

## **President Mubarak's speech at 'Arab Reform: Vision and Implementation' Conference**

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Brothers and Sisters,

It is pleasure to me to welcome you in the advent of your pioneer conference on "Arab Reform - Vision and Implementation."

The conference is held today in Alexandria Bibliotheca that constitutes a lighthouse for the Mediterranean in culture and science. It adds a historic value and an Arab civilized status to your persistent quest for modernization, development and reform, as well as to your deep concern to revive the Arab heritage so as to illuminate the way for a more shining and prosperous future.

Our Arab peoples have believed in the need for modernization, development and coping with the contemporary age spirit. They believed also in making use of the available chances that globalization has and is still offering to settle the actual structural problems now existing in the political, economic and social structure of the Arab states and societies. They look forward to achieve the desired progress in those domains in order to realize the peoples' ambitions and aspirations for a better future.

Yet, such efforts have not so far succeeded in bridging the gap between what the advance we achieved on one hand and our capacity to adopt with the successive changes on the international and regional arenas on the other.

Thereupon many conferences, meetings and symposia were held to crystallize a clear-cut Arab vision to close that gap via exerting more efforts in modernization and reform fields in a way that eradicates previous passive actions and guarantees the preservation of our own Arab and Islamic distinguished entity and privacy. Those conferences did undoubtedly work in presenting the due concern of our Arab communities from the Gulf to the Ocean to put and implement ever developing policies to react with the international and regional changes and challenges for realizing our own interest.

Under such terms your gathering today gains pivotal importance emerging from several considerations:

1. That it is held out of **self initiative** by some Arab NGOs and businessmen councils, thus representing the most extensive sector of specialists, intellectuals, writers, researchers and scholars interested in Arab affairs of various branches **without any governmental participation.**
2. That such conference with its ambitious work-plan can constitute an Arab integrated crucible where all outcomes reached by past conventions could be melted to generate an Arab popular vision for modernization and reform in the Arab world. Such vision could

as well **cover all political, economic and social aspects** and present best evidence for our Arab communities ability to reach an integrated visions and provide the basic incentive for Arab governments to achieve real contact with the civil society in the modernization and development issues.

3. That convening of this conference comes at a time preceding the convenance of the Arab summit expected in Tunis by the end of this month. That offers a golden opportunity that should be seized by Arab governments to drive for implementing a common governmental/popular vision for modernization and reform in a framework that leads to an integrated strategic directive expressing the views and aspirations of our Arab peoples.

4. That holding of this conference coincides with the international controversial arguments on several overtures floated for reform in the Arab world, and others that are to be submitted before various international and regional meetings to endorse plans and situations for modernization and reform in the Middle East. Meantime, the Arab nation has not so far come out with one integrated national vision on those issues.

All governments and peoples of the Arab region agreed that our strategy to achieve better future is based on two main axes:

1. to exert efforts of modernization and development based on Arab societies self-forged visions, in conformity with and cohesion between Arab governments and their peoples.

2. to drive hard for reaching fair and comprehensive peace in the Middle East while evacuating it from all kinds of WMDs to provide due political climate necessary for prevailing peace, security and stability as key components promoting our efforts for development and modernization and deepen our drive for more effective world and regional cooperation.

All Arab countries have done their best to achieve structural and organizational reforms in all walks of political, economic and social life. That was done in the framework that considers the accurate equilibrium between positive and negative consequences of the reform process. It also takes into account the distinctive cultural, religious and demographic diversification of each society. Besides, it was imperative to follow a reform method that does not lead to shaking the stabilized current position and does not allow extremist narrow-minded powers to steer the reform process and direct it in a way that does not cope with the community's vision.

Again, our different Arab states gradually promoted the popular and social participation in the reform and modernization efforts side by side with the governmental efforts so that results could realize the people's hopes and aspirations. Hence, popular and social responsibility came to be augmented, especially that of civil society and businessmen organizations. They all are responsible for offering innovated notions and opinions to be adopted by governments as a basis to forge a public national approach toward the reform issue. They have to seek implementing it together with effective popular and societal sharing plus seeking to form an Arab vision more comprehensive and determining for reform cases in the Arab world.

