

HH the Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani delivered the following speech on the opening of the Advisory Council's 46th Ordinary Session.

In the Name of Allah the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

Sisters and Brothers, Members of the Advisory Council,

I express to you my best greetings at the opening of the 46th session of the Advisory Council, and at the outset I want to extend sincere thanks to the brothers, the former members of the Council for their appreciated efforts during their term of office. I welcome also the brothers and sisters the new members, wishing them every success in serving their country.

Honorable Brothers and Sisters,

Our annual meeting to which we look forward to comes to assess activities in the preceding year, and to glimpse the future prospects of our development march that, thanks to God, is striding confidently towards achieving our national goals. As you know, Qatar has come under an unjust blockade, during which all established values and norms - not only those prevalent among fraternal and friendly countries, but even among enemies - were breached. It was evident from the nature of the steps that were taken, as well as the accompanying behavior and rhetoric, that their goal was not to reach a solution or settlement. I will not elaborate on the repercussions of those steps, as they have already been discussed at every social gathering and household, especially since the blockading countries have left nothing without endangering it, i.e., the norms, values, consanguineous relations, private properties and interests. Accordingly, they provoked the condemnation and repulsion of the Gulf, Arab and global public opinion. They have built their campaign on fabrications since the hacking of Qatar News Agency's website. Their propaganda campaign drives them to get embroiled in more lies which hurt them alone. As you know, Qatar has pursued a policy of self-restraint, moderate response, and has risen above all wrangles and misbehavior in respect for our values and norms and out of our keenness to maintain the fraternal relations among the Gulf peoples. Qatar's political approach and diplomacy have gained the respect of the whole world. It seems that the countries which imposed the blockade on Qatar have been embroiled in it. They have become captives of their own media rhetoric, as attempts made to give them a way out through mediations and dialogue as well as our declared readiness for settlements, etc., did not succeed. It also seems that, this has become their approach, as they became hasty in taking steps in other countries as well, without having any exit strategy from the situation they tend to implicate themselves in. The fabrications regarding supporting and financing terrorism leveled against the State of Qatar have failed to convince the international community, especially the major powers and active countries in this field. Paradoxically, our originally good relations with these countries are now better than they were before the crisis. The State of Qatar has a well-known and documented counterterrorism record. Qatar has acceded to the international and regional treaties in this respect, foremost of which is the United Nations Convention against the Financing of Terrorism of 1999, and has contributed to every international and regional effort in this regard. Recently, it has signed a detailed Memorandum of Understanding with the US administration on combating terrorism and its financing. Many foreign officials have asked the blockading countries to submit evidence for their claims; and you all know that they did not submit

anything because they haven't anything to submit. They know, and everyone who visits them from the politicians knows, that their campaign against Qatar has nothing to do with terrorism.

Brothers and Sisters,

Here in Qatar, we are used to frankness between the leadership and the people, as is the case in a family. I am addressing you very clearly that we mean what we say when we express our readiness for settlements within the framework of dialogue based on mutual respect for sovereignty and joint commitments. On the other hand, we are aware that the indicators we receive reveal that the siege countries are unwilling to reach a solution. These countries began in their conduct a new phase in the relations between the Gulf states. We have benefited from this experience, as it brought out the best talents and spirit of challenge inherent in this people, and contributed to crystallizing its national identity, and enhanced cohesion between the people and the leadership. Our government knows that what we have said about the productive society, self-sufficiency in food and medicine and the national security, and establishing balanced bilateral relations based on the mutual interests between Qatar and other countries, are tasks for implementation that cannot be delayed. The blockading countries want to distract us in battlefronts they open against Qatar everywhere, so that our internal and external policies are disrupted. But this will not happen, as we continue to pursue our positive and effective foreign policy and meet our humanitarian and international obligations, which contribute also to defending our people and our country. Domestically, we have to continue to work and produce more vigorously under the new circumstances. I do not need to remind you of the number of countries that are thriving with sea and air routes, without having land crossings. The Qatari society knows how to lead a normal life, flourish and develop, whether the blockade is prolonged or not. We do not fear the boycott of these countries against us, we are a thousand times better off without them. But vigilance is required. Their claims that they will only adopt boycott are not true, as they continue to interfere in the internal affairs of our country and take collective punitive measures against the Qatari people, and practice incitement everywhere against the State of Qatar, thus wasting the energies and resources of their peoples although these efforts hurt them. This dispute is a nowin situation. Its continuation will dent the reputation and interests of all the GCC countries. On this occasion, I extend my sincere thanks to my brother HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Emir of the brotherly State of Kuwait, for all his commended efforts in mediating between our Gulf States and my special appreciation for his strong will, wisdom and keenness on the future of the GCC, which he expressed in his latest cautionary appeal on 24 October to heal the rift and halt the deterioration; a call which was promptly and positively responded to by the State of Qatar. I also extend thanks to all the countries who supported us in our stance during this crisis.

