

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
2013 U.S.-ISLAMIC WORLD FORUM
Sunday, June 9, 2013

GALA DINNER KEYNOTE SPEECHES

PARTICIPANTS:

Moderator:

MARTIN INDYK, Master of Ceremonies
Vice President and Director, Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution, United States

Keynote Speakers:

H.E. AHMAD BIN ABDULLAH BIN ZAID AL-MAHMOUD
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for
the Council of Ministers Affairs, Qatar

H.E. HAMID KARZAI
President, Afghanistan

H.E. EKMELEDDIN IHSANOGLU
Secretary General
Organization for Islamic Cooperation, Turkey

H.E. NASSIROU ARIFARI BAKO
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Benin

H.E. TARA SONENSHINE
Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and
Public Affairs
U.S. Department of State, United States

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ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. INDYK: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. If I could have your attention, please. Please take your seats.

Good evening. I'm Martin Indyk, the vice president and director of the Foreign Policy Program at the Brookings Institution. And on behalf of the Brookings Institution and our partner, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the State of Qatar, I want to extend a very special welcome to all our distinguished guests this evening who are attending this 10th anniversary opening gala dinner of the U.S.-Islamic World Forum.

For 10 years, the forum has been meeting here in Doha for 9 of those 10 years. Thanks to the vision and generosity of His Highness, the Emir of Qatar and the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Qatar, Sheik Hammad bin Jabr. It was their vision and support that made this forum possible and I want to express our deep appreciation to them and the State of Qatar for that.

The conversation that began today and will proceed this evening and over the next two days is taking place in very different circumstances to those that applied when we had our first conference. The revolutions in the Arab world, the sectarian civil war in Syria, the United States ending its involvement in wars in the greater Middle East, including next year in Afghanistan, and now as President Obama has announced bringing the war on terror to an end, as well. The focus now is on transitions in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, and of course in the broader Middle East. That's the context for this evening's gala dinner.

We have a very full program and the speakers are in a unenviable position of standing between you and your dinner, but we have an incredible lineup; the deputy prime minister of Qatar, the secretary general of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the foreign minister of Benin, the United States undersecretary of state for public diplomacy, and finally the *pièce de résistance*, a special address from the president of Afghanistan.

I know they will provide you with plenty of food for thought, so, please sit tight and enjoy the show, secure in the knowledge that your minds and your stomachs will be sated by the evening's end.

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It is first of all my pleasure to introduce you to the Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar, His Excellency Ahmad Bin Abdullah Bin Zaid Al-Mahmoud. His Excellency is also minister of state for the Council of Ministers; he's the deputy chairman of the board of trustees of the University of Qatar, chairman of the committee on boundary issues and chairman of the Development Fund. He's been a member of the Diplomatic Corps since 1976, has served with distinction as Qatar's ambassador first in Oman and then to the United States and Mexico. In 1995, he became minister of state for Foreign Affairs.

We had the pleasure of hosting him in Washington in 2011 for the U.S.-Islamic World Forum that we held there and we are delighted to have him here today as in his new position as deputy prime minister.

Hopefully, sir, you'll be able to join us next year, when we have the eleventh U.S.-Islamic World Conference in Washington.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome His Excellency Ahmad Bin Abdullah Bin Zaid Al-Mahmoud. (Applause)

H.E. AL-MAHMOUD: Ladies and gentlemen, as you all know, the Palestinian cause is the most important relationship impacting the relationship between the Islamic world and the United States of America, especially that it is not a state that actually impacts only the Palestinian people, but also all the Islamic people which actually refuse the policies of the Israeli occupation forces in widening settlements and civilization of East Jerusalem, as well as the constant violations of a Al-Aqsa Mosque. And, of course, the people actually look for the American stand and position that will be more just an equitable and in line with the principles and the values of the American people that actually go against the persecution of people and the violation of human rights and their dignity.

When the Palestinian cause will be settled, its just, sustainable, and comprehensive settlement, which will achieve the Palestinian people's aspirations, legally aspirations especially, the right to establish its independence state with East Jerusalem as its capital than a huge obstacle would have been back or removed and would actually remove an obstacle before the relationship between the Islamic

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world and the United States of American and will open, widen horizons of cooperation and constructive cooperation for the best interests of both parties and for the international peace and security.

We would like to note that here in this regard the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is conducting a lot of activities and movements in order to re-launch the stalling peace process and we hope that these efforts will succeed in convincing Israel to stop its illegal policies and its oppressive practices against the Palestinian people and to return to the negotiation table with a real will to achieve peace.

Another issue also impacts the relationship between the Islamic world and the United States of America, which is the Syrian crisis and the tragic humanitarian circumstances that have arisen from this crisis because of the practices of the system, the killing and the terrorizing of the Syrian people which has led so far to the death of about 100,000 persons and the displacement of 1 million of Syrians internally and externally while the international community is incapable of saving Syria from dismantlement from the vision and protecting its people from killing and displacement.

We fear that if the international community and especially the United States does not recourse to solve the Syrian crisis in a quick and urgent matter and a way to achieve the legal aspirations of the Syrian people then this crisis will have more serious repercussions than what you are witnessing today on all the neighboring countries and the Middle East region as a whole, it will also impact the international peace and security. We can no longer wait and be lagging in our interference. This requires swift interference and a unity in the international position in order to stop the bloodshed in Syria and to preserve the unity and sovereignty of Syria and to make sure that the region will not fall into a very serious abyss.

