

QFC Authority imposes a financial penalty against Awan Media International LLC

Doha, Qatar, 1 June 2023: The QFC Authority announced today that on 20 March 2023 it imposed a financial penalty in the sum of US\$3,000 on Awan Media International LLC (“the Firm”) for contravening a Relevant Requirement pursuant to Compliance and Enforcement Rule (“CER”) 6.1.1(C) of the QFCA Rules.

The Firm is a QFC Entity which was incorporated by registration and licensed in the QFC on 19 April 2018. The Firm’s licence was withdrawn by the Qatar Financial Centre Authority on 2 February 2020. Nevertheless the Firm remains a QFC Entity. All QFC entities were required to submit a Beneficial Ownership (“BO”) report to the Companies Registration Office within 90 days of enactment of the amended QFCA Rules (from 6 September 2021). The 90-day period expired on 5 December 2021, which was later extended by a legislative amendment to 31 December 2021. However, the Firm failed to submit the required BO report by 31 December 2021. A contravention of General Rule 8A is taken to be a contravention of a Relevant Requirement for the purposes of the CER Rules.

The QFC Authority considered the financial penalty above was reasonable considering all the relevant circumstances of the case, namely that: the Firm is registered in the QFC; the Firm contravened a Relevant Requirement as outlined above; the contravention was serious because it concerns BO which is a Money Laundering / Terrorist Financing (“ML / TF”) vulnerability; there are indications the Firm bears the characteristics of a shell company, which is a ML / TF risk per Financial Action Task Force guidelines; issuing the financial penalty would deter other QFC Entities from being in contravention of non-compliance with ML / TF matters; and a financial penalty will educate the QFC community about the importance of ML / TF compliance issues.

(Ends)

About the QFC Authority

The QFC Authority is a body established in 2005 by Article 3 of the QFC Law to operate the QFC in accordance with its objectives in Article 5 of the QFC Law. It licenses and administers firms that conduct business in or from the QFC. It has a broad range of powers to license, monitor and, when necessary, discipline non-regulated firms and individuals in accordance with the QFCA Enforcement Policy 2019. Further details are available on the website www.qfc.qa.

