



**International Seminar – 28-29 October 2008**

**Towards Qatar's National Strategy: Issues and Challenges**

**Addressing Qatar's Development Challenges**  
***Qatar National Vision 2030***

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His Highness, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, Heir Apparent  
H.E. Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor Al-Thani, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister  
of Qatar  
Your Excellencies the Ministers  
Distinguished Audience

Qatar's National Vision defines the salient features of Qatari Society for the foreseeable future. It sets out the main economic, social, human and environmental goals that will help Qatar in choosing a development path that is compatible with the aspirations of the country's leadership, and of its people. The approval of Qatar's Vision by His Highness the Emir, and by the respectful Council of Ministers, constitutes an important step towards achieving these goals.

However, to achieve the Vision's goals requires overcoming many challenges at three different levels. The first level of challenges depends on the distinctive positions that will be taken by Qatar towards some important aspects of national development. These can be summarized as follows:

- Being able to preserve religious and cultural identity in an increasingly globalized world, with ever-more interconnectedness between financial and economic systems, while avoiding contradictions with the requirements of development.
- Meeting the needs of the current generation without harming the interests of future generations. This cannot be easily achieved in a context where these are multiple pressures to meet society's current needs, especially increases in the production of non-renewable resources so as to increase financial revenues.
- Targeting a fully thought-through and moderate rate of economic growth that is compatible with the absorptive capacity of the economy, while at the same time avoiding rapid uncontrolled growth. The difficulty here lies in the fact that rapid growth brings short-term benefits whose effects are immediately felt, thereby often creating a bias among decision makers in favor of rapid growth.
- Determining the size and quality of the expatriate labor force in a way that reconciles the preservation of national identity and society's security, with the needs of development. Reconciling these two demands is a very complicated matter. Obtaining a consensus could prove to be difficult due to conflicts of interests and ideas. However, if we are unable to resolve this challenge, it will compromise the nation's development outcomes.
- Protecting and preserving the environment in a rapidly growing economy, where growth depends on exploiting hydrocarbon resources - a similar pattern of economic growth is occurring regionally. Qatar's efforts alone are not sufficient because pollution knows no borders. Qatar must coordinate and cooperate with its neighboring states in all activities that affect the environment.

There are also multiple challenges at the second level. Qatar's most important challenge is to ensure the wise management of our non-renewable resources, and the optimum exploitation of these resources. We need insightful economic management capable of transforming the financial wealth that accrues from this exploitation into

sustainable wealth. This management has to ensure that our revenues are efficiently and effectively used, including through foreign and domestic investments according to the needs of sustainable development. Domestic investments should focus on developing the country's infrastructure, upgrading the standard of our education and health systems, building a skilled labor force, supporting and developing entrepreneurship capacities, and encouraging research, development and innovation.

Wise management of our economy entails avoiding spending on conspicuous high-cost projects. It should also avoid straining the economy which could lead to the failure of public services in meeting the increasing demands of development, and making the achievement of the Vision's goal unattainable.

One of the major challenges at this second level is the ability to diversify Qatar's economy without harming its competitiveness. This requirement is widely mentioned in development literature. However, it has met little success in economies that depend on a single source of wealth, especially the economies of oil producing countries.

Diversifying our economy while maintaining our competitiveness can be attained by benefiting from the technologies and skills provided by the oil and gas industry, and expanding its supportive and linked industries and services. Diversification must also be carried out through planning to create new industries and services, and by building the capacities required for its success. A particular challenge is moving steadily towards a knowledge-based economy and attaining it in less than a decade.

The third level of challenges lies in formulating and implementing the national strategy. We need first and foremost, the full commitment of agencies and ministries to the goals of the national strategy, and for these institutions to be efficient, effective and comprehensive when decisions are made. However, the commitment of ministries and government agencies by itself is not sufficient. The interaction and partnership between the public and private sectors must be enhanced, and the role of civil society organizations in formulating and implementing the national strategy must be expanded.

The adoption of the National Vision by the Qatari leadership, foremost H.H. the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and crown prince Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, coupled with the support of the Qatari people for the Vision, will help us overcome many obstacles and enable Qatar to face the various challenges, and achieve the desired goals.