



Address by

**His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani
Emir of the State of Qatar**

Before

**The general debate of
the 67th session of
the United Nations General Assembly**

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**Your Majesties, Excellencies, and Highnesses,
Your Excellency the President of the United Nations General Assembly,
Your Excellency the Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset I would like to congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremic on his election as President of the 67th session of the General Assembly, wishing him all success.

I would also like to express my thanks to His Excellency Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser the President of the previous session and one of the capable Qatari Diplomats for the efforts he made in order to ensure the success of the work of this General Assembly.

I would also like to seize this opportunity to thank Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his continued work in support of the role of the United Nations.

**Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Arab world, these days is passing through a very difficult and risky period, which, at the same time, is full of hope. As a matter of fact it is an impressive attempt at correcting the prevailing conditions in a region which has a special history at a time when the whole world is rapidly changing. This is a very special, new and unprecedented experience throughout the human history. It is different from the previous experiences of nations and people's who managed to join changing times and accepted their necessary requirements and bore their costs knowing that they must be consistent with the movement of advancement and with its time with all the ambitions towards freedom, enlightenment and the dignity of man. But the Arab experience of transition is unique in its pace and process.

Conditions in the Arab world, seen from a far, may show that there are disturbances and problems all over the place filling it with flames and smoke. However, I would like from this rostrum to assure all those who are following the events in the region and sometimes feel uncomfortable at what they see and hear is that it is only the movement of a nation struggling to cope with this age and contribute to its march as it has done many times before it was interrupted by obstacles, both external and internal, regional and international. Those obstacles frustrated its will and derailed its march. But it has lastly took matters into its hands after having suffered from dictatorship, dependence and corruption.

We remember that the American political and social experience was borne out of civil war that the country had to go through in order to solidify its unity. The Europe we see now has gone through terrible world wars until it achieved a degree of unity that could not be achieved by arms or hegemony. And in Asia there are great cases of success of nations after long periods of the pain of the new birth, after which they advanced and achieved their aspiration.

I am saying this to assure whoever cares about our world's present and future that what is going on in our region is natural and historic.

It is not reasonable for anybody to imagine that people can attain their freedom once they ask for it. Human history shows that peoples have sacrificed their life and their wealth to gain their freedom. In the same context, dictatorship does not change at the sight of the precursors of revolution but requires real resistance to depose it. Also the desire for advancement does not eliminate backwardness except through hard work. The restoration of occupied territories can never be achieved by merely rejecting occupation but by persistence in demanding rights and resistance through all legitimate means.

What adds to the difficulties of the transition in our Arab world is that it takes place in a climate full of aspirations and amenable to all sorts of effects and complications. Our peoples had to go through a battle for changing their lives under circumstances that are greatly different from those faced by others in similar situations. In America, Europe, Asia and other places, the historical transitions took place within limited conditions. But in the case of the Arab region, the birth took place under spotlights, before the eyes of the whole world and the satellites crossing the space and under the influence of electronic media without any shield or barrier of any sort.

Mr. President,

In order to achieve their objective, internal and external interventions against peoples' attainment of their legitimate rights do not hesitate to use all means from the exploitation of the past and its complex residues to means of provocation. They can even use arms and shed seas of blood if the other means fail or take a longtime. All of this made the transition from the past to the future and from backwardness to development a risky process threatened from all corners.

Together with others we realized the risk of this phase in the march of our nation and of the Arab world. If we may ask for something in this session it would be the renewed encouragement that confirms the rights of our Arab world to continue its advancement and achieve its aspirations in a new world influenced by science and technology that never occurred to the pioneers who wrote the well-known conventions of rights and freedom.

On the other hand I hope that this world gathering will take a stand that sympathizes with this historical transformation underway in the Arab world. This would reassure peoples who are working hard with the determination to reach a place fit for them in history and struggle for their freedom and dignity hoping for a better tomorrow for the next generations.

Mr. President,

The situation in Syria has reached an unacceptable phase. Hundreds of innocent Syrians are killed everyday by the fire of a regime that does not hesitate to use all sorts of weapons against its people.

We have used all available means to get Syria out of the cycle of killing but that was in vain. The Security Council failed to reach an effective position. In view of this, I think that it is better for the Arab countries themselves to interfere out of their national, humanitarian, political and military duties and do what is necessary to stop the bloodshed in Syria and the killing of innocent people and their displacement in order to guarantee a peaceful transition of power in Syria. We have a similar precedent when the Arab forces intervened in Lebanon in the mid-seventies of the last century to stop the inter-fighting there in a step that proved to be effective and useful.

We urge all countries that believe in the cause of the Syrian people to contribute to the provision of all sorts of support to this people until it gains its legitimate rights.

Mr. President,

Despite all the suffering in the Middle East, the core problem remains the Palestinian question and the continued Israeli occupation of the Arab territories in the West Bank, the Golan and Shaba'a Farms in Southern Lebanon in addition to the stifling blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip and the continued arrest and imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians. The peace process has stopped because of the current Israeli position that insists on continuing the policy of settlement in the Palestinian Territories and Jerusalem and refusing to cede them.

Sometimes, I would like to ask why does the International Community not do something to implement the relevant resolutions of legitimacy in the Middle East and why does the Security Council not adopt a resolution under Chapter VII that forces Israel to stop the blockade of Gaza and the settlements and return the peace process to its comprehensive track instead of the partial solutions that have not lead to any results. And I find no answer to my question.

Mr. President,

We firmly believe in the importance of the freedom of expression and the right of people to express their opinion based on our belief in the sanctity of humanity and dignity of man who was created by God as free and dignified. At the same time we believe that freedom should not cross reasonable limits and become a tool to hurt and insult the dignity of others and of religions and faiths and sacred beliefs as we have seen lately, which regrettably led to the killing of innocent people who have not committed any crime.

We have called for a dialogue to exchange information and experiences and called for a dialogue among civilizations and religions and we have established the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue and called and still call for dialogue aimed at getting to know the ideas and the experiences everywhere, and also to know different faiths in order to make sure that human culture is connected and created by all and that everybody should take part in its dividends based on understanding and appreciation and based on rights and knowledge.

I have on previous occasions confirmed the importance of this question and the need to have a balance between the respect of sacred faiths and religions and the freedom of expression in order for tolerance to replace intolerance and the acceptance of the other to replace his rejection and stereotype, which is neither fair nor right. Today, I would like to seize this opportunity to call on the United Nations and those of wisdom and reason and those who have the power of decisions at the international level to write internationally agreed upon laws, procedures and controls to prevent insulting religions and faiths under any pretext and at the same time keep the right of man to know and express his opinion.

Mr. President,

One of the great challenges that we must face is the question of climate change and its bad and destructive consequences for all countries. This requires us to cooperate and work together to reach the best solutions for this challenge.

Here I would like to state that the State of Qatar will host the 18th Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Framework Conventions on Climate Change (COP18). The importance of this conference is that it could draw a roadmap to face the negative effects of this phenomenon.

I take the opportunity of being on this international rostrum to welcome all countries of the world to participate in this conference so that we may reach an international consensus on this matter.

Mr. President,

Before concluding, I would like to welcome the election of Brother Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud as President of the Republic of Somalia wishing him every success in realizing security and stability in this country, whose people have suffered a lot. I call on the international community to exert more efforts to help Somalia to reach a solution for its crisis that would be acceptable to all Somali parties and pave the way for the return of peace to Somalia and for building of the State after long years of war and destruction.

Thank you.