Brothers and Sisters,

We have, of course, taken the necessary measures to counter the new challenges in areas of air and maritime transport and to find alternative sources of goods and services that had adversely been affected. These matters have, thank God, been restored to almost normal levels, and on stronger bases than before. As you know, before the present crisis we were preoccupied with curbing the impacts of falling oil prices on our development plans, as oil and gas prices fell by 49% in 2015, and a further fall of 18% in 2016. As expected, this cumulative decline, has led to low growth rates in all GCC countries, including Qatar, where GDP growth in fixed prices fell from 3.6% in 2015

to 2.2% in 2016. Despite this decline, per capita income in Qatar, according to purchasing power is still among the highest in the world, according to international institutions' reports such as the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. However, this shouldn't lead us to self-conceit, as this achievement was not easily achieved, and maintaining it requires redoubling the effort. It is not to be taken for granted. It is reassuring that although the hydrocarbon share in GDP has fallen by about 1%, Qatar's growth rate has improved, as the share in GDP from other sources has risen by about 5.6%. Our achievement of this rate does not mean that we are satisfied with it, as it is less than our ambitions, and we will strive to achieve higher growth rates in the future. Our commitment to implement prepared plans in the fields of industry, agriculture, trade, tourism and services, will contribute to that end.

Brothers and Sisters, Members of the Advisory Council,

The measures taken by the blockading countries were aimed at creating a political shock, affecting Qatar's stability and forcing us to accept tutelage and cede our independence. Then they have moved on to a second plan that is still being applied. It could be summed up as an attempt to harm our economy. But they have erred in their evaluation of the will of the Qatari people and the State, as well as in their estimates of our economy. The negative impacts of the blockade were temporary and our economy has managed to contain most of them very quickly, while adapting and developing itself in the course of the crisis management. These campaigns have not affected our major exports of oil and gas. On the contrary, our respect for our gas export contracts - even to countries that have played a leading role in the campaign against our country - has boosted the confidence of the international community in our credibility to honor our commitments, in addition to our keenness not to harm a brotherly people. Efforts exerted in previous years to achieve Qatar's national vision have steadily proceeded. In continuation of efforts to support small and medium industries, an industrial zone has been developed with state-of-the-art basic services and facilities, in addition to the construction of industrial facilities which are ready for the private sector. Work is underway to implement economic development projects that would help in fortifying our economy, these include establishing areas for storage, developing logistics areas and introducing a number of food security projects. The State has given special attention to water security and has constructed new desalination plants and mega storage reservoirs for potable water, the largest of its kind in the world. Its first stage will be commissioned in the first half of next year. As a result of Qatar's strong economy and its ability to withstand the crises rapidly and efficiently, the monetary authorities, in collaboration with the fiscal authorities, the banking and financial systems, were able to counter and foil attempts to harm the Qatari Riyal, thus maintaining the financial and exchange rate stability and free remittances. As you know, Hamad Port, one of the largest and most modern ports in the Middle East, was opened and commissioned recently. Several agreements have been signed with important shipping lines to connect the port to international ports in Turkey, China, Taiwan, Oman, Pakistan, Singapore, Kuwait and Australia. These achievements were realized despite that the blockading countries have made relentless efforts to disrupt and obstruct them by various means, which started with the blockade itself, and included pressure on other countries in addition to even spreading rumors and fabrications, and acting against hosting of the World Cup in 2022 by Qatar.

Brothers and Sisters,

Based on our awareness of the new situation that must be addressed, our strategy to fortifying the national economy must be based on the following:

First, completion of the necessary legislations and decrees to facilitate investment, reduce bureaucracy, and reform the banking system to be compatible with the major tasks that we face in the new stage of building the economy and the state.

Second, completion of food and water security projects over a specified time frame, and development of new industries and services necessary to respond to any contingencies, and implementing constructions and facilities that are essential for oil and gas industry.

Third, expanding existing economic and trade relations and developing new bilateral relations.

