

Mission permanente
de l'État du Qatar
auprès de l'Office
des Nations-Unies à Genève



الوفد الدائم لدولة قطر
لدى مكتب الأمم المتحدة
جنيف



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الوفد الدائم لدولة قطر / جنيف



The Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva, presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva, and has the honor to follow-up on its Verbal Note 84668 dated December 30th 2020 (*attached herewith*) – by which the Permanent Mission has communicated the information received from the Competent Authorities pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/44/7 of July 16th 2020 – entitled:” **Human rights and Climate Change**”.

The Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar is pleased to attach, *herewith*, **additional information** in the same context, as received from the Competent Authorities in the State of Qatar -Ministry of Public Health- with regard to the above mentioned subject.

The Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Special Procedures Branch, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva, the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, April 20th 2021

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Climate Change and the Rights of Older Persons

Questionnaire in Relation to Human Rights Council Resolution
A/HRC/RES/44/7 on Human Rights and Climate Change

1. Please describe the impacts of adverse effects of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of older persons. Where possible, please share specific examples and stories.

Climate change has adverse effects that are of a broad nature; impacting human rights on so many levels. Vulnerable groups including the elderly, namely those with disabilities as well as older women, are considered the most affected group by climate-related impacts. The effects of climate change include elevated vector-borne diseases, heat-associated stress, and the increased intensity and frequency of sudden/slow natural disasters. All these impacts adversely affect the elderly's mental and physical health and wellbeing. The elderly, who are also stakeholders in designing health policies, have tremendous knowledge and experience which make it necessary to involve them in climate policy formulation ensuring healthy climate and their wellbeing.

Climate change presents a challenge for the policy makers, as it cannot easily be captured as a discrete exposure but is instead represented by multiple hydrometeorological indicators. Unlike other exposures, there is no theoretical minimum future climate change exposure that can be attained, and it is unclear what the baseline level for climate risk should be, given its unique status as a constantly changing global system. Climate change-related exposures will continue to increase in the next few decades, no matter the extent of reductions of greenhouse gas emissions. For present and future climate-related risks, the risk-outcome pathways (e.g., undernutrition, malaria, diarrheal disease, and injury) are often indirect, making attribution challenging.

Because climate-related health impacts are closely tied with local mediating factors, the same hydrometeorological events affected by climate change may have very different consequences within and between locations and populations, making it challenging to extrapolate health outcomes in low-income settings from studies conducted in higher-income settings, an issue common to many environmental exposures. Although researchers have considerable experience with projecting the magnitude and pattern of certain climate-sensitive health outcomes (such as mortality associated with heat or malaria) at local to international geographic scales, projecting other climate-sensitive health outcomes, such as the disease burden associated with climate-driven conflict or migration, is more challenging.

There is a well-documented association between ambient temperature and ground-level ozone formation, as well as growing evidence for temperature-driven increases in PM2.5 in drier regions, both of which are associated with increased morbidity and mortality. In addition, higher carbon dioxide (CO₂) concentrations are associated with reduced micronutrients, protein, and B vitamins in staple crops, particularly wheat and rice. These trends may exacerbate micronutrient deficiencies that are associated with a variety of physical and cognitive ailments. Other risk-outcome pairs are those associated with risks, such as precipitation changes, and outcomes, such as injuries, diarrheal disease, undernutrition, cardiovascular disease, and mental health, among others. Moreover, extreme weather events will likely require attribution to climate change as the science becomes more robust. In addition, climate-related risk factors affect upstream drivers of health and welfare outcomes, including economic productivity, fertility, migration, and governance capacity. Altogether, these interconnected relationships present potentially far-reaching consequences for global health.

Globally and in Qatar, the elderly population is on the rise. Climate changes not only impact the elderly, they also affect the environment. The negative impacts of climate change result in

new threats to an elderly person's health and wellbeing, which then present economic and social challenges. In Qatar, there is no direct evidence that the impact of climate change has impeded the human rights of the older people. The Elderly- citizens and residents-enjoy the right to free healthcare services and affordable medication as the Qatar National Development Strategy paid special attention to this vulnerable group and ensured their equitable access to healthcare. Climate-related impacts such as undernutrition, malaria, diarrheal disease, and injury are not applicable to the state of Qatar. In addition, the prevalence of cardiovascular diseases and Asthma among Qatar population cannot be accurately/ directly attributed to climate change, which requires further studies to determine the main drivers of these diseases' prevalence.