The people of the Islamic world are also very sad to see the United States of America with all the global weight it represents and its commitment to the ethical and human standards doing nothing or to stop the extermination war that Muslims in Myanmar are facing because that will have negative impact on the relationship between the two parties. While the United States shows interest in the situation of the Muslim minorities throughout the world, it does create a dispositive environment than climate and its relationship with the Muslim world and rectifies many of them as concepts regarding the nature and the truth of the American policies and positions. In this regard, we cannot forget the American

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justice in Kosovo, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and we hope that the U.S.'s stands and positions will be similar than other positions.

Ladies and gentleman, we are very pleased to see the first evidence of a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan under the auspices of the State of Qatar, and I would like to seize the opportunity of His Excellency Hamid Karzi amongst us in this forum to express to him our aspirations for reconciliation for peace and stability in Afghanistan as soon as possible and I would like to assure His Excellency, the president, that we in that State of Qatar and based on the principles, the guidelines, and the policies of His Highness Sheik Ahmed bin Jabr Al-Thani, the emir of the State of Qatar, and His Highness Tamin bin Hamad Al-Thani, the crown prince, we will exert every effort in order to achieve a reconciliation and agreement between the brothers and the friends and to strengthen the culture of peace reconciliation and tolerance between people and we will use all our resources and efforts for development, reconstruction, and not for killing and destruction. Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

With our joint efforts and our honest will, we can strengthen the relationship between the Islamic world and the United States of America and launch it on the best process that will protect the interests, the rights, and will open new horizons of a new era, a prosperous era of good relationships, especially that there could be no contradictions or conflicts or disparities between the Islamic world and the west in general.

Just like the west is proud of its democracy, Muslims are also proud of the shura principle that was enacted by Muslim and on which the Islamic culture was based and prospered throughout the centuries. Just like the west is keen to preserve human rights, Islam also respects these rights and safeguards because this is in the best interest of all, especially the non-Muslim minorities in the Muslim world and just as the west rejects terrorism, Islam also rejects terrorism regardless of its motives, its forums, and sources.

This is why we are optimistic with a better future of relationship between the U.S. and the Islamic world and the west in general and it is without a doubt that is forum and with all its experiences and expertise and all that has it gained in the past years and the discussions that were enriching in nature

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and intellectual ideas and what has been achieved of unity and (inaudible) and rapprochement between an elite of politicians, academics, media personnel, leaders, religious men, businessmen, and prominent figures from the United States and the Islamic world. It is considered one of the most important tools to achieve this required rapprochement and cohesion in order to strengthen the relationship between two parties to develop them and to promote them and to protect them and strengthen them.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you all and let's thank the organizers of this forum and I ask God to give you full success in your efforts and to be very constructive in your efforts for peace, for cooperation between the people of the world. And thank you and peace of God be upon you. (Applause)

MR. INDYK: Thank you very much, Deputy Prime Minister. I greatly appreciate your (audio drop) conflict between the United States and the Islamic world and we need to build on your wise recommendations in that regard.

Our next speaker is the secretary general of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu. I noted in my introduction that the State of Qatar has been our partner in this forum for 10 years. Since His Excellency Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu has taken over leadership of the OIC, the OIC has been our partner in this forum, as well, and we are very grateful to him for that and we're very honored to have the OIC as one of our partners.

Secretary General Ihsanoglu has been with the OIC all the way back to 1980, where he was the founding director general of the Research Center for Islamic History, Culture, and Arts in Istanbul. He's also been the founding head of the Department of History of Science at Istanbul University and the founding chairman of the Turkish Society for the History of Science.

Under his leadership, the OIC's tackling many of the issues that we are dealing with in our conference over the next few days in our working groups. He has especially focused on promoting religious tolerance and the OIC's recent report on transforming Arab economies, which was jointly prepared with the World Bank, the Center for Mediterranean Integration, and the European Investment Bank, as well as the Islamic Educational Scientific Cultural Organization is an example of the way in which the secretary general has managed to use the OIC in partnership with its other important international organizations to focus on the need to promote investment in Arab societies.

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We are very grateful that he has joined us again this year and we look forward to his remarks. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming His Excellency Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu.
(Applause)

H.E. IHSANOGLU: (Speaking in Arabic.) Your Excellency President Karzai, Your Excellency Deputy Minister Ahmad Bin Abdullah Bin Zaid Al-Mahmoud, Your Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen, it's a great pleasure to be invited to address the United States-Islamic World Forum, which is now celebrating its tenth year, held in educated dialogue. The forum has indeed become an invaluable platform for engagement between American leaders from governments, business, and civil society, with their counterparts in the OIC countries around the world. The United States remains a vital partner for the OIC and must continue to play an active role as the leading power in the world.

As President Obama enters his second term in office, it is time to exercise determined leadership to fulfill his call for better relations with the Muslim world. Recent history reminds us that allowing problems to remain unsolved does not help maintain peace and security in the world.

