

Opening speech

By

His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa AL-THANI

Emir of the State of Qatar

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In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate

Excellencies and Highnesses,

Distinguished Audience,

Welcome to the State of Qatar, I hope you're having a pleasant stay. I would like on the occasion of the twelfth edition of the Doha Forum to pay tribute to the importance of this forum, the discussions it hosts and the recommendations it presents. This year's edition comes at a crucial and critical time in our Arab nation's history. Many of the events taking place in our region, and in various parts of the world, were topics listed on the agendas of the previous editions of this Forum, and I recall, among other things, that since the fourth forum in 2004, and over successive editions, the Forum has been urging those who were delaying reforms in our region to proceed with them. We were certainly not alone in criticizing, advocating and advising, and had such appeals found sympathetic ears the history of the region may have taken different paths over the past year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Arab freedom uprisings were preceded by manifestations of complete rigidity, paralyzed policies and wide public anger. Some ignored these indicators and were taken aback by the outburst of revolutions that heralded a historic and

unprecedented transformation showing that the Arab peoples are shaking off the long period of indolence and claiming back a role in the furtherance of human civilization.

The Arab revolutions did or are about to achieve victory, but precious innocent blood was shed, and still is, for some regimes still oppose immediate reform.

Distinguished audience,

Arab peoples revolted so the Arab Man could recover his freedom and dignity, but they will also be the support the regional relations system will be built on over the coming years.

For the Arab citizen has longed for regional integration but was powerless to attain that goal when he was not in control of his destiny. Today we believe that the Arab integration will no longer be a mere hope of the people ignored by the rulers since governments will be committed to it under the pressure of a public opinion.

Just as Arab public opinion claims freedom for the citizens, so it does for the nations. Palestine is the last Arab homeland that has been deprived of its freedom to-date, and it's time it gets it. In this regard, one should assimilate the deep significance of the great concern shown by the Arab peoples towards the Palestinian cause despite their preoccupation with Arab Spring-driven instability at home.

That's why I think it is wrong to leave the Palestinian issue hanging on the political and international agendas, for the will of the Arab peoples will not allow it anymore, and I call on Israel to take a positive step towards peace and coexistence.

I also call from this forum for the Arab Spring to be matched by a Just Peace in the Middle East Spring. The Arab peoples will never forget Palestine, just as we do not forget the thousands of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, nor Gaza, the besieged by Israel and others. Therefore, Israel should seize the opportunity to commit to the rules of international legitimacy, to recognize the legitimate rights of the Arab Palestinian people, to withdraw from the Syrian Golan and Lebanese

Shebaa Farms, and to refrain from practices that create de facto situations hindering the future achievement of a just peace, such as building settlements and the Judaization of Jerusalem. Otherwise it will miss a chance for peace with the peoples, for the coming Arab generation that crafted the revolutions, rejected and challenged the injustice of their kin will even less suffer the oppression of strangers. Can anybody believe that this generation would accept an on-going colonial issue in its homeland? This generation is complex-free and does not deem an occupier-occupied situation acceptable, and does not bow, as the world does, to Israel's monopoly of force and nuclear and other weapons in our region. It's also a generation willing to develop their country and to live in peace, prosperity, equality and in parity with other nations. And we must exploit this opportunity.

Here we must pause and reflect upon a major political development that took place a few days ago on the Israeli political scene, where the Israeli Prime Minister has managed to gather the largest and strongest government coalition in Israel's history.

After Kadima party rallied the government, the Prime Minister can today boast the support of 94 deputies out of 120, thus denying himself the longtime Israeli argument of the governmental coalitions' chronic frailness that prevents any flexibility or concessions.

If this coalition's goal is not to better resist post-election U.S. pressure, we say in good faith that if there is will for peace the Israeli Prime Minister should fear no opposition, and we ask for a bold step, long overdue, on the path towards a peace based on the cessation of settlement, the borders of 1967 and the two-state solution. Israel cannot rely anymore on the friendship of rulers that have been overthrown by the Arab Spring revolutions, nor should it count on the support of those who are against their own people and public opinion, for in this case it will soon find itself with no friends at all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The revival of popular will in our region is not limited to the repossession by the citizen of his political rights, but also his economic and social rights. Privation was one of the most important causes that sparked the Arab Spring revolutions. And it'll soon dawn to us that, as in third world countries, it's impossible to have a transition to democracy in the Arabic countries without development policies, gap bridging between rich and poor, and the creation of appropriate economic conditions for the expansion of the middle class. I would like here to stress the following challenges to the change process.

First, there are lots of complicated economic problems that either require time-consuming processing, either could not be solved at once before long, either are impossible to solve at once, such as economic growth decrease, high unemployment rate and low productivity. We must inform the people about those difficulties in full transparency, in order for them to tell what can be processed immediately from what will take more time, and what are the priorities.

Second, political freedom, which is the foundation of democracy, does not lead to economic justice if not accompanied by social and humanitarian development as well as fair social policies.

Third, the utmost importance should be placed on solving the issue of unemployment and on the re-evaluation of the educational systems so to match the needs of the labor market. Unemployment is a major factor in undermining social stability, for not only does it deprive the worker of his income, it also negatively affects his self-esteem, which leads to frustration, anger or rebellion. In order to protect the gains of these revolutions, priority should be given to addressing this problem.

Fourth: The ultimate goal should be sustainable development, which involves achieving its economic, social, human and environmental general objectives. I would like through your forum to underscore the challenges facing the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals in developing countries, as the achievement of most of these goals by the 2015 deadline has become out of reach in the poorest countries. This applies to the objectives related to providing

sanitation, provisioning drinking water, ensuring primary education for all, protecting biodiversity, reducing mortality rate among under-five children, empowering women and reducing the number of undernourished people in the world.

The food and economic crisis that affected the world recently played a major role in worsening the situation. Food shortage has deepened poverty in the poorest countries, and the economic crisis has led to a decline in direct investment and exports. Even public aid to these countries, which resisted during the great economic downturn, has dropped in 2011. This phenomenon is disturbing, especially if the decline persists. The fear of austerity policies implemented by most of the donor countries has led to reduced aid to developing countries, though with a lag.

I would like in this regard to emphasize that the State of Qatar has doubled its government aid in 2011 compared to 2010, reaching \$ 730 million. Estimates for public and private aid for this year are about \$ 990 million, which does not include aid provided by some government agencies. We urge all donor countries to commit to the ratio recommended by the United Nations of an aid equal to 7 per thousand of their national gross income.

The expected delay in achieving the Millennium Development Goals beyond 2015 should not deter us from achieving it later, and we should at once set additional development goals that take into account the recent events and changes as well as the wide disparities between individuals within the same country.

The determination to attain the Millennium Development Goals and to improve them continuously will help achieving peace and prosperity for all.

Distinguished audience,

The Doha Forum, which has been convening on a regular basis for a second decade now, will remain a platform where opinions about events in the region and the world are exchanged, where ideas about the future are presented, and where proposals that help promoting democracy, development and free trade are made.

In conclusion, I wish you again a pleasant stay among your brothers and friends in Qatar and success for your forum.

May peace and God's mercy and blessings be upon you.