- 2. Please describe any specific policy, legislation, practice or strategy that addresses the nexus between climate change and rights of older persons, in particular, please share any information related to policies that ensure the participation of older persons in the design, planning, implementation and monitoring of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, learning from the knowledge and experience of older persons, as well as supporting the independence and autonomy of older persons. Please note and identify any relevant mechanisms for ensuring accountability for these commitments, including their means of implementation.**

It is imperative to emphasize that in the state of Qatar, there is no direct evidence that the impact of climate change has impeded the human rights of the older people. However, Qatar has adopted a Social Protection Strategy (SPS) - guided by the QNV 2030 goals and the directive of the higher leadership, and consistent with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - which aspires to achieve the necessary social development requirements and conditions. To attain social development, policies, programmes and mechanisms have been developed to enhance social protection for all citizens, empower different social groups, provide them with the necessary skills and voice to ensure freedom from need and fear, guarantee their right to a healthy, dignified and secure life, while preserving the social and cultural values. The currently in place Social protection Strategy is an essential component of an integrated approach for sound social development aimed at preserving the well-being of Qatar and its citizens of all ages, and a safe, secure and stable society free from all social risks and ills that might threaten its integrity.

Furthermore, Qatar National Health Strategy (NHS) main objective is to improve the health of Qatar's population, meeting the needs of existing and future generations through an integrated system that aims to achieve better health, better care, and better value for all. The elderly is one of the 7 priority groups identified by the NHS, and healthy ageing is one of the 12 intermediate outcomes that it seeks to achieve. The adopted National Health Strategy strives to support disease-free ageing through enhancing health awareness, self-care capabilities and coordination of care, which can reduce disease and disability among populations 60 years of age and above.

The increased life expectancy among Qatar population indicates the top-notch quality of the health care services provided by the health sector, which also signals the increased number of the elderly. The health strategy also points out that elderly people are more likely to have higher rates of chronic conditions. Their limited mobility, as well as mental health issues, will increase their social needs as they are at higher risks for using multiple medications, visiting multiple providers, and receiving conflicting advises. Thus, it has paid special attention to this

priority group; aiming to increase their health knowledge, enhance their ability to take care of themselves, and provide coordinated care with the aim of reducing morbidity and disability among them. It also stresses the importance of identifying their health risks and early detection of their illnesses which will facilitate the timely intervention, prevent complications and support healthy ageing.

In regard to climate change mitigation, the state of Qatar is among the first nations who acceded to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1996 and the Kyoto Protocol in 2005. In addition, it hosted COP18 that is regarded as one of the critical milestones contributing towards the Paris Agreement in 2016, which it ratified in 2017. Qatar National Vision reemphasizes sustainable development, which is vividly reflected in its National Development Strategy; aligning Qatar's growth and prosperity to the realities of environmental constraints in all sectors. Qatar has worked on designing a national policy that takes into consideration climate change and manages greenhouse gas emissions. It has made some voluntary efforts to target and contain greenhouse gas emissions despite the fact it is not obligated by the UNFCCC to set emission control targets.

Reaffirming its full commitment to climate change mitigation, delivering responses to climate change, and respecting human rights; the state of Qatar has adopted a number of policies and measures that strive to conserve environmental assets, curb emissions, as well as eliminate any negative effects caused by climate change on human dignity. Some of the actions and initiatives are as follow:

1. The National Flaring and Venting Reduction Project (Towards Zero Emissions from Gas Flaring).
 2. Qatar's project of using Compressed Natural Gas (CNG); as a fuel in the transport sector (CNG as an alternative fuel in Qatar's public transport applications).
 3. Qatar Airport Carbon Program to reduce CO2 emissions; making Hamad International Airport the first airport in the region to reach the Level 3 'Optimization' status in the Airports Council International (ACI) Airport Carbon Accreditation program.
 4. Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) project, aimed at improving oil recovery and limiting carbon emissions in the environment.
 5. Launch of a solar power station; aimed at diversifying the country's electricity production sources and increasing reliance on renewable energy sources.
 6. Social initiative to plant one million trees, aimed at enhancing environmental sustainability.
- 3. Please share a summary of any relevant data that captures how the adverse effects of climate change have affected older persons, taking into account multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination (i.e discrimination based on a combination of multiple grounds, including disability, gender, race, color, sex, language, religion, nationality and migration status)-including in older age cohorts.**

There is little relevant data available on how climate change has affected older people or how it has created any form of discrimination against them. There are just few incomprehensive studies that tackle the impact of heatwaves on this vulnerable group health and wellbeing, yet there is no data that suggests discrimination or violation of their human rights. We suggest that local researchers direct their studies towards the elderly, especially women, disabled individuals, and isolated elders (individuals without family members). These groups are potentially the most vulnerable of the elderly population.

