

Speech of Dr. Saleh M. Al Nabit, Minister of Development Planning and Statistics,

State of Qatar,

At the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2018

New York, 9-18 July 2018

Mr. President,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by expressing my great pleasure to be here with you for the second time in the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, in which we meet this year under the theme "**Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies**". On this occasion, I am pleased to present to you the second Voluntary National Review of the State of Qatar. But, first I would like to precede by referring to some indicators and evidences that demonstrate what we have achieved so far in terms of sustainable development.

As you know, we are a country with a population of about 2.7 million today. We have a strong and coherent economy that has proven its ability to overcome the challenges of the blockade we are experiencing from some neighboring countries. The economic growth rate in 2017 was about 1.6%, and is expected to rise to 2.6% this year and to 2.7% in 2019. The State of Qatar ranks first in the world in the average per capita GDP index (PPP at current prices), with an average per capita of US \$ 127,000 in 2017.

In terms of human development, according to the UNDP Human Development Report of March 2017, the State of Qatar maintained its 33rd ranking among 188 countries in the Human Development Index. Thus, Qatar continues to lead the Arab states in this index. The average life expectancy at birth for both sexes was 78 years, while the infant mortality rate was about 7 per

thousand for the same year, and the adult literacy rate rose from 96.7% in 2015 to 97.8% in 2017. Higher education enrollment increased from 14% in 2015 to 16% in 2017 for those of university age. The labor force participation rate for those aged 15 years and above was 84.6% in 2017, while unemployment rate among young people aged 15-24 years decreased from 1.1% in 2015 to 0.8% in 2017.

On the Global Competitiveness Index 2018 of the International Institute for Management Development (IMD), Qatar ranked 14th out of 63 countries.

The State of Qatar has topped the Arab World in Global Peace Index to become the most peaceful and secure Arab country, ranking 30th in the world and maintaining its first rank in the Middle East and North Africa during the years 2009-2017. On the Index of Economic Freedom, this year our country ranked 29th out of 180 countries, and on the Global innovation Index, Qatar ranked 49th out of 127 countries.

In this regard, I take the opportunity to inform you that we have completed most of the infrastructure projects related to hosting the 2022 World Cup and we are ready to make this event a global cultural and sporting phenomenon where peace-loving human civilizations interact. This is not only because Qatar has the adequate resources and capabilities to host such a major event, but also because Qatar believes, as HH the Amir said, that **“Development and stability are interdependent and intertwined; there is no development without stability, and no stability without development. Development in its broadest sense aims at uplifting the humans and realizing communal stability. Development can achieve its objectives only through good governance, the rule of law, combatting corruption and injustice, promoting and consolidating human values, achieving social justice and equality, in addition to non-marginalization or exclusion in terms of faith or sect”**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now, I would like to present our development achievements with regard to the goals set for this year's VNR. The goals and targets of the 2030 Global Sustainable Development Agenda are integral to the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

In the area of ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, all of Qatar's population have access to safe drinking water through an integrated and sustainable distribution network. Wastewater treatment plants have been expanded and preparations are underway for the construction of an industrial wastewater treatment plant. The State has also worked to achieve efficiency in the provision of water from desalination plants, groundwater and wastewater by harnessing modern technologies and revitalizing international partnerships.

In terms of ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, the State has provided electricity services to all its inhabitants and has enhanced thermal efficiency in energy production by monitoring the operational efficiency of all independent producers. It has also carried out large-scale energy conservation campaigns, and is working to increase the contribution of renewable energy to the country's energy needs. For this purpose, our country has allocated many land plots for solar energy projects and plants and has promoted sustainable energy initiatives and the use of energy saving technologies. Qatar has also developed a plan for the transformation to the use of treated wastewater instead of desalinated water in the operation of cooling stations, the replacement of old power plants with new more efficient ones, the establishment of partnerships to transfer solar technology and the formation of a national renewable energy committee at the Ministry of Energy and Industry.

