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Subject : The State of Qatar's inputs on "Oceans and human rights"

The Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Special Procedures Branch, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva, and has the honor to refer to the Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment' Call for inputs dated September 26th 2024, addressed to Governments to receive their inputs, in preparation of his thematic report to be presented to the 58th session of the UN Human Rights Council on "**Oceans and human rights**".

The Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar has the honor to attach herewith **the information** received from the competent authorities in the State of Qatar concerning 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, October 16th 2024



Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Attention: Ms. Dorte Nita Simonsen
Attention: Ms. Viktoria Aberg
Human Rights Officers
Email: hrc-sr-environment@un.org

Object/subject: call for inputs – special rapporteur on the human right to clean, healthy and sustainable environment

1. Information regarding effective measures, policies, and laws for the protection, conservation, and restoration of oceans that incorporate a human rights approach. This includes measures based on the precautionary principle and other international law standards.

Protecting and conserving oceans while incorporating a human rights approach involves several measures, policies, and legal frameworks. Here is an overview focusing on the precautionary principle and other international standards.

1. Human Rights and Environmental Protection

- **Right to a Healthy Environment:** Recognizing that a healthy ocean is integral to the right to a healthy environment. This right is increasingly acknowledged in international law and national constitutions.

- **Indigenous and Local Communities:** Ensuring the rights of Indigenous and local communities who depend on marine resources for their livelihoods is crucial. This includes involving them in decision-making processes.

2. Precautionary Principle

- **Preventive Action:** Implementing measures to prevent environmental harm even in the absence of full scientific certainty. For instance, regulations should restrict activities that could potentially harm marine ecosystems.

- **Ecosystem-Based Management:** Policies should consider the interconnectedness of marine ecosystems and human activities, promoting sustainable practices that protect biodiversity.

3. International Frameworks and Agreements

- **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):** Establishes guidelines for the management of ocean resources and protection of marine environments. Qatar is a party to UNCLOS, which emphasizes sustainable use and conservation.

- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** Encourages the sustainable use and conservation of marine biodiversity, incorporating a rights-based approach to access and benefit-sharing.

- **Paris Agreement:** While primarily focused on climate change, it indirectly impacts ocean health by addressing emissions that affect ocean temperatures and acidity.

4. National Legislation and Policies

- **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs):** Qatar has indicated a target of 30% MPA by 2030 in the National Development Strategy (NDS-3) to protect vital marine ecosystems, ensuring that local communities can participate in the management of these areas.



- Pollution Control: Implement strict regulations to reduce pollution from land-based sources, shipping, and industrial activities that impact marine environments.

5. Public Participation and Access to Information

- Stakeholder Engagement: Policies should mandate public consultations, allowing community voices to shape ocean management strategies.

- Transparency: Ensuring access to information related to marine conservation efforts empowers communities and enhances accountability.

6. Education and Capacity Building

- Awareness Programs: Initiatives to educate communities about the importance of ocean conservation and their role in sustainable practices.

- Training for Local Stakeholders: Building capacity among local fishermen and communities to engage in sustainable practices and conservation efforts.

7. Climate Resilience and Adaptation

- Coastal Management: Developing strategies to protect coastlines from erosion and the impacts of climate change, which can disproportionately affect vulnerable communities.

- Restoration Projects: Investing in habitat restoration projects, such as mangrove replanting, which provide both ecological benefits and support local livelihoods.

8. Regional Cooperation

- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Collaboration: Engage in regional initiatives to address shared marine challenges, such as pollution and overfishing, while ensuring that human rights considerations are integrated into these discussions.

Qatar aligning its ocean protection efforts entails recognizing the vital link between healthy marine ecosystems and the well-being of its people. By adopting effective policies that incorporate the precautionary principle, Qatar can lead in sustainable ocean governance in the region.



2. Examples of the best practices and suggested solutions of human rights-based approaches to the environmentally sustainable management of marine, coastal and ocean areas, and resources. This includes examples at national and regional level.

