



Address of

H.E SHEIKH HAMAD BIN JASSIM BIN JABR AL-THANI

First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs

State of Qatar

At

**The Sixth International Conference of
New or Restored Democracies**

Doha, Qatar

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Excellencies Representatives of Governments;

Excellencies Representatives of Parliaments;

Representatives of Civil Society Organizations;

Honored Audience;

May Peace, Blessing and Mercy of Allah be upon you,,,

At the outset, I would like to welcome you to Doha and extend to you the warmest greetings of His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar and His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Heir Apparent, and express to you their best wishes of success to our conference.

I would also like to express our deep appreciation to the Republic of Mongolia for the important role it has played throughout its presidency of the Fifth International Conference On New or Restored Democracies since September 2003 and for the commendable efforts it has exerted to consolidate and follow-up new and restored democracies.

I would also like to commend the role of the United Nations Organization, through the United Nations Development Program UNDP, and its efforts in preparing and organizing this important international conference. Sincere thanks are also due for H.H. Sheika Haya Al Khalifa, President of the UN General Assembly for her participation in this international conference which reflects her interest and support to the democratic orientation of the UN member states.

Honorable Audience,

The genuine popular participation that we all aspire to as a means to select the political, economic, social and cultural systems, within a framework of a democratic system, entails a true understanding of rights and duties, and a conduct that promotes a sense of responsibility towards such a noble goal, accepting the others' opinion so that they are not harnessed to achieve shortsighted individual objectives leading us to a state of anarchy. The well-established and ancient democracies have gone through experiences and phases coupled with many failures until they have reached the stage of intellectual maturity. Therefore, it is imperative to take stock and to use the lessons learnt to serve our societies while avoiding the failures of others without compromising the specificities of each society.

It is taken for granted that there is no single global model for democratic practices. Democracy did not belong, in any day, to a certain country or region. But there are many cross cutting lines among democratic states. The most important features are the political participation, how decisions are made, safeguarding the internationally recognized human rights, including the economic and social rights, while attaching greater importance to empower all individuals of society to attain their full rights in addition to respecting the rights of minorities.

Democracy in the international system is the other side of this equation. Without an international democracy well-founded on the principles and rights stipulated in the United Nations Charter, namely the right of the peoples under occupation to self-determination, democracy will not be true. We should also take into account that the continuation of armed conflicts and violence constitute an obstacle towards realizing

this objective, particularly in the Middle East region. Therefore, good governance at both national and international levels should exist so as to achieve greater benefit in the existing relation between economic and social development on one hand, and democracy and human rights, on the other.

Out of our firm belief in the United Nations' great role in consolidating the member states' capacities to implement principles and practices of democracy, we have given special importance to establishing the UN Fund for Democracy. This was motivated by our willingness to support the United Nations' endeavor to promote democratic practices, being a global value based on the peoples' will to determine their own political systems and their full participation in the decision-making process related to all spheres of their respective lives.

Honorable Audience;

Our initiative to host the Sixth International Conference on New or Restored Democracies in Doha emerges from our full conviction, as government and people, of democracy in theory and practice. It also hinges on our belief that binding Shura emanates from the tenets of our upright religion and sublime principles and values which we highly cherish. Those principles and values promote building society on justice, equality, fairness and freedom. It is from the vantage point of this firm belief that the State of Qatar has launched some years ago its' democratic process. Under the sagacious patronage and guidance of H.H. Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, slow but sure steps have been taken towards genuine democracy. H.H the Emir has, in many occasions, confirmed his determination to pursue this process, establish its foundations and to work for its success for building the state of law based on transparency, accountability, strengthening the role of legitimate

and constitutional institutions and modernizing bases of administration. They all constitute the main pillars and sound orientation necessary for the future of our country to respond to the challenges of 21st century.

Honorable Audience,

Our conference is, by the tripartite nature of the participants, i.e. governments, parliamentarians and civil society representatives, acquires special importance. It enables our countries to proceed on the right direction and to realize the ultimate goals of the three components. Indeed, bringing these three components together in such an interactive and positive fashion is a pioneering experience that started in the Fifth International Conference held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. We hope that such a positive interaction will continue to exist among the three components. So that it becomes an established institutional approach.

“Capacity building for Democracy, Peace and Social Progress” which has been selected as the slogan of the Sixth International Conference on New or Restored Democracies clearly reflects the need to translate the broad knowledge generated since Manila Conference into concrete realities. The world will indeed flourish when it exercises its intellectual vitality by producing marketable ideas equally applicable in the national contexts. This should help us reach open horizons for linking peace, democracy and social progress which can only be realized if the necessary tools are made available. There is no doubt that the most important tools lie in practicing freedom along with due respect to other’s opinions, the foremost of which are religions and religious figures. In fact, as many experiences have shown in the recent past that the lack of such engagement may adversely affect the social peace and democracy.

We hope that our conference will coordinate the attainment of those goals and will set up the necessary follow-up mechanism. Undoubtedly, the proposal to create a permanent secretariat for the conference, to be mandated with the task of looking into the past, assessing the present and envisioning the future, is a large step forward in the process of building capacities of democratizing countries. Otherwise, our resolutions and recommendations will only be theoretical outputs that do not reflect the real situation on the ground. It may even lead to loss of the momentum generated over the last period of time.

Before concluding, I wish you a very pleasant stay in Qatar.