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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Forty-second session

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 964th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 5 March 1993, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. VALENCIA RODRIGUEZ

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 4) (continued)

Eighth periodic report of Qatar (CERD/C/207/Add.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Al Thani, Ambassador of Qatar to the United Nations Office at Geneva and the specialized agencies in Switzerland, and Mr. Kharma, adviser to the Permanent Mission of Qatar, took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. AL THANI (Qatar) said that, since its accession to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Qatar had tried to submit its reports in accordance with the Committee's guidelines. The eighth periodic report (CERD/C/207/Add.1) set out, in part I, the general measures taken by Qatar to prevent racial discrimination; part II described in detail the legislative, administrative and judicial measures taken to give effect to articles 2 to 7 of the Convention; and part III contained the clarifications provided in response to the requests made by the Committee when considering previous periodic reports.

3. It was stated in part I that, pursuant to article 9 of the Provisional Constitution of the State of Qatar, all persons were equal without distinction as to race, sex or religion. The promulgation of any legislation permitting such discrimination was thus prohibited. Moreover, article 5 of the Provisional Constitution affirmed the State of Qatar's belief in the principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations, which, as everyone knew, ruled out discrimination. Discrimination was likewise prohibited under the Islamic Shari'a, which constituted the principal source of Qatar's legislation.

4. He recalled that his country had acceded to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination on 23 July 1976, after having acceded, on 18 July of that year, to the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. Both those conventions had binding force in Qatari domestic law and could be invoked before the courts.

5. Qatari courts were not empowered to punish an act of discrimination unless it constituted an offence under the law. They could, however, award compensation for damages arising out of an act of racial discrimination by invoking article 4 of the Civil and Commercial Code, which empowered them to apply the principles of the Islamic Shari'a in the absence of any applicable legislative provision or customary practice. In addition, the Shari'a courts could impose a penalty, which was left to their discretion, for an act involving racial discrimination or segregation.

6. In view of the aforementioned provisions and the fact that acts of racial discrimination were unknown in Qatari society, the State of Qatar had not found it necessary to promulgate specific legislation. In Qatar, in

conformity with the teachings of Islam, the notion of superiority of Arabs over non-Arabs or of whites over blacks did not exist, except in terms of piety.

7. Likewise, in its foreign policy, Qatar was resolutely opposed to racial discrimination; to that end, it had promulgated Decree No. 130 of 1973 suspending the export of petroleum from Qatar to South Africa and Decree No. 140 of the same year severing economic, trade and cultural relations with that country.

8. Part I of the report also showed that, according to the census conducted in 1986, there had been 369,079 inhabitants in the country at the time, including the members of foreign communities - Asians from India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Thailand, the Philippines, Japan and China, Arabs and non-Arabs from African countries and Europeans from Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Greece and other countries.

9. After drawing attention to the information in part II of the report relating to articles 2 to 7 of the Convention, he read out replies, as contained in part III, to the questions asked by the Committee when considering the fifth, sixth and seventh periodic reports. With regard to the last question, relating to measures taken by the State to make the population more aware of the provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, he supplemented the reply contained in paragraph 41 by adding that the media, including television, drew attention to the provisions of international instruments relating to racial discrimination. Lastly, he assured the members of the Committee that his delegation was entirely prepared to reply to any requests for clarification they might wish to make.

10. Mrs. SADIQ ALI (Country Rapporteur) said that, with the eighth periodic report of Qatar (CERD/C/207/Add.1), the Committee found itself at an impasse, since there seemed to have been no change in the Qatari Government's viewpoint. Although the fact that Qatar maintained its dialogue with the Committee was to be welcomed, it had to be noted that the eighth report reiterated the concept that the hadith (tradition) of the Prophet ruled out acts of discrimination. It was also stated in the report that the Shari'a was the principal source of legislation. Apparently, the Qatari Government continued to think that the principles and provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and of the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, which had been incorporated into domestic law, sufficed to prevent and punish any act of discrimination. It merely asserted that "any victim of an act of racial discrimination can apply to the civil courts for compensation or, alternatively, can apply to the Shari'a courts ..." (para. 11) and that the "Amended ... Constitution and the provisions of the Islamic Shari'a prohibit discrimination on grounds of sex, race or religion ...".

