

## DOHA YOUTH FORUM PREPARES NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS AS DRIVERS FOR CHANGE ON CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

*Qatar Foundation-Organised Event Brings Together Young Qataris And Expats To Probe  
Policies On Tackling Crime And Ways To Improve Crime Prevention*

**Doha, Qatar, 31 March 2015:** The countdown has commenced to April's inaugural Doha Youth Forum on Crime and Criminal Justice, which is being organised by Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) in collaboration with the Organising Committee of the 13<sup>th</sup> United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

The Forum is the first event of its kind in the Middle East and will be held over three days from 7-9 April 2015 at the Qatar National Convention Centre. It has been timed to precede the 13<sup>th</sup> United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice that will be held in Qatar from 12-19 April.

The Doha Youth Forum is a unique initiative launched by the State of Qatar to engage young people on issues related to crime prevention and criminal justice, as well as familiarise them with the role of the United Nations and its functions. Additionally, it will discuss student issues in the region and challenges faced by communities in fighting and preventing crime. It will also suggest practical solutions to issues of criminal justice.

The event supports Qatar Foundation's strategic objective to promote the culture of innovation and creativity while nurturing the human development of the country's future leaders within an engaged society.

The student delegates will role-play the 13<sup>th</sup> UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, as part of the Forum, to discuss three designated themes. The first theme addresses successes and challenges in implementing comprehensive crime prevention, criminal justice policies and strategies to promote the rule of law at national and international level, and support sustainable development.

The second theme questions national approaches to public participation in strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice. The final theme will engage young participants on their responses to evolving forms of crime such as cybercrime and trafficking in cultural property, including lessons learned and international cooperation.

Following the conclusion of the Forum, specially selected students will be given the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to present the findings and chosen recommendations from their summit to the UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice a few days later.

The UN Congress is held every five years, and its purpose is to encourage the exchange of ideas between international governmental institutions, non-governmental organisations, criminologists and experts with other related specialisms. In this way, the Congress provides an opportunity to share experience in the fields of research, law and policy development, as well as explore new ideas in the area of crime prevention and criminal justice.

### Preparations for Optimum Representation

Students and organisers are currently completing final preparations for the event, to ensure that participants' voices will be brought to the forefront at the Forum.

Following the original announcement of the event, QF received 185 applications from students at universities across Qatar. Some 123 Qatari and international participants have since been selected, principally between the ages of 16 and 26.

Mohammad Al Shahrani a successful applicant who is a Business Administration student at the College of the North Atlantic – Qatar, said: "This Forum is unique because it is being held here for the first time. It will provide a great opportunity to explore new issues, like crime around the world."

Al Shahrani acknowledged the Forum's positive objectives to build participants' knowledge, as well as offer the opportunity to explore new cultures. "It is rewarding being able to work together to discover new ideas, and learn more about the work undertaken by the United Nations. And, by taking part in making important decisions, it raises awareness of the role we all play in the development of our own countries," he said.

When asked what he hopes to gain from the experience, Al Shahrani said: "I am looking forward to developing my abilities in public speaking and communication skills, acting on responsibility, meeting others from different backgrounds, and making proposals as the Forum seeks to propose solutions."

Another participant, Al Bandari Sultan Al Abdulla, from the Community College of Qatar, says that she is participating because the Doha Youth Forum's subject matter is closely related to her field of study. "I have taken part in Qatar Debates' activities in the past, and I applied to join the Doha Youth Forum because it is a constructive Qatari initiative for young people; providing an important opportunity to gain experience," she said.

Al Abdulla added that she has particularly benefited from orientation sessions that were organised by QF to support the students' involvement in the event and maximise the benefits of attendance. These sessions provided her with the opportunity to discuss and explore the Forum's themes in advance and allowed her to be better prepared for the event.

"These orientation sessions taught me how to engage in a dynamic dialogue. This has boosted my confidence and given me the ability to open up to the outside world and communicate with students who come from completely different cultural backgrounds," she said.

Acquiring experience and honing new skills was also the motivation for Mariam Al Nasr, an employee of the Communications Department at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, who is looking forward to acting as a role model to young Qatari women by taking part in the Forum.

Al Nasr described the preparatory sessions, saying: "In the beginning, we met with the organising committee and the panel of teachers. This was followed by a meeting about the SharePoint platform, which allows us to communicate with each other as well as the teachers. In addition, there were orientation meetings that gave us background about the law and crime in general, as well as giving us a clearer picture of the Forum's subjects and discussion points. We were also able to exchange ideas and opinions."

Al Nasr pointed out that she gained many positive insights from her participation in the early stages. "I had the opportunity to look at criminal justice issues and problems that are present in other societies but that do not necessarily occur in Qatar," she said. "And I learned about the interaction between the law and politics abroad. I was able to improve my research and information gathering skills, as we were instructed to put together five proposals in preparation for the UN Congress."

Hala Abu Saad, who is pursuing her degree in Educational Leadership and University and College Management at Qatar University, said that the Forum's subject matter was important because violent crime was on the rise around the world: "Even if this violence is in faraway places, it poses a threat that should not be ignored."

"Everyone should have a role, however small, in combatting such issues in society. I am a mother of two girls and I feel that this issue is a priority for me because it is important to know how to deal with violence and crime in the world. This will help me prepare my daughters for dealing with this problem when they grow up," she concluded.

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## **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. Qatar Foundation was co-founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir, and Chairperson Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser. 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.