

26 June 2014

Our reference: MIN/66828/2014

Shona Robison MSP
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Dear Ms Robison,

Thank you for your letter of 30 May about migrant workers in Qatar.

I share your concerns about the reports on migrant workers' conditions in Qatar, and I personally raised these issues with Mr Hassan Al Thawadi when I visited Doha in January this year. He is very aware of the concerns surrounding migrant workers and assured me that both he and the Qatari authorities are taking the issue seriously. Mr Al Thawadi also emphasised that steps were underway to address these concerns, but obviously they would not happen overnight.

There have recently been some encouraging developments since my visit. The Qatari Government announced on 14 May that it intended to reform the current labour law and abolish the kafala system of sponsorship. The authorities in Qatar have also pledged to investigate the reports of poor conditions for migrant workers.

In response to a request by FIFA, the Qatar 2022 World Cup Supreme Committee announced a 'Workers' Charter' on 12 February. This was developed with the International Labour Organisation, and seeks to protect the rights of migrant employees. The Charter includes measures on health and safety, living and working conditions, wages and grievances, and sets out measures to ensure all workers are treated equally and fairly. The Qatari Government has also announced an increase in the number of inspectors to check that companies adhere to Qatari labour laws.

Whilst I welcome the recent moves towards improving their labour laws by the Qatar authorities, the key is in the implementation. We will look to the Qataris to demonstrate that they are serious about implementing and enforcing their proposed reforms.

I note that you have invited Mr Al Thawadi to visit the UK to meet you and learn of your experiences in hosting the Commonwealth Games. The Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy remains keen to learn of others' experiences of hosting international sporting events and will appreciate any support or assistance offered. I hope that the current controversy surrounding the 2022 World Cup does not overshadow the meeting.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Scottish Government officials have developed good working relationships and take a collaborative approach

towards the Scottish Government's international activity. I know that the Scottish Government values the support offered by the FCO. I would be grateful if this collaborative approach could be reciprocated, and on issues which could impact on wider UK bilateral relationships, the FCO is consulted in the first instance. If appropriate, which I believe is the case here, your concerns should be raised through the FCO.

All my very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H Robertson', written in a cursive style.

THE RT HON HUGH ROBERTSON MP
Minister of State