11. Qatar should appreciate, however, that, pursuant to article 9 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, States parties had to report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they had adopted to give effect to that

instrument. Even if, as the Government asserted, racial discrimination did not currently exist in Qatar, a legislative text prohibiting racial discrimination would be useful, since it would have a deterrent effect.

12. She would also like to have details, preferably in tabular form, about the composition of Qatar's population, which, in 1986, had some 300,000 foreign workers out of 369,079 inhabitants. She would also like to know the situation of Palestinian refugees, many of whom had stayed in Qatar after the Gulf war. With regard to the protection of non-citizens, the report mentioned articles 1, 7 and 9 of the Provisional Constitution; it would be useful for the Committee to receive the text.

13. It was said in paragraph 15 that there were no integrationists multiracial organizations or movements in Qatar. In view of the diversity of the population, to which attention was drawn in the report, it seemed that such organizations would be useful in helping the various communities living in the country to get to know each other better, culturally and socially. She also felt it essential to prohibit, even if only as a deterrent, all propaganda which incited racial discrimination, as called for in article 4 of the Convention.

14. With regard to naturalization, she asked whether non-Arabs had the right to acquire Qatari citizenship. She also noted, in paragraphs 18 (j) and (k) of the report, that foreigners in Qatar were not guaranteed free choice of employment. During the Committee's consideration of Qatar's previous periodic report, the Rapporteur for that country had pointed out that Qatar did not apply ILO conventions and recommendations relating to trade unions. She noted the explanations given in that regard, in paragraph 18 (l) of the report, and hoped that, when the Qatari economy had become stabilized, workers' rights would be better protected. She would like figures to be provided on the subject of unemployment, whose existence was acknowledged in the report. She also wished to have a clearer explanation of the role of the special judicial body for labour affairs mentioned in paragraph 18 (l) of the report.

15. With regard to article 6 of the Convention, it was stated in paragraph 20 of the report that compensation awarded to a person who suffered material or moral damage as a result of an act of discrimination was normally assessed at the amount of material or moral damage suffered and the extent of any lost earnings, in accordance with articles 58, 67, 72 and 73 of the Civil and Commercial Code of Qatar, promulgated in Act No. 16 of 1971. It would be desirable to have the texts of those provisions communicated to the Committee.

16. She noted that paragraph 29 of the report said that, in the absence of legislation prohibiting acts of racial discrimination, the civil courts were not empowered to impose punishment for such acts, but could award compensation in respect of resulting damage. She thought it essential to adopt legislation prohibiting such acts and would like to know what procedure was currently followed for awarding compensation.

17. Lastly, she noted that the eighth report, while responding to some of the Committee's previous questions, failed to answer one which had been raised in connection with article 2 of the Convention: Mr. Wolfrum had noted that the provisions of the Convention were not sufficiently detailed for judges to be

able to apply them direct and had stressed that legislative measures should be adopted in order to ensure the application of the Convention. She would like to know the Qatari Government's viewpoint on that matter. She was pleased that the Qatari Government acknowledged the shortcoming, since it was said, in paragraph 26 of the report, that Qatar envisaged "promulgating ... legislation in the light of model legislation which ... could be formulated by the Committee". Qatar could make use of the advisory services of the Centre for Human Rights for that purpose. In conclusion, she expressed the hope that changes in respect of the matters she had raised would be announced in the next report.

18. Mr. SONG said that he endorsed the detailed observations Mrs. Sadiq Ali had just made on the eighth periodic report of Qatar; he would therefore confine himself to a few questions. Firstly, he had noted in paragraph 10 of the report that, if an Islamic judge did not find a ruling in the Koran, the Sunna or previous judgements of Islamic courts, he might exercise his own juristic reasoning. There was a risk, therefore, that judges could differ in their reasoning; that was a further reason, in his view, which should prompt Qatar to adopt legislation against racial discrimination.

19. Paragraph 11 referred to the existence of two types of court to which any victim of an act of racial discrimination might apply: the civil courts and the Shari'a courts. It would be useful to have an idea of the amounts that the civil courts could award as compensation. He also wondered whether a judgement had to be passed in order for compensation to be awarded. The report referred only to rulings of the Shari'a courts, inter alia, in paragraph 30.