Qatar has made strides into the environmentally sustainable management of its marine, coastal, and ocean resources by incorporating the best practices and suggested solutions at both national and regional levels:

1. National Vision 2030

- Qatar's National Vision emphasizes sustainable development, including the protection of natural resources. This framework promotes a balance between economic development and environmental sustainability, highlighting the importance of marine and coastal ecosystems.

2. Qatar's Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

- The establishment of MPAs, such as the Al Thakira Mangroves, aims to protect vital habitats and biodiversity. These areas not only conserve marine ecosystems but also engage local communities in their management, ensuring their rights and livelihoods are respected.

3. Community Engagement in Conservation

- Initiatives like "Qatar Environment Day" encourage public participation in conservation efforts. These events raise awareness and involve citizens in protecting marine environments, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.

4. Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)

- Qatar has implemented ICZM to address the impacts of development on coastal areas. This approach involves stakeholders in planning and decision-making, ensuring that community needs are considered.

5. Legislation and Policy Frameworks

- Qatar has laws aimed at protecting marine environments, such as the Environmental Protection Law, which regulates activities that may harm marine biodiversity.

Suggested Solutions

1. Strengthening Stakeholder Participation

- Develop more inclusive mechanisms for local communities, fishermen, and NGOs to participate in marine resource management. Establishing advisory committees with diverse representation can ensure that local knowledge and rights are recognized.

2. Capacity Building and Education



- Invest in training programs that equip local communities with sustainable fishing practices and conservation techniques. Educational initiatives can raise awareness about the importance of protecting marine resources and the rights associated with their use.

3. Monitoring and Reporting

- Establish transparent systems for monitoring marine health and the effectiveness of conservation measures. Regular reporting can involve community input, ensuring accountability and fostering trust between authorities and local stakeholders.

4. Regional Cooperation on Marine Issues

- Collaborate with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to address transboundary marine challenges, such as pollution and overfishing. Joint initiatives can incorporate promoting sustainable practices that benefit all nations involved.

5. Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge

- Recognize and integrate traditional ecological knowledge from local communities and Indigenous peoples in marine management. This approach can enhance sustainability and respect cultural rights.

6. Climate Adaptation Strategies

- Develop and implement climate resilience plans that protect coastal communities from the impacts of climate change. This includes investing in infrastructure that safeguards marine ecosystems while respecting the rights of vulnerable populations.

Regional Best Practices

1. Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiatives

- The GCC has undertaken joint projects focusing on marine conservation and pollution control. These initiatives can benefit by including local communities in decision-making processes.

2. Collaboration with NGOs

- Engaging with regional and international NGOs that focus on marine conservation can facilitate knowledge sharing and best practices.

3. Regional Marine Biodiversity Programs

- Participation in regional programs that aim to protect marine biodiversity, such as the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME), can foster a collaborative approach that respects local rights and ecosystems.

By building on these best practices and implementing suggested solutions, Qatar can further enhance its commitment to the environmentally sustainable management of its marine and coastal resources while ensuring that human rights are upheld.



3. Examples of how human rights related to the oceans have been fulfilled including through the protection of marginalized communities, including examples of community management of marine and coastal areas, restoring of ecosystems and fisheries, and the role and inclusion of Indigenous peoples, women, children and youth.

Qatar has seen several noteworthy initiatives for the past many years in community management of marine and coastal areas, restoring of ecosystems and fisheries involving people from all ages and gender. Here are examples illustrating how these rights have been upheld through effective community management, ecosystem restoration, and the inclusion of various groups:

1. Community Management of Marine Areas

- Local Fisheries Management: Fishermen's cooperatives in Qatar play a crucial role in managing marine resources. These cooperatives often involve local communities in decision-making processes, allowing them to have a say in sustainable fishing practices and resource allocation. This participatory approach helps protect their livelihoods while promoting sustainable practices.

2. Ecosystem Restoration Initiatives

- Mangrove Restoration Projects: Qatar has initiated several mangrove restoration projects, such as in Al Thakira, where local communities are actively involved. These initiatives not only restore vital ecosystems but also engage local residents, providing them with opportunities to participate in conservation efforts. Such projects often include training and awareness programs, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members.

