

HH the Emir Inaugurates Doha Forum and Enriching the Future Conference



Doha, May 20 (QNA)

HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani on Monday inaugurated the Doha Forum and Enriching the Middle East's Economic Future Conference at the Ritz Carlton Hotel, in the presence of a number of Their Excellencies Heads of State and participating delegations.

Addressing the opening of the Forum, HH the Emir stressed that the Forum has become an international platform where there is interaction of ideas on important regional and international issues, in order to reach visions that would form bases for a serious collective action toward finding ways to implement those visions in a manner ensuring the widest possible common interest.

HH the Emir noted that there is no doubt that the world order has witnessed successive changes, not only in the political domains, but also in the economic, social, intellectual and humanitarian fields, in general.

"In this context, the Arab world was one of the most prominent regional arenas that were affected by these changes, making the current stage that the region is undergoing now, one of the most important stages of its history," HH the Emir said.

"One of the most prominent features that we notice today in the Arab world is the peoples call

for comprehensive reform, and the pursuit to achieve that by various ways and means, first and foremost realizing political participation in the management of public affairs," HH made clear.

"We must not forget that the prevalence of poverty, unemployment, absence of decent means of living and violation of human rights under the reign of autocratic, repressive and corrupt regimes, were the driving forces behind the unfolding of Arab revolutions that have been targeting popular participation in the political and economic decision-making," said HH the Emir.

HH the Emir noted "Achieving this goal requires beginning with developing the institutions that guarantee the scale of this participation, which cannot succeed unless coupled with plans to disseminate democratic awareness, and an active effort in the sustainable development considered as an inseparable face of the process of comprehensive reform based on a modern educational system, thus we ensure the practice of respecting others opinions to achieve a social interaction based on dialogue rather than violence".

"Then the consolidation of peace and stability at the national level would be possible, and a general conviction in favor of the joint interests of the community would prevail, which would be reflected on the promotion of the democratic process because it will not be just a process of casting votes in the ballots boxes during specific periods," said HH the Emir.

HH the Emir expressed confidence that those who reject reform and change and are unable to understand the realities of the age and modern societies needs are bound to be changed by the necessities of history and the pass of time, as peoples do neither live on slogans nor they are only satisfied with ideologies.

HH the Emir went on to say in his address at the Doha Forum and Enriching the Middle East's Economic Future Conference "We have often drawn attention to what I said earlier on several occasions, not as bragging of what we have achieved in a gradual calculated way in Qatar, but to prove that what we had done was indispensable in the current historical stage".

"That is why we feel sorrow and grief to see the brotherly Syrian people's revolution entering its third year without a clear prospect to stop the bloody conflict, which has left behind tens of

thousands of innocent victims, millions of displaced people and refugees, in addition to massive material destruction as a result of the adherence to military solution by the Syrian regime," HH the Emir added.

"It is no longer acceptable from the powerful countries in the international community not to act to put an end to this terrible tragedy and the worsening humanitarian disaster, while at the same time they want to determine the identity of those who defend the Syrian people under various pretexts. Sadly, this happens after the failure of all Arab and international initiatives to push the Syrian regime to listen to the voice of reason," HH said.

Regarding the settlement of the Palestinian issue and the conflict in the Middle East, HH the Emir said "We have heard in the past that reform has to be put aside until a peaceful settlement is reached with Israel, but everyone should realize that such thinking is no longer tenable after the Arab Spring revolutions, which were necessitated by the propensity towards reform and pursuit to implement the ensuing outcomes, and that could not be achieved unless it is coupled with the quest to find a peaceful settlement for the Palestinian cause and the Middle East conflict."

HH the Emir noted "The reason for this is that the Arab Spring revolutions have set Israel in a direct confrontation today with the Arab peoples and not only with their rulers. Those peoples would not accept any more that negotiations or the political process be as an end in itself, and consequently there must be a serious effort to achieve a just peace as the main objective and goal of the peace process".

HH the Emir emphasized that our region would not witness stability and security unless and until there is a just solution to the Palestinian cause and withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied in 1976, on the basis of resolutions of the international and Arab legality and the right of the Palestinian people to exercise all their inalienable national rights through establishing their independent State with its capital in Al-Quds (Jerusalem).