20. The report also said that all persons were equal in regard to their rights and obligations, without distinction as to race, sex or religion (para. 5). He asked whether foreign workers in Qatar were subject to discrimination and, in addition, what happened if a foreign worker of European origin committed an act of discrimination against a worker from the third world.

21. Paragraph 18 (g) of the report listed a number of rights which were said to be exercised by all persons on an equal footing within the limits of Islamic customs and traditions. He would like to know exactly what limits were meant and what the situation of women was in that regard.

22. Since Qatar had not seen fit to adopt legislation relating to racial discrimination, it was open to question whether it was in conformity with the Convention to leave it to judges, in the absence of relevant legislation, to assess the type of penalty to be imposed on those who committed acts of racial discrimination.

23. Mr. BANTON said that, like Mrs. Sadiq Ali, he regretted the difference that had arisen between Qatar and the Committee relating to the interpretation of the Convention. The difference was very much less than it appeared, however. Indeed, in paragraph 26 of the report Qatar reaffirmed its willingness to consider promulgating internal legislation in the light of model legislation that the Committee could formulate. It therefore seemed to be but a question of timing. It should be mentioned, in that regard, that

Qatar could seek help right away from the Centre for Human Rights with a view to drafting such legislation, without waiting for the model legislation mentioned.

24. Paragraphs 9 and 29 of the report, dealing respectively with the incorporation of the Convention into domestic law and the right of victims of racial discrimination to compensation, also allowed the aforementioned difference to be seen in a more relative light.

25. According to paragraph 12 of the report, Qatar had not found it necessary to promulgate legislation prohibiting acts unknown in Qatari society; he, too, reiterated that all States which had ratified the Convention thereby undertook to promulgate such legislation.

26. He also noted that, under article 9 of the Qatari Constitution, all persons were equal (para. 5 of the report); he would like to know whether "persons" meant Qatari nationals and foreigners alike.

27. He supported Mrs. Sadiq Ali's request that the next report should provide more details about the population's demographic composition (para. 14 of the report). In paragraph 18 (k) (iii) (a) of the report, the Qatari Government quoted article 1, paragraph 2, of the Convention, according to which the provisions of the Convention did not apply to distinctions, exclusions, restrictions or preferences made by a State party to the Convention between citizens and non-citizens. It should be noted, in that regard, that the provision did not authorize the State or private bodies to introduce distinctions among various categories of non-citizens. It should also be emphasized that only in the light of the Convention could it be affirmed that a particular distinction was both non-racial and acceptable (para. 18 (k), last sentence).

28. It would be interesting to know whether the Qatari authorities, and the Amir in particular, were concerned not only with the racism which victimized the Palestinian and South African peoples, but also with events which were taking place in neighbouring countries and which strongly resembled acts of racial discrimination.

29. Having read in paragraph 3 that there was no superiority of Arab over non-Arab and in paragraph 4 that Islamic history contained numerous examples of non-Arab companions of the Prophet who had held high office in the Islamic State, he was astonished to read in paragraph 40 that the prevention of non-Arab lawyers from pleading before the courts of Qatar "obviously" did not constitute discrimination in favour of Arab lawyers. Even granted that few non-Arab lawyers would be able, for linguistic reasons, to perform such a task, the possibility should not be ruled out. What did seem obvious was that such an exclusion was a discriminatory measure.

30. Mr. SHAHI said he thought that the report of Qatar had been drafted very frankly and that the Government of that country had clearly explained why it had failed to comply with certain obligations under the Convention. He also agreed that, as Mr. Banton had already pointed out, Qatar had declared its

willingness to consider promulgating internal legislation, relating to racial discrimination, in the light of model legislation that the Committee could formulate.

31. No legislation had been promulgated concerning, on the one hand, compensation to which a victim of an act of racial discrimination was entitled and, on the other hand, the penalty to be imposed on the perpetrator of such an act. He would therefore like to know how a judge determined the amount of compensation and the nature of the punishment and whether there was a risk that penalties for similar offences could vary considerably according to the judge who heard the case. With regard to compensation, for instance, did judges refer to jurisprudence before taking a decision?

