



وزارة التخطيط التنموي والإحصاء
Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics

Doha International Family Institute (DIFI)

**High Level Policy Dialogue and
International Research Seminar on the
Impact of Population Dynamics on the Arab Family**

Opening Address

**Dr Saleh Al Nabit
Minister**

Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics

**Qatar National Convention Centre
Doha**

2 December 2013

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Magnificent

HE Abdullah Bin Nasser Al Khalifa, *Chair of the Board of Governors,*
Doha International Family Institute (DIFI)

Honourable and distinguished participants

Dear guests

...let me begin by sincerely thanking the organizers of this Seminar for inviting me to make these opening remarks.

The subject of today's policy dialogue, the impact of population dynamics on the Arab family and the implications for planning, is of considerable importance.

The structure of the Arab family, which is the basis of Arab societies and the most influential educator and inculcator of values, is in the midst of transition.

Modernization and globalization processes, including near universal use of the internet and social media, as well as rapidly changing population and demographic dynamics, are fundamentally altering the traditional Arab family's way of life.

Qatar's Permanent Constitution of 2004; article 21, committed to a society that is safe and just, with the Qatari family, founded on religion, ethics, and patriotism, as the basis of society. It provided for legislation to ensure the means to protect the family, support its structure, strengthen its ties, and protect maternity, childhood and old age.

In the context of an increasingly interconnected world ***Qatar National Vision 2030*** foresaw the challenges facing the family in terms of balancing modernization and the preservation of traditions.

Qatar's very rapid economic and population growth have and continue to create intense strains between the old and new in almost every aspect of life, including the family life. Modern work patterns and pressures of competitiveness sometimes clash with traditional relationships based on trust and personal ties, and create strains for family life.

Moreover, the greater freedoms and wider choices that accompany economic and social progress pose a challenge to deep rooted social values highly cherished by society. Yet it is possible to combine modern life with values and culture.

Qatar aspires to advance and develop the social dimensions of society by nurturing its citizens to deal flexibly with the requirements of the age they live in.

QNV 2030 sets a goal to preserve strong cohesive families that care for their members, and maintain moral and religious values and humanitarian ideals. Women are assumed to play a significant role in all spheres of family life, as well as through participating in economic and political decision-making.

Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016 (NDS), defined the priority national initiatives for achieving this goal.

Marriage is the foundation leading to the formation of Qatari families. Two prominent trends are threatening Qatari family cohesion. These are the sharply rising proportion of Qatari women who never marry and steadily increasing number of divorces. Ensuring the **continuity of cohesive families** and large households is crucial to the national vision.

So within the NDS initiatives were proposed and now being implemented to strengthen the institution of marriage, including marriage guidance and counseling and other measures to reduce the proportion of Qatari women remaining permanently unmarried.

To strengthen **Qatar's long-term social care and protection outlook**, the NDS proposed initiatives to provide support systems for families with special circumstances, such as families of people with disabilities and juvenile delinquents; improve support for working families, particularly for women; and reduce family violence by establishing a protection and support system for victims.

And to ensure **long term financial security for Qatari families** and reduce economic and social vulnerability, the knowledge and skills of all Qataris is being deepened to adapt to Qatar's transformation into a diversified knowledge-based economy.

The NDS proposes massive investments in **quality education** and training of boys and girls - quality being critical for ensuring outcomes that address current and future labour market needs.

These include measures to ensure universal access to high-quality education - our target is to achieve a net enrolment of 95% throughout the K-12 education system by 2016. Beyond basic education, there will be greater alignment between higher education and needs of a knowledge economy. **And the NDS is providing for greater opportunities for women in the workplace**, with more diverse and socially acceptable pathways, and expanding the professional, managerial and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Concluding remarks

Distinguished participants

The family is the basis of Arab society and is the foundation on which rest all aspects of our social architecture.

Later today and tomorrow you will be considering some of the challenges facing the Arab family in the presentations and discussions. I wish you well in your deliberations.

With vision, firm resolve and leadership our goals can be achieved. We need the active commitment and support of all sectors and individuals. And a huge effort that starts within our homes and families, to make sure that our sons and daughters are supported and encouraged equally.

God be with you.

Thank you.