"For this, the settlement practices and Judaization of Jerusalem in addition to being a violation of international law, they undermine the foundations of the two-state solution , and Israel should not lose the opportunity provided by the Arab Peace Initiative," said HH the Emir.

At the beginning of the Forum, HE the Prime and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor Al Thani delivered a speech in which he stressed that the Forum has important axes which had its significance if taking into account what is happening on the global arena in the political, economic and social fields and the resulting significant impacts on the Arab world, especially the countries that witnessed the Arab Spring and entered into the institutional reform process.

HE the Premier explained that the Forum axes did not ignore the repercussions of the global economy on human rights and the challenges as well as opportunities offered by digital media that are contemporary issues require discussion and exchange of ideas to benefit everyone.

HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister stressed that this forum has become an annually milestone of intellectual activity and cross-fertilization of views in the political and economic fields for more than a decade. The Forum has proved its usefulness after it has begun with a modest beginning and expanded its theme until today to be a platform to discuss everything pertaining to democracy and free trade.

HE the Premier pointed out that that First Qatar Conference on Democracy and Free Trade was organized in April 2001 under the title of " Qatari-American Conference on Democracy and Free Trade". The Conference was focused on the fundamental issues which had significant role in activating the democratic process, such as free trade, economic rights, human rights, press freedom and the relationship between religions in the shadow of political differences.

HE the Prime Minister added that the second conference was held in March 2002 and was focused on opening the door to broad, comprehensive, deep and responsible dialogue between civilizations and religions, especially Muslim-Christian dialogue, and linking between the free and productive economy, as well as enhancing popular participation and the right of all peoples and individuals in obtaining what imposed by the respect of democratic principles. One of the key points that have been also emphasized in the conference was the importance of the women's role in society as an active and essential member in the development path.

HE the Premier pointed out that the third conference was held in 2003 and focused on the overlap between the democracy and free trade issues, expansion the democracy discussions to include religion matters and inter-religious dialogue. The conference also focused on the media

role and pedagogical issues and women's role and rights, with a special focus on the consequences of all this on our Arab region. The economic dimension of free trade and open markets was strongly presented in the conference discussions, especially from the perspective of the governments role in the economic process in the light of globalization.

In the 4th conference, emphasis was laid on four axes serving as an input for deepening popular participation in the Arab and Muslim world, where energy policies, market economy stepping up the economic and the democratic course, including the mechanism for transformation into democracy in the Arab world were stressed, HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim said.

The role of the outside world, especially the role of Europe in the transformation, as well as relationship between culture and development gained prominence in that conference, he noted.

In the 5th conference, he continued, issues related to the greater Middle East initiative and the role of civil society as well as creating the appropriate milieu and advancing the role of woman were studied.

The 6th conference focused on the perception of human rights in the light of international changes and the need to realize the cherished political reform in the Arab world as well as the role of youths and civil society organizations in the process.

HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim also noted that the 7th conference was a qualitative shift as it shed light on Arab perception of political reform and democratic expression, whereas the 8th conference dwelt on issues related to politics, development, security , free trade , information, culture , education, modern technology , globalization and their role in economic development and democratic reform.

The 9th conference, explained HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim, laid emphasis on sharing world influence, reform of international cooperation and the position of the Arab pole in a multi-polar world. It also focused on other issues, inter-alia the economic crisis as well as global good governance.

Post-crisis investment, immigration, creed, education, scientific research, world peace and stability were at the centre of the 10th conference whereas the 11th conference discussed the world political perspectives, Middle East transformation scenes and the 12th conference dwelt

on development as the future of Middle East.

"From that humble start we arrived at a deeper understanding of what we should do," he said, expressing the hope the forum will continue to discuss the bases of transparency and objectivity in order to help diagnose preclusions and pinpoint remedies. "As such, we have progressed firmly for the benefit of society", he said.

HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim noted that future generations in the Arab world and humanity at large will always recall the efforts of HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani for lifting the country and the Ummah towards sublimity.

This forum wouldn't have arrived at its current status without the strenuous efforts of HH the Emir, he said, citing HH's continued championing and sponsorship of the gathering.

The opening ceremony was attended by HE Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah, President of the Qatar Administrative Control and Transparency Authority, as well as by Sheikhs, ministers, heads of diplomatic missions and guests. (QNA)