32. He shared Mrs. Sadiq Ali's wish to know whether Palestinian refugees in Qatar had suffered as a result of the stance adopted by their leaders during the Gulf war.

33. Lastly, he agreed that the fact that non-Arab lawyers were not permitted to plead before the courts of Qatar constituted an act of discrimination.

34. Mr. de GOUTTES congratulated Qatar on having already submitted eight reports since 1976 and for having replied, in its latest report, to the questions raised by the Committee during its consideration of the previous report.

35. It was stated in the report that Qatar saw no point in promulgating legislation to prohibit acts of discrimination, since, on the one hand, those offences were unknown in Qatari society and, on the other, such acts were prohibited by the Constitution, the Convention - incorporated into domestic law - and the Shari'a. He thought it as well to reiterate, once again, that no State could claim to be entirely free from racial discrimination and that, in ratifying the Convention, all States parties undertook to declare such acts punishable offences (art. 4 (a) of the Convention).

36. The Committee welcomed the fact, however, that Qatar had declared its willingness to consider promulgating internal legislation in the light of model legislation which could be formulated by the Committee (para. 26 of the report).

37. The Committee would also appreciate details about the respective jurisdiction of the civil and religious courts.

38. He noted that, according to paragraph 17 (e), the perpetrators of acts of racial discrimination might be liable to punishment ranging from an oral reprimand or a flogging to capital punishment; he recalled that, in the Committee's view, the campaign against discrimination could not justify a State's recourse to a penalty as severe as execution.

39. Mr. RECHETOV congratulated the Qatari Government on having replied in its eighth report to the questions put to it at the time its previous report was being considered. Other States parties should follow that example.

40. The Committee and Qatar differed on two essential points. First, although that country saw no need to promulgate legislation to prohibit acts unknown in Qatari society, the Committee took the view that any State party to the Convention was bound to declare such acts punishable, even if only as a deterrent. Secondly, contrary to what Qatar asserted, no country could claim to be entirely free from racial discrimination. Despite those differences, the valuable dialogue established between Qatar and the Committee should be continued.

41. The impression was given, in paragraph 18 (e) of the report, that only Qatari nationals had the right of complete freedom to leave the country and return to it. He would like to know what the exact situation was.

42. Mr. van BOVEN said that he, too, appreciated the fact that Qatar had replied in its report to the questions raised during the consideration of the previous report because such questions often remained unanswered.

43. Having read the report, he had the impression, that Qatar had ratified the Convention not in order to enhance the campaign against racial discrimination in its own territory, since it asserted that no act of discrimination was ever committed there, but, rather, to add its efforts to those of the international community to combat racism in other parts of the world. As other experts had already pointed out, however, even if discrimination did not exist in Qatar, it should adopt legislation, if only as a deterrent, to prohibit acts of discrimination. Moreover, even if racism was completely unknown to Qatari society, racist acts might perhaps be committed by certain foreigners living in that country (para. 14 of the report).

44. Although Qatar applied article 6 of the Convention by making it possible for any victim of an act of racial discrimination to apply to the civil courts for compensation and to the Shari'a courts for punishment of the guilty party and payment of compensation (para. 11 of the report), it was not thereby released from a considerable number of obligations under the Convention with regard to the prevention and combating of discrimination, on the pretext that the practice did not occur in Qatar. In that regard it should be strongly emphasized that, when it came to the exercise of fundamental rights, nationals and non-nationals must be on an equal footing. Persons in both categories thus had to be protected in an identical way against racial discrimination.

45. In paragraph 18 (k) (iii) (a), Qatar contended, on the basis of article 1, paragraph 2, of the Convention, that any State party to the Convention was entitled to make a distinction between citizens and non-citizens in economic and other fields and that the freedom of the State in that respect was not subject to any restriction or condition. He did not fully agree with that assertion because basic international instruments, such as the human rights Covenants and the General Assembly's Declaration on the Human Rights of Individuals Who are not Nationals of the Country in which They Live, determined very precisely the spheres in which the State could apply a distinction between citizens and non-citizens. The Committee should clarify its position with regard to article 1, paragraph 2, of the Convention.