Palestine is a good example of that. The Palestinian issue remains at heart of the most pressing concerns of the OIC and the international community. For more than 60 years, the Palestinian people's aspirations to realize their legitimate rights to free them: serenity, self-determination, and their own independent states. And in their own homeland have been unrealized.

In both his famous June 2009 statement in Cairo and his 2010 speech at the United Nation's June assembly, President Obama raised expectations among the entire Muslim world for the long awaited establishment of a Palestinian state. In fact, the recent General Assembly's recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer state constitutes a timely and crucial opportunity. We should (inaudible) in full in order to give renewed momentum to the current deadlock and peace process. It is long overdue for Israel and Palestinian people to live side-by-side in peace and security.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, as the world's second largest intergovernmental organization, OIC, the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, is committed to cooperate with the United States and the international community to promote and contradict (sic) global peace

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stability, harmony, security, and development. I have repeatedly underlined on many occasions that the OIC is guided by the principles of moderation and modernization.

The basic documents of OIC, such as the 10-year program of action and a new charter provided a provisional roadmap to meet the challenges of the first 21st Century we are witnessing today in the Muslim world. Strengthened and inspired by the vision and objectives of the new charter and the 10-year plan of action, we have managed to elevate the profile of OIC with a greater visibility and international level and have made peace organization a global actor and strategic partner among international organizations.

Since I came into office in 2005, I have worked hard to develop strong partnership with the United States. In fact, the appointment of the first United States special envoy to the OIC has taken place as a result of our efforts to work with both the previous and current United States administrations to facilitate the creation of high-level position which includes enhanced bilateral consultations between the United States government and the OIC and lead to increase understanding and cooperation.

In 2010, Secretary Clinton made the first ever visit by sitting United States secretary of state to the OIC headquarters in Jeddah to discuss the Middle East and peace process. The following year, I traveled to the United States, where I had the pleasure of being the keynote speaker at this forum, the United States-Islamic World Forum in Washington, and during the same visit, I had the honor of meeting president of the United States in the White House.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, there are examples of successful OIC-U.S. cooperation, which are symbolized in this joint effort to eradicate polio, promote maternal health, encourage youth entrepreneurship, develop greater opportunities for women in education and science, as well as efforts to counter radical Islamists and other international security issues.

Perhaps the most significant example of OIC-United States cooperation is in the consensual passage of United Nations' Human Rights Council Resolution 16-18 on combatting religious intolerance. I would like to reiterate here that our objective in tabling the resolution was not to combat intolerance based on religion and race and to find a working mechanism so that freedom of speech, to which we are all committed, is not abused to incite hatred and intolerance, including violence.

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The OIC is an international and intergovernmental organization and committed to the universal declaration of human rights and other international instruments. It upholds and respects an individual right to freedom of expression.

It is with this in mind that I initiated with the presence and participation of Secretary Clinton the Istanbul process for consensual implementation of this resolution, and this Resolution 16-18 in July 2011. And this process, Istanbul process, the OIC has demonstrated ability to build consensus on the most sensitive of international issues.

I am pleased to see that in this forum there are working groups at this freedom of speech and religion, but also other critical issues and I'm a little bit worried that the literature in this forum today reflects the situation before 2010, and I hope this will be updated. So, we are really pleased to see that this forum is addressing many fields of interests and issues of economic development and social change, advancing women's rights as well as the ways faith leaders and diplomats can work together to tackle problems affecting the international community. It is in precisely this kind of intellectual forum where we can develop mutual understanding; we can ensure far-reaching and meaningful solutions for such challenges.

Let me say here that we cannot attend the problems facing the Muslim world in piecemeal fashion. There must be a comprehensive strategy and outlook that takes into account the broader issues while recognizing the specific parameters of each problem.

If you look at to the violence and radicalism taking place in Mali, in Nigeria, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere, we find that there are common features emanating from general conditions of the Muslim world. A grand vision is necessary to address those conditions while understanding the particular dynamics of each local situation and it must be based on mutual respect and mutual interests.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, the efforts of the Brookings Institution and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar to organize the United States-Islamic World Forum are to be commended. Over the three days, expert as well as governmental, intergovernmental, and NGO

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representatives gathered here are expected to engage in an intensive examination of the United States relations with the Islamic world and the transformations occurring across the region.

It is clear from the agenda of this forum that you will be able to explore these issues and much more in the coming days. I look forward for your successful deliberations and wish you a productive and fruitful outcome. I thank you for your kind attention. (Applause)

MR. INDYK: Thank you very much, Secretary General Ihsanoglu.

Ladies and gentlemen, the secretary general will be ending his term in office at the end of this year, and, so, this is an opportunity for us, even though it's a little premature, to thank him for his leadership, for his partnership, for his promotion of tolerance, women's rights, as he's outlined to you, health, and the partnership between the Islamic world and the United States. So, please, let's give him a round of applause for his leadership. (Applause)

This is the U.S.-Islamic World Forum. When we first established it, we did so with the intention to ensure a dialogue that covered relations between the United States and the whole Muslim world; not just the Arab world or the Muslims of South Asia, but also Southeast Asia and the African continent and it's in that context that I'm particularly pleased that the minister of Foreign Affairs of Benin is with us this evening, His Excellency Nassirou Bako Arifari.