4. Please describe any mechanisms and tools that are in place to measure and monitor the impacts of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of old persons.

Qatar has aligned its national strategy towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and included references from the SDG's in its numerous plans that have been implemented to achieve Qatar Environmental Development Pillar-National Vision 2030. Accordingly, the state of Qatar, through the Ministry of Municipality and Environment, uses mechanisms and tools that ensure sustainability; measuring and monitoring climate change impacts. These measures and indicators are used to evaluate projects and their prospect impacts on the climate before approving them. Moreover, the Human Development Pillar of Qatar National Vision 2030 expresses Qatar's ambition to develop a healthy population, physically and mentally, which is clearly reflected in the National Health Strategy (NHS) 2018-2022. Qatar health strategy has identified the elderly as a vulnerable group that is prioritized and for whom special attention is to be paid. A set of national targets were formulated for this priority group with key performance indicators for each national target; these indicators are used to assess the human rights of older persons to adequate and equitable access to health care services.

Further, there are several adopted United Nations programs and processes that help monitor negative impacts on local societies. These global programs help support UN member states implement greater environmental policies and support the advancement of these policies through inter-state collaboration.

- The Universal Periodic Review process identifies and addresses important health-related human rights issues and generates action by raising attention to these issues in each country.
- The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which monitors countries' sustainable development through human rights accountability reviews.

World Health Organization's domestic agents could greatly contribute to monitoring the impact of climate change on the elderly population in Qatar. This would be especially useful, as WHO itself is dedicated to providing adequate healthcare and human rights services to all global citizens.

5. Please identify and share examples of good practices and challenges in the promotion, protection, and fulfilment of the human rights of older persons in the context of the adverse effects of climate change, including any age-appropriate or sensitive support services that are provided.

The promotion, protection, and fulfilment of the human rights of elderly individuals is highly evident in the National Health Strategy. The State of Qatar has paid significant attention to providing empowering opportunities for the elderly in various fields (social, economic, cultural and political). The National Health Strategy 2018-2022 emphasizes supporting and promoting disease-free aging through health education, enhancing independence and self-care, and strengthening support and coordination services that would reduce the risk of disease and disability. The strategy also ensures that the elderly receive coordinated and integrated care, improved mobility and access to services such as rehabilitation services, integrated home care

services, and support services provided to their families which contribute to enhancing the elderly's health and enhanced healthy-life-years for the community.

Awareness campaigns have been conducted by the Ministry of Public Health and healthcare professionals, which increased awareness about the effects of extreme heat on the elderly health. Besides, there have been efforts to increase health literacy among this population group to reduce hazardous behaviour. Some challenges that Qatar witnesses is the elderly's illiteracy in the overall adverse effects of climate change and the importance of mitigating them. Thus, more need to be done in order to increase climate change literacy and engage the elderly in environmentally friendly behaviour and attitude.

6. Please include examples and good practices that highlight international and multilateral cooperation and approaches that are implemented in close consultations with the active involvement of older persons, including through their representative organizations.

In the state of Qatar, older persons are involved in the public healthcare consultations, as Qatar National Health Strategy considers them as a priority group and values their feedback. The aim of involving the elderly in these consultations is to ensure their equal access to health services and to provide them with tailored services that address their needs. There is a need to conduct literacy campaigns for the elderly on the adverse effects of climate change; to involve older persons in the future in climate change-related consultations and benefit from their input.

7. Please provide any additional information you believe would be useful to support climate action that promotes the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of older persons.

There is inadequate data available on this topic. The studies that are conducted either address climate change concerns or tackle older people's illnesses; no enough research has been done that directly links the effect of climate change on older people's health. There is a need for detailed and in-dept studies that investigate the relation/correlation between climate change related-risk and the elderly's health. Thus, we recommend allocating a special fund for conducting research on this subject. The state and civil society should implement programs that promote global and local climates and mitigate extreme heat changes in the future; actively engaging the public and educating them on the matter. Finally, the state, individuals, and local society should be engaged in awareness campaigns on climate change and its health-related impacts, since climate change does not only impact young generations' future but also the elderly's present.

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The Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva, presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva, and has the honor to refer to the latter's communication dated September 17th 2020 – concerning the request of information pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/44/7 of July 16th 2020 – entitled: " **Human rights and Climate Change**".

The Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar is pleased to attach, *herewith*, the information received by the Competent Authorities in the State of Qatar with regard to the above mentioned subject.

The Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Special Procedures Branch, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva, the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, December 30th 2020



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