No doubt this will let you bear huge responsibilities not only through taking part by voicing opinions and sharing in formulating and implementing the due directives, but also via shedding light on the actual image of our partners in development and in reform and modernization efforts.

You are more aware of your societies' pulsing and you are more able to truly express the political, economic and social currents existing there. You are also conscious how your peoples cherish more freedom, democracy and human rights respect. They desire more economic and social development to be persistently executed out of self-motive without any external imposing.

Now, so that our Arab peoples and societies could exert their best in modernization, development and reform there must be great interest in the second axis of our Arab strategy to achieve better future. This can best be realized through reaching just all-out peace in the Middle East, especially after introducing the daring comprehensive peace initiative accredited by the Arab summit in Beirut.

Regretfully that overture still lacks due interest to put it into action together with other initiatives; the latest of which is the roadmap, to establish an independent sovereign Palestinian state.

It can also be realized through decisive treatment of the extremely deteriorating positions in sister country of Iraq so as to restore sovereignty, security and stability there. Dealing with the Iraq crisis uncovered an obvious double-standard criteria in tackling the WMDs issues.

It must be obviously born in mind that if such positions went on, besides intentional disregarding of the daily violations practiced by Israel against human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories and the international and regional condemnation of such practices, will not serve our drive for reform and modernization. Rather it would embolden terrorism and extremism based on feelings of despair and frustration in Arab societies that compare between outside attempts to impose certain reforms -willy-nilly - and the full negligence of violations committed by other parties.

The world society and the peace-loving powers disregard the dire need of the Middle East countries to reach peace, security and stability in the framework of justice, equality and international legitimacy that we rely on as bases to support our efforts for reform and modernization and for alleviating extremism and resorting to violence.

Hence, Egypt has given the due example through the strenuous efforts over the long past years to settle the Palestinian cause and the political, then military, dealing with the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait. It also promoted the spirit of religious moderation, tolerance and cooperation in the region. Meantime, it performed pioneer political, economic and social reforms through which it achieved tangible progress in all walks of life. But our capacity to drive ahead with reform and modernizing efforts in Egypt and the Arab countries will reduce unless our peoples feel that the real objective of such efforts is to

prevail peace, security and stability, and not to offer the opportunity for some party to dominate or control the entire Arab region.

Brothers and Sisters,

If some reports have shown drawbacks in implementing plans of development and modernization in Arab societies - which asserts significance of driving ahead the reform efforts with more persistence - it reflects at the same time the need for strong external support to our self-exerted efforts toward reform and modernization, but without trying to impose an outside stereotype pattern or attempting to achieve goals disagreeable with plans of the Arab states in these domains.

Within this framework, the international cooperation aiming at establishing peace, security and stability will cement the bases of reform and modernization as well as deepen national commitment by pushing them forward and overcoming all obstacles that confront them. Yet, such cooperation should not match with those who call for resorting to military measures alone. They should rely on all means of the international and regional relations: political, diplomatic, military, trade preference and developmental assistance, so as to achieve those targets.

We have had already deep-seated frameworks with the outside world to enhance this cooperation. The most significant of them are the Euro-Mediterranean frameworks, the partnership agreements with the European Union that involve mutual commitments for cooperation in the various reform fields, and the framework of trade and investment accords and free trade treaties with the USA that include also mutual abiding in the same domains. There are also the preference and developmental dealing with other powers such as Japan, China, Russia and other advancing economies and open societies. All pour in the long run in bolstering the self-exerted efforts in a way that contributes in achieving security, peace and stability for all parties.

We have always to take into consideration how important it is to promote the links connecting the efforts exerted to develop the joint Arab action in the Arab League framework and those exerted in each Arab country individually - and in all Arab countries collectively - for the sake of political, economic and social reform. This should be done in a way that preserves the Arab regional identity - without any adding or extracting - based on common values and principles that obtain consensus in the Arab world.

We should also drive ahead out of full conviction that the Islamic religion calls for modernization and coping with the spirit of the contemporary age. It is based on tolerance, fraternity, mercy and not harming others except for self-defense. So, the world community has not to deal with Islamic culture as one of extremism and violence but as one of cooperation and participation to achieve due interests in the framework of equal footing and preserving due rights and abiding by due responsibilities.

