (1996). Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. A/CONF.166/9.
- ^[11] United Nations. (1996). Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. A/CONF.166/9.
- ^[12] QCPD. (2025, May). Qatar's fourth Universal Periodic Review: Advancing Commitments Amid Persisting Challenges. <https://qatarcpd.com/qatars-fourth-universal-periodic-review-advancing-commitments-amid-persisting-challenges/>; UNGA. (2024, December 23). Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Qatar. A/HRC/58/16; Coalition on Labor Justice for Migrants in the Gulf. (2024, August). Migrant Worker Rights Violations in Qatar. https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Qatar-UPR-Advocacy-Brief_Coalition-on-Labor-Justice-for-Migrants-in-the-Gulf.pdf; UNGA. (2024, July 31). Summary of Stakeholders' submission Qatar: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. A/HRC/WG.6/47/QAT/3; Migrants-rights.org. (2023, December 4). Qatar's performance reports on labour law reforms raises concern of regressing on commitments. <https://www.migrant-rights.org/2023/12/qatars-performance-reports-on-labour-law-reforms-raises-concern-of-regressing-on-commitments/>; Human Rights Watch. (2021, March). Qatar: Male Guardianship Severely Curtails Women's Rights. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/29/qatar-male-guardianship-severely-curtailed-womens-rights>; OHCHR. (2025). UN Treaty Body Database: Qatar Ratification Status. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=140&Lang=en.
- ^[13] In line notably with UPR Member State recommendations 170.1 (Cyprus, Denmark, Switzerland); 170.14 (Ukraine); 170.18 (Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire); 170.19 (Senegal); 170.20 (Niger); 170.21 (Panama); and 170.22 (Portugal). See UNGA. (2024, December 23). Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Qatar. A/HRC/58/16.
- ^[14] In line notably with UPR Member State recommendation 170.40 (Albania), as well as with UPR stakeholder inputs. See UNGA. (2024, December 23). Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Qatar. A/HRC/58/16; UNGA. (2024, July 31). Summary of Stakeholders' submission Qatar: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, paras 15, 38. A/HRC/WG.6/47/QAT/3.
- ^[15] In line notably with UPR Member State recommendations 170.93 (Portugal); 170.94 (Sweden); 170.95 (Costa Rica); 170.206 (Italy); 170.210 (Malawi); 170.220 (Republic of Korea); 170.227 (Switzerland); 170.231 (United States of America); 170.233 (Denmark); 170.240 (Zambia); 170.241 (Botswana). See UNGA. (2024, December 23). Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Qatar. A/HRC/58/16.
- ^[16] In line notably with SDG 16.10, UPR stakeholder inputs on increased transparency and access to information, and ILO's 2021 report and recommendations for Qatar. See UNGA. (2024, July 31). Summary of Stakeholders' submission Qatar: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, paras 7,29. A/HRC/WG.6/47/QAT/3; ILO. (2021, November). One is too many: The collection and analysis of data on occupational injuries in Qatar, p. 25. Available here.
- ^[17] In line notably with ILO guidance and SDGs 8.8, 10.2. See ILO. (2019, May 22). General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment and definition of recruitment fees and related costs, p. 16. Available here; ILO. (2006, April 19). The Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration, para. 13.3. Available here.
- ^[18] In line notably with UPR Member States recommendations 170.132 (Kingdom of the Netherlands); 170.139 (Togo); and stakeholder inputs. See UNGA. (2024, December 23). Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Qatar. A/HRC/58/16; UNGA. (2024, July 31). Summary of Stakeholders' submission Qatar: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, paras 52, 59-60. A/HRC/WG.6/47/QAT/3.
- ^[19] In line notably with SDG 16.3, UPR Member State recommendation 170.303 (Belgium) and stakeholder inputs. See UNGA. (2024, December 23). Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Qatar. A/HRC/58/16; UNGA. (2024, July 31). Summary of Stakeholders' submission Qatar: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, paras 50, 70. A/HRC/WG.6/47/QAT/3.
- ^[20] UN CESCR. (2016, April 27). General Comment No. 23 on the right to just and favourable conditions of work, para. 14. E/C.12/GC/23.