46. Mr. LECHUGA HEVIA noted that the number of inhabitants indicated in paragraph 14 of the report included the members of foreign communities; he

asked how many foreigners lived in Qatar and what percentage of the country's total population they represented. He also wished to know whether social benefits were available to foreign workers on the same footing as to Qatari citizens.

47. He thought it would be useful to have comparative data on morbidity and mortality rates, housing conditions, and access to education for workers or their children, as between Qataris and foreigners.

48. Lastly, he asked whether the situation of Palestinians living in Qatar, a country which had always upheld their cause against Israel's racist practices in the occupied territories, had changed since the Gulf war.

49. Mr. DIACONU said that the report of Qatar reflected sincerity as well as openness and a willingness for dialogue with the Committee. Some differences of approach were nevertheless discernible and appeared in the way in which the report was drafted and in the replies to the various questions put by members of the Committee. The latter should consider making recommendations to ensure that the Committee and the States parties had the same perception of the various aspects of the implementation of the Convention.

50. On the subject of legislation, a way would have to be found to convince States that, in matters of racism and racial discrimination, as in other spheres, the purpose of legislation was not solely to punish violations, but also to prevent them.

51. With regard to punishments, he noted that flogging, which had not been practised for a long time in most countries, was still practised in Qatar. He asked whether Qatar was a party to the Convention against Torture and, if not, whether it planned to become one.

52. He noted that Qatar had declared its willingness to consider promulgating legislation on racism and racial discrimination and he proposed that, with the Secretariat's assistance, the Committee should take the requisite measures to assist that country in drafting and adopting legislation for that purpose. In that connection, he asked what the respective spheres of competence of the civil and Islamic Shari'a courts were. It was said in the report, which made a distinction between source of legislation and source of law, that the Shari'a was the principal source of legislation (para. 1). Was it, however, also a direct source of law?

53. He asked whether religions other than Islam existed in Qatar and whether their followers were able to exercise the religious freedoms envisaged in the Convention.

54. Mr. YUTZIS said that most authors who dealt with the question of racism and racial discrimination recognized that the phenomenon was not exclusively political, social or economic in nature: it had an anthropological dimension, in that it reflected differences in outlook which might gradually become blurred, but could also become sharper. The members of the Committee might thus be dreaming of a Utopia in wanting to eliminate all barriers and all differences among human beings.

55. Life as generally envisaged in Islam was a journey towards perfection, the latter being perceived as an ideal, not a reality. Conditions therefore needed to be established which would prevent any imperfections from worsening. Koranic law was most rigorous on that score, in that it severely punished the perpetrators of offences such as theft or rape, which made it very difficult for human beings to live together. But it was hard to see why legislation should not be enacted to prevent potential crimes such as racism or racial discrimination, which were just as universal.

56. He agreed with Mr. Lechuga Hevia and other members of the Committee on the need to obtain data about foreign workers, of whom there seemed to be a very large number in Qatar. In that connection he noted that, according to the sixth periodic report of Qatar, "Qatar does not have a social insurance scheme to safeguard workers against the risks of death, disability or unemployment" and that the social security scheme covered by the Act of 1963 was "restricted to Qataris" (CERD/C/156/Add.2, para. 15 (j)). The eighth report of Qatar did not mention any resources to which foreign workers in Qatar might have access or any benefits available to them.

57. In conclusion, he drew Qatar's attention to the fact that it was part of an interdependent universal system, that the crises which occurred in various parts of the world transcended States, regions and individuals and that no country could peremptorily assert that racial discrimination was unknown to it.

58. Mr. GARVALOV said that he welcomed the high standard of Qatar's report, which reflected a willingness to cooperate in all frankness with the Committee. He was nevertheless of the opinion that the consideration of the report had revealed some basic differences of view between Qatar and the Committee and that refusing to recognize them did not further the cause of the Convention.

59. He would like to know whether Qataris and foreigners alike were aware of the fact that the Convention was an integral part of the country's domestic law and that it could be invoked before the courts. If so, he wondered whether they were aware of the provisions of the Convention, of the protection it provided and of the compensation they could obtain by invoking it.

