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Bonjour Mesdames et Messieurs, je veux d'abord remercier chaleureusement M. Thierry de Montbrial, qui est infatigable pour nous réunir chaque année et se retrouver avec des amis et débattre certainement des problèmes du jour. Et c'est surtout cela qui est intéressant à la World Policy Conference c'est qu'on est au courant de choses dont on n'a pas l'occasion de discuter. Je voudrais également souligner ici la question de l'éducation des femmes et leur importance.

Here I will switch into English because I want to underline the great importance that Qatar has placed on the field of education, in particular by allocating the city of education, where some of the most important universities in the United States, such as Georgetown, Cornell, and others have found a friendly educational environment to establish sister universities in order to make societies into more open global players. There is a noteworthy awareness in Qatar that education can be an agent of change, with women in the forefront to provide elements in the development of long-lasting skills and values, such as freedom, and respect for diversity, and basic human rights.

With more than 40% of people in the Arab world under 18, education is a key political and social factor that can strongly impact the process of democratisation in the future. However, in the absence of a good educational environment, there is little room for the Arab world's youth to turn into responsible citizens who can consolidate and stimulate social transformation to bring about more prosperity and free societies. In this context, women have a major role to play in sustainable economic and social development. Here I would like to focus on two main issues concerning education and the role of women: one of them is flagship educational programs in the Arab world; the second is women as an untapped resource in the fight against terrorism.

Let me first start with citizenship education programmes. Despite the potential for meaningful transition to democracy in some Arab countries, the general political context for education in the Arab world remains one of considerable authoritarianism and patriarchy. This authoritarianism is long-standing and is reflected in the structures of education, administration, and institutions. Despite ethnic and religious diversity in several Arab countries, the systems are rarely pluralistic and inclusive in their approach. Most countries claim they aim to produce graduates who are creative, independent thinkers, responsible citizens, and lifelong learners who are competent in language, mathematics, science, information technology, etc. However, the goals and objectives laid out in the national programmes are mixed up with religious and nationalistic values. Overall, most of the Arab nations have diverse priorities in citizenship education. The trouble is one group seeks to raise religious citizens as its highest priority; another group wants to raise them as patriotic nationalists; a third desires to graduate youth with two or more identities, ethnic, religious, nationalist, regional, and international. In most of the Arab countries, what we see is the Ministers of Education assume a highly centralised role and continue to be dominated by authoritarian administration systems.

Furthermore, Arab countries lack efficient supervisory limits, units, competent human resources, and mainly a strong political commitment to undertake political reform. Therefore, although Arab countries are allocating significant resources to education, the educational system remains plagued by grave problems which hinder the development of citizens who are adequately prepared for social and political life. What we see is that active learning is rare and students are not encouraged to think analytically or critically, as instruction remains didactic and directed by the teacher, with limited opportunities for students to engage in open discussion or express their opinions without fear



or intimidation by the teachers. Finally, while efforts are being made to introduce concepts such as democracy and human rights into textbooks, teaching methods are failing to encourage the skills and engagement needed for modern citizenship, producing a wide gap between stated goals and implementation.

My second issue deals with women as an untapped resource in the fight against terrorists. We know that stifling opportunities for any group, including women, not only holds back the country's economic development; it can produce a host of other social problems from inequality to crime, to disengagement from public life. Therefore, across the globe we have seen how the marginalisation of groups and the perception that there is no path to a better future creates powerful grievances that terrorist groups like Daesh exploit. Then we see horrific violence like the attacks on Egyptian civilians and soldiers in the Sinai, also the grisly beheading of Egyptian Copts on the shores of Libya and the murder of innocent Americans by terrorists last December in California, in France and Belgium in November, and on 14 July, the national day of France. These killers and their hateful cause threaten us all but while military tools remain critical for fighting terrorism, they cannot address the underlying factors that make people vulnerable to the lure of violent extremists.

How can we prevent young people from turning to violence in the first place? This is a new way of thinking about terrorism, to expand our efforts to include getting ahead of the terror threat instead of simply responding to its existence. I believe that to counter violent extremism governments need partners, for instance civil society, including religious leaders, the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which have a key role to play in securing communities and protecting our vulnerable youth. Women in particular are an untapped resource in the fight against terrorism. As Daesh calls on women to marry its terrorist fighters and support its nihilistic campaign, women are well-positioned to counter that message. How? What better network to enlist in the struggle than women, who live in every city and every village, whose reach extends into every family and who understands the needs of their communities better than many government officials?

However, mobilising the power of women for this security challenge requires empowering women and women's groups in all forms of public life. Only women can speak with the independence, authority, and authenticity needed to effectively push back against terrorist recruitment. If governments are serious about reducing the threat of terrorism, they need to get serious about including and empowering women. However, for women to fully contribute to a prosperous, secure society, they need to feel secure in their day-to-day lives. According to many surveys, an enormous percentage of Egyptian women, for example, have suffered from sexual harassment or violence. The Egyptian government has taken important steps in this regard, such as the provisions in the new constitution guaranteeing protection for women from all forms of violence, along with equal social, economic, and political rights.

However, as we all know, constitutional commitments are not enough and national trust strategies are not enough to promote equality and stop sexual violence. They will achieve little unless they are backed up by political will and with a clear mandate, sufficient resources, strong institutions, and vigorous enforcement. Finally, I would like to say that investment in girls' education may well be the highest return on investment in the developing world. Put a girl in school and the ripple effects are far-reaching. The Arab people are still writing their own history; this is a difficult period for all but for women to thrive in a competitive global economy and cast off violent extremists, they need their security to be assured. Now I will yield the floor to my colleague from Qatar, who will explain the many advances that Qatar has made on this particular issue of education and the role of women.

I will now introduce Dr Hamda Hassan Al-Sulaiti, Secretary General of the Qatari National Commission for Education, Culture and Science.