3. Inclusion of Youth

- Youth Engagement Programs: Qatar's environmental education initiatives, such as the "Youth for the Environment" program, encourage youth participation in marine conservation efforts. These programs often involve hands-on activities, such as beach clean-ups and ecosystem monitoring, fostering a sense of stewardship among young people and ensuring their voices are heard in environmental discussions.

4. Indigenous and Local Community Rights

- Recognition of Traditional Knowledge: Efforts have been made to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge in marine resource management. Local communities often possess valuable insights into sustainable practices that have been passed down through generations. By recognizing and valuing this knowledge, Qatar supported the rights of these communities and enhances conservation efforts.

5. Policy Frameworks Supporting local communities

- National Policies: Qatar's National Development Strategy includes provisions for the protection of coastal and marine environments while emphasizing the importance of community involvement. By alignment of national policies, Qatar has effectively supported communities engaged in marine resource management.



6. Educational and Awareness Initiatives

- Public Awareness Campaigns: Campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the importance of marine conservation often target local communities, emphasizing their role in ecosystem health. These initiatives help empower communities by providing them with information about their rights and responsibilities in managing marine resources sustainably.

7. Collaborative Conservation Efforts

- Partnerships with NGOs: Collaborations with non-governmental organizations focused on marine conservation have facilitated community engagement and empowerment. These partnerships often include training for community members, enhancing their capacity to manage marine resources effectively while ensuring their rights are respected.

Through initiatives that promote sustainable management, restoration of ecosystems, and inclusion of women, youth, and Indigenous knowledge, Qatar is making strides toward ensuring that the rights and voices of all community members are recognized and respected in marine and coastal governance. These efforts contribute to a more sustainable and equitable management of marine resources.



4. Main challenges for the protection and prevention of damages to the ocean and coastal areas, in relation to the effective implementation of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, including ongoing policies or effort to overcome these.

Qatar faces several challenges in protecting its ocean and coastal areas while ensuring the effective implementation of a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Here are the main challenges along with ongoing policies and efforts to address them:

Main Challenges

1. Coastal Development and Urbanization

- Rapid urbanization and infrastructure development along the coast can lead to habitat destruction, pollution, and loss of biodiversity. The expansion of ports and real estate developments often disrupt marine ecosystems.

2. Pollution

- Industrial activities, agricultural runoff, and marine traffic contribute to pollution in Qatar's waters. Oil spills and discharge of untreated wastewater are particular concerns that affect marine life and coastal health.

3. Climate Change

- Rising sea levels, increased temperatures, and extreme weather events pose significant threats to coastal areas. Coral reefs and mangroves, vital for biodiversity and coastal protection, are particularly vulnerable.

4. Overfishing and Unsustainable Practices

- Overfishing and unsustainable fishing practices can deplete fish stocks and disrupt marine ecosystems. Ensuring sustainable fishing while supporting local communities is a significant challenge.

5. Lack of Public Awareness

- Limited public awareness about the importance of marine conservation and sustainable practices can hinder community engagement and support for protection initiatives.

Ongoing Policies and Efforts

1. Environmental Legislation

- Qatar has established a framework of environmental laws, including the Environmental Protection Law, which regulates activities harmful to marine and coastal ecosystems. This legislation is crucial for enforcing standards and protecting marine biodiversity.



2. National Marine Strategy

- The Qatar National Marine Strategy outlines plan for sustainable management of marine resources, emphasizing conservation, community involvement, and resilience to climate change. This strategy aims to balance development with environmental protection.

3. Protected Areas and Conservation Initiatives

- The establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs) is a key initiative. Areas like Al Thakira are designated to conserve critical habitats and promote biodiversity. Efforts are underway to expand the MPA network to include more vulnerable ecosystems.

4. Public Awareness Campaigns

- Initiatives aimed at raising public awareness about marine conservation, such as "Qatar Environment Day," educate citizens on the importance of protecting marine ecosystems and to a healthy environment.

