

## The Geneva Observer – 18 October

1. **Can you confirm that in the context of the June 3 meeting between ILO’s D-G Gilbert Hounqbo, representatives from Qatar, and a delegation of GUFs, a report commissioned by BWI assessing labour reforms in Qatar post-World Cup 2022 was shared with Mr. Hounqbo?**

The agenda of the meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> June did not include such an item.

2. **Can you tell me in detail what, as of today, the ILO considers to be “radical” reforms and what makes Qatar a “role model” when it has still not ratified a number of ILO fundamental Conventions?**

The reforms are indeed significant, compared to the situation of five years ago. Some of the changes are “firsts” the region, for example the research and legislation around the impact of heat stress on workers’ health (see below)..

These reforms are having a direct impact on the lives of hundreds of thousands of workers. While a lot has been achieved, there is a universal recognition that there are gaps in terms of the implementation of the labour reforms. Like everyone, the ILO is impatient to see a more effective implementation of the labour reforms– but we also recognize that building institutions and changing mindsets takes time, and progress is gradual.

In the past five years, we’ve seen major developments in terms of new laws and policies, of the role of institutions to ensure the effective enforcement of these laws and policies, and increased partnerships and engagement with different stakeholders across the world of work, including international unions and NGOs.

For a more detailed summary of Qatar’s labour reforms, including the achievements and remaining challenges, please consult the [web story](#) and the [4-year summary](#).

- A) At the heart of the labour reform agenda is the **dismantlement of the most problematic elements of the kafala system**; specifically, the ability for workers to exit the country and to change jobs without their employers’ consent. The suppression of these previously imposed obligations aims to fundamentally address the excessive control and power imbalance that existed between migrant workers and their employers. Hundreds of thousands of migrant workers have changed jobs in the three years since these reforms were introduced.

With the introduction of these kafala reforms, workers now have more bargaining power, and employers are incentivised to ensure better working and living conditions, in order to attract and retain workers.

Labour mobility also benefits employers. Companies can now hire the workers they need from the local pool of workers in Qatar. This reduces the risks and costs associated with international recruitment. Furthermore, the economy benefits by retaining workers’ skills and experience within the country.

- B) In addition, we've seen the **introduction of a non-discriminatory minimum wage** of 1,000 QAR in March 2021, which applies to all workers of all nationalities across all sectors, including domestic work (a first in the Gulf region). That has led to 280,000 workers, or 13% of the workforce, seeing their wages increase.

The minimum wage law not only establishes a minimum basic wage, but also minimum food and accommodation allowances on top of that. Importantly, the law establishes a minimum wage commission which will review the impact of the minimum wage and propose adjustments.

- C) **Heat stress** represents one of the main occupational hazards for workers in Qatar. The [world's largest ever study](#) (in terms of workers and working hours) was carried out on the impact of heat on workers' health, and to test various mitigation strategies.

This research helped to inform [new legislation](#), adopted in May of 2021, which extended the window in which outdoor work is prohibited. According to the new legislation, all outdoor work is prohibited between 10 am and 3:30 pm from 1 June to 15 September. In addition, the legislation establishes a threshold at which all outdoor work must stop no matter the time of day or year. It also mandates that employers conduct annual health screenings for outdoor workers so that those who are more susceptible to heat-related disorders can be identified and assigned to other tasks.

This experience from Qatar has been shared with many countries in the past year, including in the Arab Region and Europe.

- D) **Access to justice:** In 2021, the Labour Ministry created an online platform for workers to file complaints in case of labour disputes. The online platform has increased workers' ability to lodge complaints in a more efficient way. Tens of thousands of workers file complaints every year – which shows the magnitude of the issues faced by workers, and also how access to justice is improving. Data from last year shows that the labour courts rule in favour of workers in more than 80 per cent of the cases. However, the time it takes for workers to get court hearings can be several months.

### 3. Can you tell me when the current technical cooperation agreement with Qatar will end?

This phase of the technical cooperation programme is set to finish at the end of the year. Discussions on a new four-year programme (2024-2027) are advanced.