Has a distinguished career first as an academic like the secretary general of the OIC. He was professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Abomey-calavi in Benin and has also held positions at University of Cologne and he's the director of the Laboratory for Studies and Research on Social Dynamics and local development in Benin. He comes here this evening with a special message of greetings from his president, Thomas Yayi Boni. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Nassirou Bako Arifari, foreign minister of Benin. (Applause)

H.E. ARIFARI: Excellencies, Mr. Hamid Karzai, president of the Republic of Afghanistan, Excellency Mr. Ahmad Bin Abdullah Bin Zaid Al-Mahmoud, deputy prime minister and minister of state for the Council of Ministers of Qatar, Your Excellency Mr. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, secretary general of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, Excellency Ms. Tara Sonenshine, undersecretary of state for Public

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Diplomacy in the United States, responsible for Public Affairs. Honorable Ministers, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen from the Diplomatic Corps, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

The president of the Benin Republic, His Excellency Dr. Boni Yayi, unfortunately had other international commitments. He, therefore, apologizes for not being able to make it and he apologizes to this noble assembly. He would have loved to be present among all of us today. However, he did grant me the privilege of presenting his speech to this forum, knowing that the importance and pertinence of this forum is not to be demonstrated anymore.

I would like to quote him saying “The U.S.-Islamic World Forum had a purpose ever since its first session. The purpose was to intensify cooperation and relations between the U.S. and the Islamic world, and along the years, this forum opened itself to the rest of the world. And as president of the Republic of Benin, an African country, I am particularly proud to be a participant and a speaker at this forum and in front of this (inaudible) assembly.”

Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa represent about one-third of the population. In the 1900s, namely at the beginning of the 20th Century, statistics tell us that on the African continent, there were only 11 million Muslims. As for today in 2000s, the Muslim population of Africa has reached 234 million people, which shows us an increase of 25 folds. In this area of the world, the main characteristic of Islam remains tolerance and the cohabitation with all other religious communities.

The events in Nairobi and Jerusalem in 1998 followed by the September 11th attack in the United States were all spectacular attacks and they paved the way for radical Islam, radical activism in Islam, which identified the west as the main enemy and this new reading of events unfortunately confirms the theory of the clash between civilizations elaborated by Mr. Samuel Huntington. Radical Muslims are trying to unilaterally and violently impose their vision of an intolerant Islam and they have been trying to do so not only across the west, but also in Africa. They have tried, therefore, to draft peaceful populations in a fight against a great numbers of enemies and this is the case for movements such as Al-Shabaab in the African Horn and in Somalia and it is also the case for subgroups of the Al-Qaeda organization around several countries of Africa, including Mali and Nigeria.

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Africa, therefore, becomes a field for mandated wars and those wars unfortunately destabilize peace and cooperation across the world. In order to remedy this situation, we need to strive to create new occasions and opportunities in order to have the possibility of exchanging visions, our visions about the world so that the silent majority of Muslims that carries peace within its hearts and that carries values of tolerance and peace of the true Islam so that this population can actually exchange its perspective with the world.

The U.S.-Islamic World Forum represents an opportunity that allows the silent majority to express itself and it allows also for dialogue between civilizations and it also allows for interreligious dialogues while also allowing for the promotion of values such as peace, security, the search of human welfare, et cetera.

It is a privileged way to work, and in this regard, I would like to salute His Royal Highness Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, emir of the State of Qatar for his initiative and I would like to salute this initiative because it entails from us to find answers to the various problems at stake. It also calls upon all leaders, opinion-makers, decision-makers, civil society organization members, media members, and all other stakeholders, it calls upon them to work in order to revive and feed the issue of dialogue because peoples, nations, religions, and leaders across the world so that together, we will reach a better cooperation all across the world.

A new era has appeared and the decision-makers at the global level in addition to the diplomacy should move together forward by adapting while also taking the necessary steps to promote this new dialogue and these new initiatives. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, radical ideologies, Islamic ideologies particularly have developed on the field and they have also developed based upon misunderstanding having to do with the Islamic world, and I'm thinking particularly of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Muslim world, and particularly the youth wonder about and question the possibility of finding a solution to this long-lasting conflict.

Therefore, the United States, as leaders across the world, first economic power, first political power, diplomatic power, and military power across the world, well, the United States is

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considered as the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end of the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

However, it seems that there is still no solution; that is why we would like to exhort all parties to re-launch the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue with no conditions and under the auspices of the United States of America, this would allow to find a fair and just solution, which would allow to reach a point where we will have one land, but two states that will coexist peacefully. This will allow the Muslim world and the western world to dedicate themselves to the solution of development problems.

It will allow also those two worlds to work peacefully for the promotion of values such as tolerance, respect of human dignity, democracy, good governance, et cetera, in order to build a world of love and charity that would allow for the boundaries of ignorance to move back. Promoting dialogue between the U.S. and the Islamic world is a guarantee for peace and trust in the future. They will unite is. It will unite us against all those that predict wars for the future.

The peace will be linked to the dialogue between the U.S. and the Islamic world, hence the need to militate together against the operation of poor exclusion stereotypes that seem to appear among our youth and that seem unfortunately to be prevailing among international media. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I would hope for the following: In addition to strengthening the economic and social basis of our countries and our continents, I would hope for all of us together to work for the next decades in full harmony. We need together to have the three symbols of religions to be put forward and to live in peace.