Out of this integrated vision for our drive toward reform and modernization, our opinions

and remarks regarding the initiatives floated to reform the Arab world, does not reflect rejection to reform or retreat away from abiding by them at all levels; governmental and popular. Rather it reflects commitment to exert more efforts if such overtures targeted bolstering Arab countries' potentials to perform their own individual reforms via promoting cooperation and participation as well as openness to world community based on equality and mutual respect.

Brothers and Sisters,

Out of this basis, our own march for political reform in Egypt kicked off many years ago. It went on to develop and deepen its practice. We gave specific interest for establishing the institutional structure of the state and creating democratic climate that sets citizenship, equal opportunities and freedom of expression - apart from sex or religion - as basic rights that promotes popular participation and civil society. It offers complete equality for all citizens, and guarantees for them practicing all due civil and political rights entitled to them by law and constitution under fair and impartial judiciary that contributes in enriching and deepening our democratic experience.

Together with all this, pioneer efforts were exerted in the development process and economic reform. We succeeded in shifting from directed economy to market economy. We encouraged the private sector to strongly share in the national economic movement. We did and will do our best in exerting intensive efforts to remove the bureaucratic impediments that obstruct the way for setting up new industries to absorb large numbers of the workforce and contribute in solving the unemployment problem plus enhancing exports at the same time.

We offered incentives that lure more foreign and local investments. We took brave decisions such as liberating exchange rates and restructuring our financial, tax and customs systems. We reviewed the state's role so as to confine to strategic economic sites that are closely related to the majority of the people's interests and adjust the economic movement.

In the social field our reform centered on promoting education quality in all its stages, on eradicating illiteracy and achieving pioneer accomplishments in the field of health welfare. The government doubled its efforts in offering basic services for all citizens. It furnished more protection for limited-income brackets giving more care for human development especially for youth and women so as to increase chances for free dignified life and raising new generations capable of bearing responsibility everywhere.

Brothers and Sisters,

If it is our right to boast of what the Arab countries have achieved in the reform and modernization march that generated a specific shift in our life, even in the pillars over which our societies are constructed, we at the same time have to realize that our Arab world stands at a new phase where we all aim at cementing the gains accomplished so far. We have to deepen the roots of the reform process to establish the strongholds out of

which we should go ahead for the cherished renaissance in all walks of life based on conscious participation between the state and the society.

Egypt has adopted a strategic decision to go forward to put those targets into effect through continual development of education system and promoting it counting on a sharp vision and a firm will in a way that enables us to catch up the cognition revolution. The future of our homeland and our promising generations depends now - squarely and inescapably - on our ability to break through science and knowledge horizons that are expanding in an unprecedented way.

That requires carrying on in restructuring the education system at all levels on a basis that guarantees education for all people, achieve upgrading of educational product quality to graduate open-minded cadres capable of dealing with the spirit and challenges of the present age, those kinds of minds that do not depend on typical thinking but on creation, innovation, research and criticism so that our sons might contribute in building our modern society, thus chances are promoted for our societies to be an effective part in the world competitiveness.

Likewise, we have rushed toward entrenching the pillars which we erected for modern economy to embark on a new stage which depends on giving free rein to the economic potentials in all sectors in light of free competition with the aim of increasing development rates, accelerating the rates of production, attracting international and local investments and upgrading the industrial and service infrastructure which would increase our competitiveness at the international level.

However, the adoption of free-market economy does not mean that the state will abandon its role and leave the market at the hands of market powers uncontrolled. This requires finding an effective institutional framework capable of monitoring and adjusting the market performance and securing the freedom of competition and flexible response to the economic variables imposed by the increasing integration of world economy.

Accordingly, we have embarked on setting a full-scale reform program through which passed the structural reform stage, which was a focal point of our attention during the last two decades, to another stage of institutional and legislative modernization in line with our policies in the field of national economy liberalization.

