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OPENING SPEECH BY MARTIN INDYK

DOHA, QATAR

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MR. INDYK: Yohannes, Sheik Hamad bin Halafel Altani, Prime Minister, first Deputy Prime Minister, and foreign minister. Ministers, ambassadors, distinguished guests, and participants in the Second Annual U.S. Islamic World Forum in Doha.

On behalf of my co-convenors, Shibley Talhami, Steven Cohen, and Peter Singer, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to the opening of this second conference on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World.

Conceived in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, when a great chasm seemed to have opened up between the United States and the Islamic World, this dialogue between leaders of the Islamic World and the United States has been designed to try to build bridges of understanding.

This forum, I believe, Yohannes is unique. Today, over 100 leaders from some 36 Islamic countries and 50 American leaders from both sides of the political spectrum gathered here, under your auspices, in Doha, to engage in an intense dialogue.

One of the biggest problems I think that has emerged since 9/11 is that all too often the United States and the Islamic World have been talking past each other. And the purpose of this dialogue is not only to speak but to listen, and to be listened to. And in this process of building a network of personal relations and understanding, finding common purposes, we hope to benefit the peoples of both sides.

Already the dialogue has generated a number of spin off activities, in particular, Yohannes, at this conference for the first time we will have a meeting of science and technology leaders who have come together here and in an earlier symposium in Washington at the Brookings Institution to begin to see how they can work together to advance science in the Islamic World.

We have a number of other initiatives that the dialogue is generating, particularly in the sphere of education reform, and in other parts of the Muslim world as well.

And thanks to your vision and leadership, we will be establishing in the next few months a Saban Center at Brookings office here in Doha to develop as a hub for the

dialogue and to develop as a repository of work and research, a kind of mini-think tank connected with the Brookings Institution in Washington as a way of furthering the research involved in U.S.-Islamic relations.

None of this would have been possible, neither the dialogue that you're hosting today or these other activities, without your vision and sustained support. And on behalf of all of the participants, but particularly we who have been involved in it from the outset, I want to thank you very much for your commitment to this dialogue.

From the outset, you have been our strongest supporter, our inspiration, and on each occasion, you've insisted on being with us to open the conference. And it was your idea to establish the Brookings office here in Doha, and I just want to record again my--our appreciation for everything that you have done to make this dialogue possible.

It is I believe, ladies and gentlemen, just a small example of the enlightened leadership that his Highness Sheik Hammad has brought with his rein in Qatar.

He has from the outset understood the importance of education in the lives of his citizens; his efforts to

extend political rights to women, to open the political system here in Qatar, to educate women, an amazing phenomenon today that the universities that his Highness and Sheik Amosa [ph.] have established here now have enrollment of something like 70 percent of women in the universities, and that will have a profound impact on Qatar. But I think that the example that His Highness has set will also have-- is having a profound impact on much of the region around Qatar.

And as . one of the first to introduce these kinds of democratic reforms, well ahead I should say of the demands that are own president in the United States has been making in this regard. I think you have set an example that is very powerful and already beginning to have a very positive impact.

So, Your Highness, on behalf of the participants in the second annual U.S.-Islamic World Forum, I want to thank you, and invite you to open the forum.

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