Let me give you an example from my country, Benin. The Python Temple, which is an endogenous religion, the Catholic cathedral, and the Muslim mosque coexist peacefully in a single village in my country, Benin, and what is notable that the original native religions, endogenous religions in Africa helped both Muslims and Catholics build their shrines, their cathedral and their mosques when they arrived to the African continent, and this shows a message of tolerance and this is something that my country has always strived to put forward, especially during our mandate at the head of the organization of African Union.

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I would like to end by thanking once more the emir of Qatar for inviting my country to this forum. I would like also to thank His Royal Highness for the hospitality and the welcome that we have received. To all organizers of this forum, I would like to say thank you for your commitment and for the values that you try to put forward. Thank you for promoting dialogue and understanding between civilizations. Thank you for your attention. (Applause)

MR. INDYK: (Speaking Arabic) Foreign Minister Arafari.

As the Deputy Prime Minister noted, Secretary of State John Kerry has been working tirelessly to restart the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. He is at this moment on his way to Israel, to Jerusalem, and to Ramallah on his fifth shuttle visit since becoming secretary of state. He has resolved that the time for envoys is over, it has to be done at a higher level, and he's committing his time, his boundless energy, and prestige of his high office to the effort to try to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

It's for that reason that he's unable to join us this evening, but he has sent us a very special representative in Tara Sonenshine. She is the undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs in the United States Department of State. She previously served as the executive vice president of the United States Institute of Peace. During the Clinton administration, I had the pleasure of serving with her in the National Security Council, where she was the director of Policy Planning and special assistant to President Clinton and deputy director of Communications for his National Security Council.

Before joining the Clinton administration, Tara Sonenshine had a distinguished career in communications, including broadcast and print media. She began her career, you'll be interested to know, at ABC News, where she eventually became the editorial producer of ABC News' Nightline, a position she held for many a decade. She is a champion of women's rights, joining the Clinton State Department under Secretary of State Hilary Clinton and joining in that cause with the secretary of state before she took on the job as undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs for Secretary of State, John Kerry.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Tara Sonenshine. (Applause)

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MS. SONENSHINE: Well, good evening, and may I begin by asking all of you to join me in a round of applause on this tenth anniversary of the U.S.-Islamic World Forum. Congratulations to you. (Applause)

Thank you, Ambassador Indyk, Tamara Wittes, your partners, the Government of Qatar, His Highness, the Emir, Sheik Ahmed bin Jabr Al-Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State Ahmad Bin Abdullah Bin Zaid Al-Mahmoud. May I extend greetings to His Excellency, President Hamid Karzai and to the secretary general of the Organization of Islamic Conference, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu. We appreciate, sir, your tremendous leadership over the last decade in modernizing the OIC and expanding U.S.-OIC cooperation and we wish you will as you reach the end of your tenure.

And, of course, greetings to Foreign Minister Nasssirou Bako Arifari of Benin.

Well, as has been said, every year that this conference meets, the world is in a different place. In just three years, we've seen the emergence and the evolution of the Arab Spring, and, yes, the United States has responsibly ended the war in Iraq and we are winding down another war in Afghanistan as we continue to build an enduring partnership with the Afghan people.

The question tonight is what lies ahead and I think you would all agree that what lies ahead is hard work. The hard work of ensuring that the gains of positive change will lead to permanent and sustainable political and economic foundations to provide for the people of this region and all the Muslim communities of the world. A peaceful region is central to all of that and let me just restate that, as you know, the United States seeks to support the people of the region as they work to realize their aspirations for greater dignity, justice, and opportunity, and we continue to provide assistance to the democratic transitions taking place across the Middle East, in north Africa, and to partner with reformers inside and outside governments, those who are doing the hard work of political, economic, and institutional change.

Let me say that the United States is pressing hard to end the devastating war in Syria through a political solution that will give the Syrian people a chance for freedom and dignity. And, yes, as the ambassador said, we have bolstered our work to help end the conflict once and for all between Israel and the Palestinians, and Secretary Kerry is traveling

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relentlessly to work with partners and allies to achieve a two-state solution that assures security and sovereignty on both sides. And if I may quote from Secretary Kerry, "If we do not succeed now, we may not get another chance. So, we cannot let the disappointments of the past hold the future prisoner. We cannot let the absence of peace become a self-fulfilling prophecy."

We realize that for decades, these issues have built up tension and distress between the United States and Muslim communities around the world. This distrust will not disappear immediately and we really cannot in effective public diplomacy without acknowledging this reality. But we believe we're on the right course and making steady progress.

What is all this public diplomacy? Public diplomacy humanizes the economic, cultural, intellectual, political relationships that we're working to build, and as undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, I work to extend avenues of opportunity to those who are affected by our policy and that is the point I'd like to make this evening; people, citizens, they're increasingly driving global events and they must be front and center in formulating and executing policy. You need policy and public diplomacy working together and if we fail to understand that, our policies will forever be flying blind. We have to reach out to one another over time, embracing shared values, interests, and aspirations.