60. It was stated in the report that, on the one hand, the Convention formed "part of the country's domestic law" (para. 28) and, on the other, that "the Islamic Shari'a is the principal source of legislation in the State of Qatar" and "takes precedence [over] any conflicting provisions of positive law" (para. 32). According to the report, there was no conflict between those two systems, since, thanks to the Islamic Shari'a which governed people's lives, racial discrimination was unknown in Qatar. He found such an argument hard to accept. The Convention contained provisions which were binding on the State of Qatar, but the latter had not yet decided to adopt the legislation necessary in order to conform to that instrument's requirements, in particular, the provisions of article 5 (d) (vii) and (viii) on the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and the right to freedom of opinion and expression, respectively, as well as those of article 5 (e) (ii) on the right to form and join trade unions.

61. The CHAIRMAN, speaking as a member of the Committee, thanked the Qatari delegation for the high standard of its report and the frankness of its account of the Convention's application in Qatar. He also thanked it for the written replies to the questions put by the Committee during consideration of Qatar's previous report.
62. There seemed to be two types of courts in Qatar, the civil courts and the Islamic Shari'a courts, the latter alone having discretionary power to decide what punishment to impose in cases of racial discrimination. Was the Islamic judge's appraisal based on jurisprudence, the Koran or the Sunna and was there a risk that punishment pronounced in that way might be inadequate or, on the contrary, excessive in relation to the offence committed? It was also said in the report that the secular courts could hear requests for compensation. He asked in what order the two types of courts were available to complainants and whether the latter could apply to the secular courts and the Shari'a courts at the same time.
63. On the subject of workers' rights, he wished to know whether Qatar intended to adopt legislation to eliminate differences in treatment between Qatari and foreign workers and whether there were plans to extend social protection to all workers, regardless of their racial or ethnic origin.
64. There also seemed to be differences with regard to the economic activity that foreign nationals in Qatar could exercise. Paragraph 18 (k) of the report thus stated that foreigners were "permitted to practise minor manual trades such as that of tailor, hairdresser, metalworker, tinsmith, upholsterer, repairman, carpenter and butcher" only if "they have a reputable Qatari sponsor". He asked whether it was intended to eliminate the difference between Qataris and foreigners with regard to access to trades.
65. Mr. AL THANI (Qatar), replying to the questions asked by the members of the Committee, said that the majority of Palestinians resident in Qatar had been established there for 40 or 50 years and that many of them had even obtained Qatari citizenship. He pointed out that, during the Gulf war, Qatar had not expelled a single Palestinian and that Palestinians enjoyed all the freedoms guaranteed by the law.
66. The Qatari Government would transmit to the Centre for Human Rights the legislative texts which had been requested from it, as well as statistical data on persons resident in Qatar.
67. Any foreigner holding a valid residence permit could enter or leave the country at will. When he went home on leave, however, he must ensure that the permit would still be valid on the planned date of return. It should be noted that he could not be away for more than six months.
68. Qatar intended to amend some of its laws in order to bring them into line with up-to-date legislation. The text of those new laws would be attached to the next report if the legislation had been adopted by then.
69. The term "persons" in paragraph 5 of the report should be understood to mean all persons resident in Qatar.

70. The social insurance system in Qatar differed from the one that existed in Europe. It covered only handicapped persons, divorced women in need of assistance and people without accommodation. A monthly allowance was paid to all such persons.

71. Foreign workers signed a work contract with their employer; its term was from one to two years and, on its expiry, the employer paid them a termination grant whose amount was proportional to the length of the contract. Access to medical services was guaranteed to all on an absolutely equal footing. Medical attention was free for foreigners.

72. Qatar guaranteed the right to education for all. The Asian and European communities had begun to set up their own schools, which provided teaching in various languages, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

73. Religious freedom was guaranteed. All persons could practise the religion of their choice, but there were no Buddhist temples or churches in Qatar because believers conducted their religious services at home.

74. In conclusion, he said that his Government would answer the other questions in the next report.

75. The CHAIRMAN thanked the delegation of Qatar for the spirit of cooperation it had shown and invited it to withdraw.

76. Mr. van BOVEN said that he would like to know whether the Secretariat could prepare a file containing documents relating to the countries whose reports the Committee was to consider by the end of the session. The file might include, inter alia, documents prepared by the other Committees established under international human rights instruments, as well as reports by country rapporteurs.

77. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat had taken note of Mr. van Boven's request and would reply to it that afternoon.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.