

بِسْمِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Unofficial Translation

The Address of

His Excellency

*Shaikh Abdullah Bin Mohamed Bin Saud Al-Thani
Chief of The Diwan Amiri of the State of Qatar*

And

*Chairman of the Board of Directors of
Qatar Telecommunications (Q-Tel)*

At the World Summit on the Information Society

Geneva 10-12 December 2003 A.D.

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

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***Your Majesties,
Your Highnesses and Excellencies,
Your Excellency The Chairman,
Your Excellency the Secretary General of the United Nations,
Your Excellency the Secretary General of
The International Telecommunications Union,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

I would like at the outset to convey to you the greetings of His Highness Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, and his wishes of success for you and your conference.

I would also like to extend deep thanks and appreciation for the Swiss Government, the United Nations and the International Telecommunications Union for their great efforts in the organization and preparation of this conference.

Mr. Chairman,

We meet here today at the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society to discuss how to achieve a very important collective goal, namely establishing an advanced information society through the use of information and communication technology that provides individuals - specially in the developing countries - with easy access to knowledge and information enabling them to improve their standard of living, socially, politically and culturally.

Today, information and communication technology is regarded as a significant factor in expediting sustainable development, increasing the ability to compete, eradicating poverty and facilitating the effective integration of all countries in the world economy.

Moreover, the provision of this technology and building up proficiency in using it leads to facilitating the ways of acquiring knowledge and hence saving time, shortening distances, narrowing the digital gap between the developed and the developing countries and deepening understanding and enhancing cooperation between them.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The State of Qatar gave special attention to the communication sector considering its pivotal and vital role in the process of comprehensive development and progress taking place in all fields. This enabled the State to achieve high growth rates

that contributed to making the economy of Qatar take up a noticeable position on the chart of world economy.

Qatar leadership has realized that the challenges represented by the world technological revolution and the quick pace of economic and social development in the country require drawing a special strategy for the information and communication technology. Hence, a plan was prepared to implement this strategy in stages up to the year 2010, with concentration on developing the infrastructure of this technology and giving attention to setting up various comprehensive educational and training programs.

On this basis, the Qatari leadership paid attention to the development of human resources. In this context, Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (Qatar Foundation) was established to foster scientific progress in the country and provide access to knowledge and science for all citizens.

One of the outstanding futuristic projects of Qatar Foundation is a Science and Technology Park which aims at utilizing the local resources and talents in scientific research and encouraging opening channels for communication and cooperation between the industrial and educational sectors.

The State of Qatar aims at using and disseminating the technology of information and communication to gain benefits in all fields. Great development has been achieved in recent years in information technologies and their various applications in our governmental and private sectors. Being aware of the role of the Internet in simplifying procedures and transactions and enhancing the standard of government services, the electronic government project was founded and a committee for information and communication technology was set up.

The State undertook implementation of the project of eradication of information technology illiteracy with the goal of building up abilities and skills of all sectors of the society in the field of technology to bridge the digital gap and for effective contribution to the digital world economy.

The State has abolished the Ministry of Information and lifted the censorship on publications to promote freedom of expression and opinion and open the way for the exchange of information without

hindrance as an initial step towards establishing a new democratic experience based on popular participation of men and women in public affairs on equal footing through elected councils and a permanent constitution which has already been drafted.

The economic growth achieved by the State of Qatar and the social and cultural progress and political reform that accompanied it had a positive impact on the information society in the country, where

the infrastructure for communication has been established, the use of information systems in both the private and public sectors has been widened, and

relevant legislation and laws have been issued, the teaching of information technology in public and private schools and universities has been catered for and employees have been trained and qualified in the use of information systems in their fields of work.

Mr. Chairman,

From this platform, the State of Qatar stresses the importance of facilitating the acquisition by the developing countries of knowledge and technology according to their special needs and on preferential and easy terms that take into consideration the importance of protection of intellectual property rights.

Qatar also emphasizes the importance of collective action for providing the necessary conditions such as establishing clear legal and organizational frameworks to facilitate acquisition and development of technology, boosting the inherent capabilities of inventiveness, and promoting the assimilative capacity of local companies and that the international management of the Internet be multi-lateral.

The State of Qatar maintains that the information society should be based on the respect and reinforcement of cultural and linguistic diversity as well as respect for the moral and social values and peoples religious beliefs and traditions. It must encourage dialogue between the different civilizations, cultures and religions, because cultural heritage is a vital factor in shaping the identity of individuals as well as societies.

Hence, the State of Qatar calls upon the international community to make the Israeli occupation force respect the relevant international conventions and accords to ensure preservation of the cultural and civilizational heritage of the people of the occupied Arab countries under its control so that the information and communication technology in those lands copes with the international development in this field.

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finally, I wish this conference all success to arrive at an agreement to adopt the two documents of the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action to utilize the potentialities provided by the information and communication technology to attain the goals stated in the Millennium Declaration adopted by Their Majesties and Their Highnesses and Excellencies, the world leaders, for the realization of development for all in a world enjoying peace, justice and prosperity for us and for our future generations.

We hope to meet after two years at the second phase of the Information Society Summit due to be held in the sisterly Republic of Tunisia, where a lot of what the international community aspires to in the field of information and communication technology would have been realized.

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