

## DIFI HOSTS SEMINAR TO ADDRESS CHILD PROTECTION IN CROSS-BORDER FAMILY DISPUTES

*Conference Explores Dispute Resolution Alternatives Under Shari'a Legal System*

**Doha, Qatar, 23 May 2016:** Doha International Family Institute (DIFI) recently co-hosted a comprehensive seminar discussing the issue of family disputes affecting children, entitled 'Protecting the Best Interests of the Child in Cross-Border Family Disputes'.

The seminar was held in collaboration with Global Affairs Canada, the Ministry of Justice in Qatar, and the Hague Conference on Private International Law. It aimed to promote dialogue and consolidate interaction among regional government officials, judges, independent experts, and other regional authorities and stakeholders.

During the seminar, participants explored the topic of children's rights in cross-border family disputes, especially those that result in the illegal transfer of children across international borders. The event aimed to provide information on child protection agreements under the auspices of the Hague Conference on Private International Law, and how it relates to countries in the GCC.

Additionally, the seminar examined existing alternative means of dispute resolution, such as family mediation relating to the Shari'a legal system and how it can be used to solve cross-border family disputes and strengthen international legal cooperation, while taking into account the child's best interests.

Ms Noor Al Malki Al Jehani, Executive Director of DIFI, stated: "Qatar ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995. Therefore, protecting the wellbeing of the child is recognised by the State of Qatar as a key issue, and guides the work of its institutions in terms of taking into account the child's best interests in all legal and institutional procedures. Since the approval of the convention, Qatar has amended legislation to provide greater protection for children, and established entities that provide services to protect them from violence, abuse and exploitation."

"This seminar contributes to the strategy we have followed since 2013, which is to focus on Arab family issues through research, strengthen the scientific base, and encourage the exchange of knowledge among researchers and policy-makers on issues facing Arab families. Child protection is a key priority outlined in the research agenda of the Doha International Family Institute, which aims to develop policies based on scientific evidence," Ms Al Jehani concluded.



Stressing the importance of the gathering, Ms Najat Mahdi Al-Khalaf, Director of the Convention and International Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Justice in Qatar, said: "This regional seminar stems from the emphasis Qatar places on protecting children and families. It is also a response to recommendations made by a number of governmental and judicial representatives from 24 countries, including Qatar, which participated in the third Malta Judicial Conference on Cross-Frontier Family Law Issues, which was held in Malta in 2009."

"The opening speech of this seminar, given on behalf of His Excellency Dr Hassan bin Lahdan Al Mohannadi, Minister of Justice, discussed the importance of this seminar. His Excellency highlighted the notable strides achieved by Qatar in protecting children involved in family disputes, as well as the important role local institutions have in protecting the family and the child from disintegration and conflict, to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the convention," Ms Al-Khalaf concluded.

Representatives from the Ministries of Justice in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) participated in the seminar, and it was also attended by judges, law professors and those concerned with family and child protection issues.

Dr Christophe Bernasconi, Secretary-General of the Hague Conference on Private International Law, said: "The Hague Conference on Private International Law – The World Organisation for Cross-border Co-operation in Civil and Commercial Matters – is most grateful to the government of Qatar, DIFI, and of course Canada, the co-sponsor of the seminar, for providing a platform to discuss cross-border child protection."

"The seminar increased awareness of the Child Abduction Convention, the Child Protection Convention, and other relevant Hague conventions in Qatar and the wider region. It also served to further strengthen the ties between the region and the Hague Conference in general."

DIFI is a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) and, by co-hosting this event, DIFI showcased its dedication to supporting QF's mission of fostering a progressive society that prioritises family and social development.

For more information about DIFI, please visit: [www.difi.org.qa](http://www.difi.org.qa)

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### **About Doha International Family Institute (DIFI)**

DIFI is a leading international institution in Qatar that supports research, policy and outreach programs that promote the development of Arab families. With research as its core focus, DIFI supports a wide range of international, regional and local evidence-based studies relating to marriage and family structure, women, fertility and demography, child and family safety, and parenting. The Institution is comprised of three divisions; *Family Research Division*, *Family Policy Division* and *Social Outreach Division*. Its body of work



includes contributions to the UN Secretary General's campaign to end violence against women; international and regional colloquia in partnership with most UN funds and programmers, including UNDESA, UNFPA, UNAIDS and UNICEF; and the funding and development of a wide range of publications on family in the new millennium. A member of Qatar Foundation, it has a Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

### **Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential**

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development (QF) is a private, non-profit organisation that is supporting Qatar on its journey from carbon economy to knowledge economy by unlocking human potential, for the benefit of not only Qatar, but the world. QF was co-founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir, and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Qatar Foundation's Chairperson. QF's work encompasses education, research and community development. World-class universities are brought to Qatar to help create an education sector in which young people can develop the attitudes and skills required for a knowledge economy. At the same time, QF builds Qatar's innovation and technology capacity by developing and commercialising solutions through key sciences. The Foundation also works to foster a progressive society while enhancing cultural life, protecting Qatar's heritage and addressing immediate social needs in the community.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, visit <http://www.qf.org.qa>

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