With regard to human settlements, Qatar is working to create safe and sustainable cities and suburbs. Thus, it has implemented many major infrastructure projects, particularly public

transport systems, roads, energy, water, sports facilities and sewage systems in order to ensure access for all to safe transportation, housing and basic services at affordable cost, as well as social welfare and protection for the vulnerable groups of society, and the protection of society from disaster risks.

The State of Qatar has also ensured sustainable consumption and production patterns by encouraging the efficient use of natural resources, green buildings, using treated wastewater in central cooling facilities and fodder irrigation, reducing the rate of waste and solid waste generation and increasing recycling rates. It has also supported the development of a plant, fish and livestock production system and the preparation of detailed plans and strategies for fisheries, natural resources and tourism sectors. Our State is also committed to the international, regional and multilateral environmental conventions it has ratified, and it supports the organization of conferences and forums in this regard. It has also encouraged the involvement of consumers through awareness and education of consumption patterns and purchases of healthy food, optimal water use and rational use of energy.

With regard to the protection, restoration and promotion of sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, combating desertification, halting land degradation and conserving biodiversity, the total protected area, with the aim of protecting desert ecosystems from overfishing and overgrazing, was about 30% of the total State area. The study of the biodiversity of wild birds has also been completed, and the State has taken urgent action to stop illegal hunting and trafficking of protected species.

In promoting the means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, Qatar has strengthened its international presence, hosting several international conferences on sustainable development, such as the International Follow-up Conference on Financing for Development to review the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, held in Doha on 29 November-2 December 2008, which sponsored the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development, the High-Level Conference on Financing for

Development and the Means for Implementing the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, held in Doha in November 2017.

In terms of financing for development, the State of Qatar provided development assistance to poor countries and refugee recipient countries in excess of US\$ 2 billion in 2017. It also promoted the role of civil society in the country and sponsored the Doha Declaration on the Role of Civil Society in the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 in 2017. With regards to the Development Goals, the State of Qatar has endeavored to promote the use of technology in the implementation of most of its economic, social and environmental development programs aimed at improving the quality of life and establishing sustainable societies in which no one is marginalized. The Qatar National Research Strategy 2012 provides a framework for research goals that Qatar Foundation's R&D sector endeavors to achieve. The State has also focused on strengthening the capacities of its citizens to be able to contribute effectively to the development process. Thus, it has established schools and universities with varied specialties and has also sent large number of students on scholarships abroad.

In this context, Qatar Foundation has developed and implemented the "Silatech" initiative to support the aspirations of Arab and international youth for decent work. The "Education Above All" Foundation provides special educational opportunities for children living in low income families or facing humanitarian crises. This initiative builds on, and helps to ensure, a broad range of national, regional and international partners in promoting the right of all children to education. This program has enabled the re-enrollment of 10 million children in schools around the world.

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, we hereby reaffirm that the State of Qatar is a strong and reliable partner in building international peace and security. We made great contributions to the activation of international dialogue through the organization of forums and conferences, the issuance of international and regional declarations, the establishment of dialogue among different civilizations and religions, and the fight against terrorism and extremism. We will continue to march forward in the development path by harnessing science and technology and fostering innovation to achieve the goals of our national strategy and population policy, together with the goals of the Global Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. As we noted in our first Voluntary National Review last year, we have integrated the goals and targets of the Global Sustainable Development Agenda into our National Development Strategy sectors 2018-2022. These goals and targets have become an integral part of the above strategy, as the implementation mechanisms and initiative and project owners have been identified. The monitoring, follow-up and evaluation system has also been developed, and periodic reports are being prepared on progress towards the goals. With regard to the statistical aspects of the Global Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, we have adopted the indicator framework adopted by the UN Statistical Commission and have joined the Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics Project administered by the UN Statistics Division to modernize the entire national statistical system and provide data and indicators for monitoring and following up the implementation of the goals of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

Thank you for your attention.

Now, we invite you to watch a short film on Sustainable Development in Qatar.