5. Community Engagement

- Programs that involve local communities in conservation efforts are essential. Initiatives like community-based fisheries management encourage sustainable practices and empower local stakeholders, ensuring their voices are heard.

6. Regional Cooperation

- Qatar collaborates with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries on shared marine challenges, such as pollution and overfishing. Regional agreements and cooperative management strategies are essential for addressing transboundary issues.

7. Climate Adaptation Strategies

- Qatar is developing climate resilience strategies to protect coastal areas from the impacts of climate change. These strategies include restoring mangroves and investing in infrastructure that can withstand extreme weather events.

While Qatar faces significant challenges in protecting its ocean and coastal areas, ongoing policies and initiatives demonstrate a commitment to addressing these issues. By integrating environmental management and emphasizing community involvement, Qatar can work towards a sustainable future for its marine and coastal ecosystems. Continued efforts to raise awareness, enforce regulations, and promote sustainable practices will be crucial in overcoming existing challenges and ensuring the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment for all.



5. Information regarding frameworks, measures, or safeguards of the protection of the right to a healthy environment applicable to projects, plans or initiatives related with the conservation or protection of oceans, such as the creation of marine protected areas, protection of fisheries, blue carbon and development of projects and infrastructure.

In Qatar, the protection of the right to a healthy environment, particularly concerning marine conservation, is guided by several frameworks, measures, and initiatives. Here is an overview of the key components relevant to projects and plans related to oceans:

1. National Legislation and Policies

- Environmental Protection Law: Qatar's Law No. 30 of 2002 on the Protection of the Environment establishes a legal framework for environmental protection, including measures for marine conservation.

- Qatar National Vision 2030: This strategic plan emphasizes sustainable development, including environmental protection and the conservation of natural resources, which encompasses marine ecosystems.

2. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

- Establishment of MPAs: Qatar has initiated the creation of MPAs to protect marine biodiversity and habitats. These areas are critical for the conservation of fisheries and the overall health of marine environments. Qatar has indicated a target of 30% MPA by 2030 in the National Development Strategy (NDS-3) to protect vital marine ecosystems, ensuring that local communities can participate in the management of these areas.

- Qatar's Marine Environment Strategy: This strategy aims to enhance marine biodiversity and includes specific actions for the establishment and management of MPAs.

3. Fisheries Management

- Fisheries Law: Law No. 4 of 1983 regulates fishing activities and aims to sustain fish stocks and marine resources.

- Sustainable Fishing Practices: Qatar promotes sustainable fishing through regulations and initiatives that prevent overfishing and protect critical habitats.

4. Blue Carbon Initiatives

- Mangrove Restoration Projects: Qatar has initiated projects to restore mangroves, which play a vital role in blue carbon sequestration and coastal protection.

- Collaborations with Research Institutions: Partnerships with local and international research organizations focus on assessing and enhancing blue carbon ecosystems.



5. International Commitments

- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): Qatar is a signatory to the CBD, committing to the sustainable management of marine biodiversity.
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Particularly Goal 14, which emphasizes the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources.

6. Public Awareness and Community Engagement

- Environmental Awareness Campaigns: Initiatives to raise public awareness about marine conservation and the importance of protecting marine ecosystems.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Involving local communities, fishermen, and NGOs in conservation efforts to ensure sustainable practices.

7. Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs)

- Regulatory Requirement: EIAs are required for major projects that may affect the marine environment. This process helps assess potential impacts and identify mitigation measures.

8. Monitoring and Research Programs

- Marine Research Centers: Qatar supports research initiatives that monitor marine health and biodiversity, contributing to informed decision-making for conservation strategies.

Qatar has established a comprehensive framework for protecting the right to a healthy environment, particularly concerning marine ecosystems. Through legislation, strategic planning, and international cooperation, the country aims to conserve its marine resources while promoting sustainable development. These efforts are vital for the protection of fisheries, the establishment of MPAs, and the enhancement.

