

SABAH EL KHEIR [good morning]

AHLAN WA SHLAN [welcome]

BONJOUR ET BON JOURNEE

Distinguished delegates, on behalf of the Brookings Institution, our President Strobe Talbott, and our delegation of x scholars from Washington and our Brookings Doha Center, welcome to this eleventh annual U.S.-Islamic World Forum.

We are deeply honored this morning by the presence and patronage of His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani, the Emir of Qatar (kick off some applause).

This year we mark the beginning of a new decade for the Forum, which coincides with a new era of American engagement in the Islamic World. After a decade of large-scale American military involvement in the broader Middle East, the U.S. government is turning the page toward a more modest and more balanced approach to the region.

In his recent remarks at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, President Obama acknowledged the limits of military force as a tool of U.S. power: " U.S. military action cannot be the only - or even primary -- component of our leadership in every instance. Just because we have the best hammer does not

mean that every problem is a nail." He also reaffirmed the United States' call for collective action, through diplomacy and development as well as force, to preserve international order and defend human dignity, two defining elements of American bipartisan foreign policy.

Making this smart power strategy work will require the United States to collaborate not only with states like Qatar, which is yet again showing the world it can play a critical role in resolving disputes. It also demands active dialogue with a wide range of people committed to peaceful change.

The U.S.-Islamic World Forum stands out as one of the few venues where this kind of multi-level conversation can happen. Where else do we find this unique blend of government officials, academics, activists, musicians, journalists and business people of all faiths and no faith coming together to solve the urgent problems facing Muslim communities around the world?

The Forum was not always such a laboratory for problem solving. Initially created to help the American government and Muslims better understand each other after the tragedy of September 11, the Forum evolved because its participants wanted a space for making policy recommendations on everything from water security to blasphemy laws. And so the Forum's working groups were born.

To mark its new decade of activity, the Forum is evolving again. In addition to the working groups, there is now an action group that each year will launch a new initiative to address challenges in Muslim-majority countries. We created the action group because we saw so many people who first met at the Forum go on to form lasting partnerships to change the world for the better. We didn't want to leave such fortuitous meetings to chance, so from now on we will convene at least one group of activists, artists, entrepreneurs, governments, and foundations to launch a new initiative.

The action group this year is attempting to revive the cultural heart of northern Mali, Timbuktu, after its rhythms were silenced by an attack by armed rebels. The group will deliberate on how to return Timbuktu's world-famous music festival to the city as well as preserve its rich heritage of Islamic manuscripts. We are honored that the president of Mali, Ibrahim Keita, could join us this year as we launch this important initiative.

The violent extremists of northern Mali and their disdain for the culture of its inhabitants is just one manifestation of a broader movement in North Africa and the Middle East to narrowly define the religious identity of its people. In one way or another, all the working groups and panels are about efforts to exclude the Other on the basis of religion. But religion can also be a means of inclusion, which is why we have made Islam and inclusion the theme of this year's conference.

And what greater embodiment of that theme than the country of Albania, which avoided the ruinous religious wars that tore apart its neighbors in the 1990s. We are honored that the president of Albania, BujarNishani, is here to address us today.

As the example of Albania demonstrates, conflict over religion is not exclusive or inherent to Muslim-majority countries. In the United States and Western Europe, which pride themselves on religious tolerance, Muslims have faced bigotry and discrimination because of their religious beliefs. Rather than hollow out their heritage in response, many have chosen to look within the tradition to find new ways of belonging, which is the subject of the working group on the trans-Atlantic dialogue on Muslim communities in Europe and North America.

Of course, religion is not the only or even the best lens through which to view conflicts among Muslims. Economic dynamics, political structure, resource scarcity and ethnic grievance are often more helpful guides to explaining those conflicts. Even conflicts framed in religious terms often require both religious and non-religious solutions, something that will be explored by the working group on countering violent extremism in Pakistan. But because so many of the parties to those conflicts define their differences in religious terms, we have to understand those terms to either challenge them or work within their confines for positive change. This latter approach is the one adopted by another of the Forum working groups this year, which will

attempt to identify Islamic principles for transitional justice after violent conflict ends.

I would like to close my remarks on new beginnings by extending special thanks to the new emir, His Highness Shaykh Tamim, and the new prime minister, His Excellency Shaykh Abdullah bin Nasser. Like the Forum itself, both are charting a new path for Qatar based on the rich legacy of its past. We have been delighted to partner with the Government of Qatar for the past decade and we look forward with great anticipation to the decade to ahead.

With that, please join me in welcoming His Excellency, Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Shaykh Abdullah Bin Nasser Bin Khalifa Al Thani (ab-DUH-luh bin NAH-sir bin kha-LEE-fuh al THAA-nee).

Please welcome His Excellency Bujar Nishani (BOO-yar NEE-sha-NEE), President of the Republic of Albania.

Please welcome His Excellency Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta (EE-bra-HEEM BOO-ba-CAR kay-TA), President of the Republic of Mali.

Anne Patterson Remarks

It is my pleasure to introduce Ambassador Anne Patterson, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.

Ambassador Patterson is one of those rare diplomats who doesn't hesitate to go where angels fear to tread. From her earlier days in trouble spots like El Salvador and Colombia, when I first got to work with her, to more recent assignments in Pakistan and Egypt, Ambassador Patterson tackles her work with unfailing dedication and stamina. We were very happy to have her with us at the annual Saban Forum on US-Israeli Relations last December in Washington and welcome her on her first official visit to Qatar as the new Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.