

Charter For Reform of Arab Condition

[Unofficial translation, courtesy 'Arab News']

The Arab heads of state, after surveying the current situation in the Arab World, have noticed the silence that has gone on for too long, and the inexplicable disregard for the explosive situation in this area. This apparent paralysis and lack of recourse has provided the opportunity to some to attack and undermine legitimate Arab interests and rights.

In recognition of these facts, we believe it is high time to urge for an awakening of the Ummah [Islamic community] to solidify its will and to demonstrate its resolve to prove its vitality and its ability to face the threats and challenges of the latest developments and the consequences they entail. By responding to these challenges collectively, with determination and vitality, we will be fulfilling, first and foremost, the requirements that Allah demands of us when He decrees that He would not change the circumstances of those who do not change themselves in the first place.

Having deliberated on the long overdue but crucial requirements that our collective efforts need in terms of seriousness, integrity and commitment, they resolve to adopt a new Arab Charter. This Charter must ensure the protection of lawful Arab interests and needs, it must build the structure of joint Arab action on the basis of the strongest and not the weakest of links, and it must direct both inter-Arab and international relations and guide the Arab World in its relations with the international community. All that would necessitate specific mechanisms and clear programs to guarantee unequivocal and sincere implementation of Arab summit proclamations.

Consequently, and in the name of God Almighty, we have undertaken an oath to our people to work with steadfastness and determination to guarantee Arab sovereignty, safety and territorial integrity, and to boost our defense capabilities. We reconfirm our readiness to bear our responsibility to back the Palestinian Authority and the tenacity of its people in their occupied homeland while facing Israeli policies of brutality, occupation and siege.

The Arab leaders also renew their commitment for a just and lasting peace that is based on legitimate Arab rights, and further announce their commitment to try and implement the Arab Peace Initiative with all those who support peace the world over. For it is our enduring conviction, as the initiative indicates, that a just and lasting peace is impossible without Israeli withdrawal from all territories occupied in 1967, and without enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate, and internationally recognized, rights, which include the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. Furthermore, it is our conviction that the Arab Peace Initiative represents the minimum requirements to enter into normal relations with Israel, on the basis of related international resolutions, and in implementation of the Madrid Conference resolutions and the principle of Land for Peace.

The Arab heads of state decide that internal reform and enhanced political participation in

the Arab states are essential steps for the building of Arab capabilities, and for providing the conditions for a comprehensive awakening and development of Arab human resources. Internal reform is needed in order to respond to the requirements for positive integration within the field of international competition, to achieve sustainable development, and to deal objectively and realistically with the myriad of novel changes in the economic sphere, especially with the emergence of huge economic blocs, the rise of globalization and what it provides in opportunities and imposes in challenges, and the accelerating development in the technological, communication and information areas. The Arab world shall continue to be an important tributary in the flow of human civilization in all its aspects.

Moreover, we express our adamant refusal of any external and non-legitimate aggression against any Arab state. Therefore, we are committed to the peaceful resolution of all inter-Arab conflicts. We will stand united against any Arab state guilty of aggression against another Arab state, irrespective of motives or circumstances. In this stand the Arab countries harbor no enmity toward anyone; their sole objective and intent is to defend their legitimate interests, and to channel their energies to serve international peace and security.

Given the fact that economics is the basic cornerstone for the strength and viability of states, the present Arab economic cooperation lacks conviction and credibility. To amend this situation would entail drawing up a plan for the establishment of the Greater Arab Area for Free Trade no later than 2005. Moreover, this plan should contain no exceptions and no technical or administrative restrictions. At the same time trade policies that are based on unified tariffs and duties should be forged with the end objective of creating a tariffs union in 10 years. These measures will enable the establishment of the Common Arab Market (CAM).

Additionally, since Arab economic cooperation should be founded on sound economic principles, it is of the utmost importance to support and encourage the private sector. This necessitates providing an environment conducive to private initiatives and investments, and which is attractive to both Arab and foreign capital. Above all, making use of Arab human resources, know-how, and expertise must form the bedrock of such an endeavor.

As such, whosoever is sincerely and wholeheartedly resolved to dedicating all his resources and capabilities toward implementing this new Charter in a serious and precise manner, his efforts shall be welcome. Those who find that these principles do not suit their aims and objectives cannot be a part of this joint Arab effort, and they would have the choice to act according to the dictates of their own particular inclinations. Henceforth, it will no longer be acceptable to promise what we cannot deliver.

This Charter, hereby, obliges its proponents to act in full accordance, and with the utmost sense of responsibility, toward its principles. Whosoever departs from these principles is answerable, firstly, to Almighty God, and then to his own people.