

Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners' Rights
Shona Robison MSP



The Scottish Government
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Rt Hon Hugh Robertson MP
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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In 2014 Scotland Welcomes the World



MINISTERIAL
SUPPORT UNIT

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Dear Mr Robertson

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As you know from media coverage in recent months, significant concerns exist in relation to the working conditions and general treatment of migrant workers involved in the construction of facilities linked to the World Cup in Qatar in 2022.

As the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary with portfolio responsibility for both Sport and Equality matters, I was asked to comment on an investigative report recently published in the Sunday Mail. Following my public statements about the importance of ensuring respect for human rights, I was approached by Duncan McCormick, UK Representative of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (the Qatar 2022 organising committee). In the course of a very constructive meeting I was able to put on record the Scottish Government's continuing concern about the treatment of migrant workers involved in construction projects in Qatar. Mr McCormick, for his part, was able to provide me with some helpful information about the situation in Qatar and the policies and intentions of the Committee.

Following my meeting with Mr McCormick, I have now written to Hassan Al-Thawadi, Secretary-General of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy. That letter welcomes recent positive indications that the Government of Qatar intends to pursue labour law reforms, and encourages the Committee in providing any support it can for the establishment of a clear timetable for implementation of these changes. Given my responsibility for Sport, the Commonwealth Games and Equalities, I have invited Mr Al-Thawadi to meet me during his next visit to the UK so that we can share our experiences and help to promote a wider dialogue around embedding human rights and safe working practices as part of the legacy of major international sporting events from the outset.

Against that background, I would encourage the UK Government to continue to press the issue of migrant worker rights with the Government of Qatar in the context of both bilateral relations and in the context of other engagement and dialogue, as was done for example in the course of the recent examination of Qatar's human rights record under the Universal Periodic Review process.

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The Scottish Government remains ready and willing to offer its support and assistance to UK Government activity in this area, including in the context of engagement in Qatar by Scottish Ministers, and through the sharing of experience generated by the Commonwealth Games. This would complement wider expertise that the UK has developed around hosting major international sporting events, such as London 2012. It would also be consistent with the Scottish Government's existing commitment to contribute to, and support, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's ongoing coordination of activity aimed at implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.



SHONA ROBISON