

بِسْمِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



*Unofficial Translation*

*The Address of His Highness*

*Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani,  
Amir of the State of Qatar*

*At*

*The U.S.A. and Islamic World Forum*

*Doha*

*April 10, 2005*

*In the Name of God,  
The Most Compassionate, The Most Merciful*

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*Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Honourable Audience,*

*It gives me pleasure to meet with you today in Doha to which you have come to participate in an important meeting, which provides an opportunity for each of its two parties to present its viewpoint to the other party and listen to the other view to find out that half of its point of view lies with the other partner in the dialogue and both parties would realize that whenever they meet they have to seek the truth and look for the meaning of "friend" in the other.*

*Your meeting is an occasion which Qatar is proud to host for the third time. It brings near to one another two sides that discovered after September 11 that there are obstacles that cannot be ignored nor taken lightly if they want the connections between them to grow and progress. Besides, some of the relations between them are still hostage to distorted impressions and rigid ideas which have to be discarded and be replaced by new, daring understanding that does not feel too haughty to admit being on the wrong or find the volume of work to be achieved too large, or succumb to those who try to plant despair in the future of a strategic relation that has before it wide horizons that must be explored.*

*If the participants in the previous rounds of this dialogue had tried to monitor the progress of the relation between the two sides and were struck by the challenges it had faced, your meeting this year has to build on previous work and look this time for the keys of change which the two parties – the American and the Islamic – have to use if they want their relations to enter through a wide gate into a secure future shaded by a mutual desire for cooperation and where agreement on a common scale of priorities prevails.*

One of the keys of change has to attend to the method of the dialogue itself, where the two parties have to be concerned with the form as much as with the content. Haughtiness on the one party or indifference on the other may lead to frustration or despair of those who rely on this dialogue for the development of the U.S.A. relations with the Islamic World.

I believe that the heritage of each of us constantly urges for promoting and advancing the dialogue in support of constructive communication with the other. Our Arab tradition advocates leniency and flexibility in dialogue, for leniency leads to affection. In our wide Islamic World, we follow the guiding words of our gracious Prophet, that: "wisdom is the goal of persistent search of the believer, who takes it from whomever he hears it and does not care from which source it came out." We find that this call establishes the principles of sound dialogue and opens the way for taking from the others what is good, without apprehension or sensitivity. That is why it is necessary that the two parties strive to conduct their dialogue in an understanding spirit so that the arrangement of priorities proposed by one party should not be seen to be instructions, or the explanations presented by the other party as an attempt to repudiate some commitments.

### *Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The keys of the most vital change in the course of relations between the U.S.A. and the Islamic World are subject to the progress in the common issues between the two parties.

Although democracy has begun after more than sixty years to occupy its place on the list of topics between the two parties, and we find countries in our Islamic World moving at different degrees towards the application of democracy, a final approach to be agreed upon by the two parties on this issue has not yet been crystallized. There are still some clouds looming over the subject which need to be dispersed by shedding more light on them by this dialogue.

*When the Islamic World sees the American attention to democracy after being affected by the September 11 events, it wonders in some of its parts whether this interest is an expression of a stance by an administration or whether it embodies complete change in the position of a state. Perhaps this is the question why the reform efforts in those parts of the Islamic World are still slack, and had to start after September 11, and are still betting on the time factor, and that some slight changes could do for the time being. This requires of the U.S.A. and the Islamic countries to arrive through dialogue at a point of transparency where any obscurity is clarified regarding the future of an unprecedented experience for political transformation that has begun and must be completed, so that the Muslim peoples, who are the prime persons concerned with reform can be assured that their hopes will not be betrayed due to changes that might take place in the balance of interests, and that their wide expectations can no longer be rewarded with some limited cosmetic changes.*

**Honourable Audience,**

*The dialogue between the two parties on democracy needs to be an issue of agreement and not contention, an issue that binds and not disunites, specially when in a number of experiences of democratic transformation in our Islamic World, from Afghanistan to Palestine and Iraq , the sound of weapons got mixed with the votes of electors in varying degrees to the extent of leaving a gap in assessments not only between the American and the Islamic sides, but also within each one of them, regarding the ideal way the outside world could help in democracy building. If there is a minority in the Islamic World who would like to urge the outside world to strongly put the pressure for democracy, and others who are averse to the outside world and eschew democracy itself, there are large, enlightened masses who realize that they have to make the way to democracy by themselves, but without refusing contact with whomever comes forward to help them complete the course.*

*There is another issue of no less importance, Ladies and Gentlemen, which if tackled, would produce a significant leap in relations between the two parties. An observer of the Islamic World, in its heart or peripheries, can see burning hotbeds of tension, and acute problems that affect the national security and territorial integrity of a number of its countries, the regional and international complications of which have often gone beyond those narrow boundaries where those problems started.*

*The stability and prosperity of the Islamic world, which constitutes a huge block of land where about 27% of the world population live, and which has abundant resources, must mean a lot to the world. That is why I think that part of the American-Islamic dialogue must be directed to finding means of easing the tension in those hotbeds and helping Muslim countries, the preservation of whose national integration represents a corner-stone in regional stability in more than one place, especially since the U.S.A. had in the last few years either entered or got near to the core of the most complicated developments in them.*

***Honourable Audience,***

*In its dialogue with the U.S.A., the Islamic World is aware that it is a dialogue of a special kind, conducted with one of the international actors who is most involved in its problems throughout more than half a century. This dialogue expands to include tens of issues such as regional conflicts, the transfer of technology, enhancing democracy, free trade, economic reforms, upgrading education, the war against terrorism, work for the freedom of information and other questions which have become so many that they knit the Muslims and the Americans in a strong fabric that cannot be easily broken for years to come.*

*I think that the U.S.A. from which symbols of economics, thought and politics have come to this dialogue, and with whom we are proud to deliberate, has on its part realized that its dialogue with the Islamic world is a special addition. After having seemed to be*

*during the cold war years as an arena for international competition and world conflict , the Islamic world has come to look with its aspirations and problems and its history and future, as a partner with who dialogue is indispensable at a time when the U.S.A. is looking very attentively into the future.*

*The need of both parties for each other places on Qatar-Brookings project, which was formed last year as a sponsor of a permanent American-Islamic dialogue, the responsibility of enhancing this dialogue and coming up with practicable recommendations that boost the seriousness of both parties to work together, a responsibility for which I wish success , as I also wish your conference every success.*

*May the peace, the mercy and blessings of God be upon you.*

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