And when I talk to people across this region and in Muslim communities, it is clear they share the same day-to-day concerns as all other people, including millions of Americans. What do they want? To live in peace, to have their families have access to education, health care, and economic opportunity, and the stakes are clear.

As you'll hear over the next few days, more than 60 percent of this region is under the age of 30 and so many come of age with their careers, their education, and their economic opportunities not keeping up and that is unsustainable. If these young people can't lead normal and prosperous lives, we must help them to pursue their vocational paths and to build prosperous futures. What we do now will affect not only them, but the children they raise and the society and economies they inherit. If citizens do not participate fully and effectively in the global economy, we have make sure they are equipped with skills and networks to live free lives, to support democratic institutions, and to broker peace.

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Let me underscore that that includes ensuring that nongovernmental organizations are allowed to operate freely. It means that governments advance and protect freedom of expression, assembly, and association with laws that are consistent with international obligations and commitments. Promoting religious tolerance is essential as is the protection of all minorities and we have to address the outbreaks of sectarian violence that perpetuate more violence, bring families, societies, economies to a standstill.

And we know the outcomes are clear, that when you build inclusive economies, when you safeguard freedom, invest in education; people become healthier, more productive, more democratic-empowered, and prosperous. So, the U.S. is working hard with its partners through such initiatives as our Middle East and North Africa Incentive Fund to help governments build effective institutions. We work and support with groups such as the overseas private investment corporation, GA partners, and the United Nations. The U.S. government is committed to reaching out to people around the world including Muslim communities who place such pioneering roles in fields as diverse as science, mathematics, medicine, and the arts.

I said “Muslim communities” for a reason. As a public diplomat committed to people-to-people ties, I reject the notion of talking to one entity as if it is the Arab world or the Islamic world or the African continent or the American people. We are individuals with our own faiths and beliefs, identities, histories, memories, and journeys, and we know how important it is to give dignity to all voices including Muslims in majority Muslim countries as well as Muslims who live in minority populations.

In terms of our public diplomacy, I will tell you that every educational initiative, every cultural exchange, every Fulbright Program, it all contributes to accumulative effect of gestures where you listen and work with civil societies, with corporations, research institutions, elementary schools, summer camps, media, because people have as much to do with a society’s evolution as its policymakers. So, we will broker partnerships between U.S. institutions and universities to increase the flow of students studying in the United States, as well as Americans going in the opposite direction to study.

We’ve launched entrepreneurship vocational training programs, expanded English language, worked with the private sector to pair aspiring entrepreneurs with angel investors or corporate

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leaders, organized business competition so that ideas find forums, attract investment, and build economies. Twenty-First Century statecraft. People conversing, trading, investing, interacting with social media in innovative ways, connecting on Google Hangouts, Skype sessions, online forums. If we don't all join those worldwide conversations, we risk becoming irrelevant.

I'm very proud of programs like TechWomen, when we reach out internationally to women and girls, to bring those women professionals in science and technology and mentor them in companies in Silicon Valley. They come from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, and the Palestinian territories, they come from Tunisia and Yemen, and they come with hope.

Our interfaith dialogues are extensive, from hosting the exchange of Imams and religious leaders with counterparts in the U.S., bringing Muslim clerics from Chad, religious scholars from Pakistan, interfaith leaders from Yemen all to interact with America and to have shared experience. Please promote active citizenship by bringing young leaders from the Middle East and North Africa for leadership development, for internships in California, North Carolina, and Utah. Bring those Arab-speaking teenagers as we do to the University of Iowa. Why? To take writing workshops in English with American peers.

The Arab Spring has demonstrated people of this region have made their needs very clear. They are ready to live better lives through political participation and economic opportunity. They are ready, but they need support and the willingness of governments and the international community. These transitions are still evolving. They take years to play out, and they're not confined to the Middle East and North Africa.

In just a few moments, you will hear from President Karzai about Afghanistan, but may I say as President Obama has emphasized, and I quote, "America and many others will stand with you. We have come too far, scarified too much, and worked too hard to turn back now." We're committed to supporting a new chapter, not only in Afghanistan, but everywhere.

You see, we have some stories, some values, some traditions and freedoms to share with the world and we know that Muslim communities from the mosques in every state of the United States to the madrasas of Kuala Lumpur also have their stories to share. And, so, we will prioritize

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people-to-people programs in Afghanistan and the region, we've invested more in our Fulbright Program in Pakistan than anywhere else in the world.

So, may I close by saying this is your challenge, to bridge that yawning gap between the government and the governed, between traditional diplomacy and real public diplomacy, make policies work for people, support men and women as they pursue education, become entrepreneurs, share ideas, promote religious tolerance, make business deals, improve transparency, forge peace treaties all to enhance mutual understanding, supportive democratic institutions that safeguard freedom. We stand with many of the people in this room, the politicians, the business people, the intellectuals, the bloggers, members of civil society, youth leaders; you all are engaged in the day-to-day business of improving lives so that people will take that greater path to security and prosperity. May we continue to work together to find ways to build those bridges in the years to come.

Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. INDYK: Thank you very much, Undersecretary Sonenshine.

I know Tara has done many things in her life, but she's been a warm-up act to President Karzai before, but I want to thank her for doing that and for bringing that special message from Washington today.