Forth, completion of the current infrastructure projects under construction now, as well as the 2022 World Cup projects in line with the National Development Plan and Qatar Vision.

Fifth, development of sea ports and the expansion in concluding agreements with international shipping companies to connect the ports of Qatar directly with international ports, and enhancing Qatar Airways' cargo and passenger capacity.

Sixth, accelerating the implementation of tourism strategy over a specified time frame.

Seventh, encouraging the private sector to engage in these areas and facilitating them for it. Yet, the private sector has to acknowledge its responsibilities towards its country.

Brothers and Sisters,

The government is currently preparing for the Advisory Council elections, including drafting legislative measures necessary to ensure that these elections are conducted perfectly well, so as to avoid the need for further amendment in each stage. There are legal shortcomings and legal issues that must be addressed beforehand, in order to have a fair Advisory Councils elections. These measures will be submitted to your esteemed Council during the next year. Due to of the importance of achieving justice and keenness on developing the judicial system and enhancing its abilities to cope with the rapid developments our society has seen in all fields, I have directed that it is necessary to upgrade our justice system to ensure the consolidation of the independence of the judiciary, avoiding prolonged litigation (as it is said: slow justice is tantamount to injustice), and taking the necessary measures to provide all human, administrative and organizational capabilities and necessary equipment for the courts of law, the prosecution and the assisting agencies, in addition to opening new branches for them in various locations in the State. The Government will present to your esteemed Council soon the draft laws prepared for this purpose.

Brothers and Sisters, Members of the Advisory Council,

With regard to our foreign policy, we continue to draw our policies guided by our values and based on a balance between our firm principles and the interests of our people, and the peoples of the region, and our political reality. We follow with deep concern the deterioration of the political situation at the regional level, and call for de-escalation to spare the peoples of the region the perils of tension and emergence of axes. It is not plausible that the countries and societies be regarded as mere spheres of influence or spaces to settle old scores between regional countries. There is a geopolitical reality that forces us to resolve our differences through dialogue. Qatar has been calling for that in line with its approach of resolving disputes by peaceful means. In the case of the Gulf and the region this is not only an option, but an urgent necessity. Relevant mechanisms must be found to address this. We congratulate our Palestinian brethren on the unity which has been realised. We hope that ending the Palestinian rift will lead to lifting the siege on Gaza and unifying efforts to find a just and durable solution for the Palestinian issue based on the resolutions of international legitimacy and the two-state solution, and the establishment of a Palestinian State on the borders of 5 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Qatar, as you know, has exerted extensive and long-term efforts to achieve unity as part of its multifaceted support for the brotherly Palestinian people. Qatar's diligent efforts were characterized by no considerations other than the national interest of the Palestinians. With regard to the brotherly Iraq, as terrorism receded from most of the areas it had controlled as a result of recent victories by the Iraqi Government, we hope that this plague will be eliminated from the rest of the regions in the near future. We also support the territorial integrity of Iraq, and call on the central government and the Kurdistan region to solve the lingering problems between them by constructive dialogue based on the Iraqi constitution, to preserve the fraternal relations between all components of the Iraqi people and Iraq's territorial safety. On the Syrian issue, we hope that the international efforts will be active in finding a just solution to this tragedy that fulfills the aspirations of the Syrian people after a lengthy inaction, and alleviates the suffering of the brotherly Syrian people, and ends the breach of their inviolabilities and dignity. We reaffirm the unity of the Syrian territory and people and reject any action leading to its partition. Regarding Libya, the State of Qatar supports the Government of National Accord in its efforts to bring about reconciliation between the conflicting Libyan factions and to counter terrorism. We will continue to support the international mediation efforts in this brotherly country. Concerning Yemen, Qatar supports the efforts of the United Nations envoy to end the crisis in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2216. We call upon all parties to a genuine national reconciliation to end this conflict, preserve the stability, safety and territorial integrity of Yemen, and put an end to the suffering of the Yemeni people, who are the major party to bear the whole brunt of the continuation of the war. On this occasion, I also reiterate the call to the Government of Myanmar to put an end to the suffering of the Rohingya, and to resolve the crisis in a constructive dialogue that preserves the rights of all parties. Qatar will spare no effort in collaboration with friendly states and the international community in this regard. In conclusion, I reiterate my appreciation to our pedigreed Qatari people and residents of the State for standing up with dignity and pride against the blockade.

God bless you with success, and may God's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you.

November 14th 2017