This coincides with our strenuous efforts to continue trade liberalization policies motivated by absolute confidence that our future economy depends on penetrating into the external markets and accelerating the pace of export according to an ambitious program to modernize our national industries. The reform of our internal structures depends on finding an institutional framework necessary for the economic activity management. However, the trend to open external new trade outlets depends on establishing dealings with our trade partners by virtue of agreements securing competition on equal footing and maximizing our competitive advantages while we are confident of our competitiveness at the international level.

In view of the aforementioned, the realization of our ambitious vision and promising

hopes of reform will encounter major challenges which must not deter us from the implementation of our pledges. They, instead, must encourage us to exert more efforts with firm steps and resolve supported by a new way of thinking and clear vision which ensure that meeting these challenges is not the responsibility of the state alone, but of the entire community.

The state has shouldered the responsibility of establishing the pillars of modern community. The reform stage, however, entails effective participation of all categories of the community where the community becomes a key development partner. Thus stems a dire need of deepening the march of the political reform in line with our concerted efforts of economic and social reform. Experience has proved that the achievements we realized and the challenges we overcame over the past decades materialized through giving free rein to public freedoms of opinion, expression, and political participation. Today, as we stand on the brink of more complicated challenges imposed by the upcoming stage which we are resolved to overcome, we must deepen our march toward democracy in accordance with a clear vision of political reform. Such vision must be built on a core foundation represented in widening the public participation base, either politically or socially, which should be a real instrument to express the people's aspirations and raise solutions for its problems pursuant to partisan programs capable of earnest handling of the real challenge and maintains its interests within an active multiparty parliamentary life.

In this context, we have been working to develop the legislative and institutional framework which governs the civil society action and its relevant organizations' activities which we regard as a true pillar of reform. In light of developments at the international political and social levels, we must realize that the power of nations is no longer assessed through the military power they possess but through the liveliness of their communities and strength of their peoples represented in their syndicates, cultured elite cooperative and civil organizations which cooperate to improve the peoples' lives and represent the backbone of the national unity and social stability.

The march toward democracy is incomplete without deep respect for human rights, not only through establishing an effective institutional framework where civil society assumes key role with the aim of maintaining the citizen's basic human rights and respect for his dignity, but through planting the broad concept of human rights values and fundamentals in core of the different categories of society in order to create a political and cultural environment supporting this trend in compliance with the constitution and laws which carefully stated that the citizen's rights is one of our society pillars. This is closely linked to significance which we attach to the elimination of all kinds of discrimination against women which deepens the pioneering march, which Egypt launched early in the last century. This enhances the full participation of Egyptian woman in all walks of life motivated by our firm belief of the pivotal role she plays in achieving the aspired social renaissance.

Brothers and Sisters,

In this decisive stage in the history of our nation, I am fully confident that our Arab communities are able to rise to the looming challenge and equip themselves with all possible potentials to achieve the development required in our entire communities. This can not be attained unless through a new way of thinking and perspicacious developing vision; a vision which enables all Arab countries to benefit from the experiences of other Arab countries in various modernization and upgrading fields.

It is a vision which helps us make maximum advantage of our own potentials to improve and upgrade our communities in the Arab world, including support of investments, promotion of inter-trade and enhancement of mutual relations among Arab governments and peoples.

It is a vision which enables us to make best use of the Arab League in order to take uniform stances in crucial causes and issues and ensures that the Arab nation has a strong will and ability to meet challenges and variables regardless of how serious they can be.

It is a vision which enables us to deal with the outside world from the perspective of exerting concerted efforts and institutional action aimed at unifying our interests and trends toward other different communities.

It is a vision which develops the international outlook on our tolerant Islam and confirms that extremism and stringency are exceptions while the origin is moderation, tolerance and relations which stems from equality.

It is an ever-renewing vision of the media presentation of our issues to the outside world, giving prominence to our achievements over years and efforts of modernization and upgrading and combat of terrorism and extremism.

Brothers and Sisters,

I aspire that this conference will come out with a clear and enlightened thinking which can contribute to ensuring our trend toward modernization and reform and underline our readiness to translate this trend into a serious and effective action in order to do good for our peoples and communities within the framework of commitment to lofty values and fine principles which we have adopted as bases of action in these efforts, and through increasing openness to the outside world within the frame work of mutual respect which is built on realizing common interests.

Peace be upon you!

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