Ladies and gentlemen, President Obama Karzai is someone who needs no introduction, especially to this audience, but he's earned one. He is, of course, the twelfth president of the Islamic Republic to Afghanistan. He was first elected as chairman of the Interim Administration of Afghanistan after the ousting of the Taliban on December 5, 2001, subsequently confirmed by *loya jirga*.

In 2004, he was elected president and in 2009, he was reelected president of Afghanistan. His friend, the United States ambassador there, Ryan Crocker, once said that President Karzai has the hardest job in the world. I could add that it's probably the most thankless job in the world and he's done it for 11 years. And now he is preparing the ground for what in politics could be an even harder job, ensuring the peaceful transition of power in a young but vibrant democracy.

Despite all the difficulties, President Karzai has presided over the building and training of an Afghan security force, which is now leading the fight against the Taliban throughout the country.

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Under President Karzai's leadership, the Afghan economy has been growing at some 8 percent a year, something that we in the United States are jealous about. He's created circumstances in which the next generation of Afghans are showing remarkable talent and promise as they rise to position of influence in the government and the private sector. He has presided over a multi-ethnic cabinet, and through his leadership, Afghanistan has avoided the kind of sectarian tensions so vividly noticeable in other parts of the greater Middle East.

And today, thanks to his leadership, 9 million Afghan children are in school compared to less than a half million when he took power in 2001. And 40 percent of them are girls.

President Karzai, I want to give you a personal anecdote about some of those girls that you made it possible for them to get an education. Under one of those State Department programs that Undersecretary Sonenshine was referring to just now, my fiancée and I have been hosting two Afghan girls as they complete their secondary education, and for two years, we've had the pleasure of learning about them and their lives in Afghanistan, Masheed and Azada. I just attended Masheed's graduation from high school and she is on her way back to Afghanistan. She has an internship there and she has put together a library of 5,000 books, which we are helping her transport to Kabul, where she and her brother are going to open the first English language public lending library in Afghanistan. This is just one example of the incredible female talent that you have helped sponsor in your own country.

When I told Masheed and Azada that I would have the pleasure of introducing you tonight, they said please thank the president on our behalf and they said please ask him to promise that the opportunity of an education for girls like us will never be taken away from the girls of Afghanistan again. And I told them that I am quite sure that you would make that commitment on the basis of the leadership that you have already shown.

President, Karzai, thank you for honoring us with your presence here for the second time at the U.S.-Islamic World Forum and, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. (Applause)

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PRESIDENT KARZAI: (Speaking Arabic) Your Excellency, Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar, Excellency, Secretary General of OIC, Excellencies, Ministers, ladies and gentlemen (speaking Arabic).

Thank you very much, Ambassador Indyk, for your introduction, for this meeting, and for your introduction of Afghanistan and for sharing with us your excellent, excellent story of looking after two young Afghan girls educating themselves in the United States and for the further good news that one of them will be returning to Afghanistan, but bringing herself and her books to the country. Thank you very much.

This is the Tenth Forum of the U.S. and the Islamic World. I was previously here some years ago, three or four years ago. It's very important for us to recognize His Highness, the Emir of Qatar for his contribution and for hosting us all here, for making such events possible in Qatar. It's becoming a place for international get-togethers, good for Qataris people and good also for the Muslim world.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, the U.S. and the Islamic world is a very vast subject. From the Muslim feelings on the issue of Palestine and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood to the current problems of the Muslim world and to the fog, blurring, quite often and the view of the west of the Muslim world in the name of radicalism among Muslims. We are talking of a very vast, indeed very sensitive subject.

My job today is to speak more about Afghanistan. But the importance of the subject will also bring me to other issues between the Muslim world and the United States or in other words the west.

The colonial rule of the 18th and 19th Century continuing into the 20th Century, the legacy that it left behind and the mantle taken over from Great Britain by the United States after the Second World War dropped the United States into close contact with the Muslim world. And this close contact has been affected by Palestine in the first place. And the aspirations of the Palestinian people in the first place. And as the Muslims continue to struggle for that state in Palestine, with many events across the world in between, the Muslim world and the United States and the west came across suddenly with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

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In the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the United States and the west helped the Afghan resistance. The Afghan resistance was indeed a resistance of the Afghan people against an invading power to protect our values, to protect our independence, to protect our religion.

In this struggle between us and the Afghan people and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, both sides, the Soviet Union and the west countries in our neighborhood and some of the Muslim countries tried to help their allies by superimposing on them the values that they thought were important for them. The Soviet Union tried to impose communism on a deeply Muslim people, on a deeply religious people, profoundly religious people, strong believers. The United States, the rest of the western world, and our neighbors tried to impose on our resistance against the Soviet Union, radicalism, the more radical we looked and talked, the more Mujahid we were called.

The consequence of that was a massive effort towards uprooting Afghan traditional values and culture and tolerance. When the Mujahid succeeded, the next day as we arrive in cabal in the form of the Mujahedeen government, the United States and Europe close their embassies and left. And we were left to the issues of our neighbors and those around. That brought us to the tragedy of September 11 and the destruction of the Twin Towers and the attack on America. And as the return of the United States and NATO to Afghanistan.

As Ambassador Indyk indicated, indeed with the arrival of the United States and the west, the Afghan people felt liberated and gave a strong helping hand to this new arrival in Afghanistan. The consequence of that, working together was the liberation of Afghanistan in less than a month-and-a-half. Subsequent to that, Afghanistan leaped forward in bringing democracy and massive free media, a flourishing of education, as Ambassador Indyk correctly indicated, 9 million children, 40 percent of it women, 150,000 students in our universities. More than 10,000 studying abroad.

In 2001, 2002, when we created our new government, Afghanistan had in name about one to three universities. Today, Afghanistan has more than 20 public universities and more than 30 private universities and institutions of learning. You know the story of the media, you know the story of the economy, you know all of that. For which the Afghan people are indeed grateful to the United States, to our western allies, to our brothers and sisters in the Muslim world, as well.

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This is one side of the story. The other side of the story, the war on terror as it began in 2001, and as it moved forward until today has not been a happy one, has not been a happy story for us in Afghanistan or the region or indeed in the consequences of it beyond Afghanistan into Africa and elsewhere. And the subject on which I have engaged President Obama and western leaders very often. And the subject is: Have we succeeded in the war on terror? Have we found a definition for terrorism? Who is a terrorist? Whilst terrorism can be found in Afghan villages and homes, did we address the sanctuaries of terrorism? And by waging this war on terrorism, have we brought less radicalism in the Muslim world or have we caused more radicalism in the Muslim world?

The argument is definitely that the Muslim world has seen more radicalism, from Pakistan and Afghanistan all the way today to Mali and Nigeria. Is this the unintended consequence on the war on terror, as some would argue, or was this intended by the United States and the west, as some others would argue? Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, this subject of this Islamic world and U.S. is one of immense importance to the relationship not only of the United States and the Muslim world, but to the whole world.

In my view, the west, as led by the United States, needs to explain itself to the Muslim world. Has the United States given an impression to the Muslims of impartiality in the issue of Israel and Palestine, no. Do the Muslims want Israel to go away? No, I as a Muslim would not want that. I want Israel and its people to live as much as a state and as a people as everybody else. But I also want the same right for the Palestinian people. The Palestinian people should live like the Israeli people in peace and prosperity and have a state of their own.

Has the United States and its western allies clearly in a manner of a clear vision explain this to the Arab world and beyond that to the Muslim world? Is this is the desire in the west to achieve? If it is, then the explanation has not been right.

Is the war on terror really against terrorism? If it is and if it has caused more radicalism among the Muslims, especially among the youth, then something has gone wrong. Have we implemented it correctly? Questions must be asked. And if there is an increasing view among the youth in the Muslim world that radicalism is actively promoted by the west, the question is why and for what

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purpose? If this is not the intention of the west, then the west has to explain to the Muslim world if things have gone wrong and the corrective course for action must be taken.

If we in the Muslim world are wrong about our perception of what the western intention is in the Muslim world, then it is for the western world to explain to us their intentions and objectives.

Today, as we speak, the Muslim world is in turmoil. From Pakistan up to Nigeria. Is this all the fault of the Muslims the radicalism that we have? Is it because of the injustice, bad governance, and all other factors or do we have external elements playing in it?

The Arab Spring, for example, well, we all were happy about this. Just yesterday, we had 28 Libyans killed by those who brought about the Arab Spring. Is this what we want? Is what the Arabs or the Libyans want? Is it not the (inaudible) of the story in Afghanistan of we succeeded in defeating the Soviet Union, but failed to create a government and stability?

So, ladies and gentlemen, in my view and of the experience that I gained in the past 11 years, there is much that we, the Muslims, have to correct in our societies and governments by educating ourselves better, by learning how to adopt to the changing environment, by showing more tolerance towards the rest of the world, other religions. But there is also a great deal of explanation, especially of good intentions by our western friends and by the United States that today they're not looking to the Muslim world from the perspective of the colonial era in that they wish the Muslim world well and that this strange relationship will be one in which mutual interests will be kept in mind, that it is inevitable in today's world and that we seek to understand one another. That we all have the right to a good life, that we share that world together, and that without that broad understanding on a proper sharing of resources and knowledge and prosperity that none of us would eventually do well.

As we have to explain ourselves to the west in terms of our views and tolerance, I believe the United States and the western world have plenty to do towards us because today, they are a bigger power, they have more responsibilities, and they have greater impact. So, from Palestine and the aspiration of its people to the wellbeing of the Muslims around the world and to us working together to removing the causes of radicalism in Muslim societies and to correcting Islamophobia in the west, there is plenty for us to do around.

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I cannot speak for all, but as a single Muslim person, I assure the west that we recognize and respect their values, their immense scientific progress, their immense ability to do good things, which they have done; Mother Theresa as an example of a western person, of a Christian person, who went to India and became a servant to the masses of India. Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, everybody. That example can be given in different ways by the western world to us and we must replicate it. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. INDYK: President Karzai, thank you. That's what we call in the United States a message of tough love, but I highly appreciate the way in which you gave both the United States and the Islamic world our equal share of explaining to do.

Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes our opening session. Dinner awaits you. Please join me again in thanking all of our opening speakers for doing such a wonderful job of preparing for our conversations in this Tenth U.S.-Islamic World Forum. Thank you very much. (Applause)

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