

GUTEN ABEND MEINE DAMEN UND HERREN
ICH BEGRUSSE SIE HERZLICH UND BIN SEHR GLÜCKLICH
MIT IHNEN HIER ZU SEIN, ZU UNSEREN AUSTELLUNGSPREMIERE
RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE – ISLAM IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

Dear Excellencies, Honorable guests, and Friends,
Dear Dr.Bisovsky

I am much honored and privileged/ to be among you this evening/ to welcome you and say few words at this special event/, which comes at a very important time of relationship between Oman and Austria,/ and at same time when turmoil and revolutions/ are mushrooming in the Middle East region.

In this respect,/ since the beginning of the Renaissance era in 1970/ under the wise leadership of HM Sultan Qaboos,/ the Sultanate has taken many initiatives,/ inside and outside the country and in different occasions,/ to promote the core Islamic values/ of peace, cultural dialogue, and coexistence.

Our exhibition tonight,/ which will be opened until the 3rd of June,/ is a show case/ of certain aspects of "Religious practices in Oman",/ with an emphasis on key ideas such as/ tolerance, moderation, dialogue, coexistence, and the acceptance of others./ On many occasions,/ Oman has called against bigotry, fanaticism, extremism, and hateful slogans,/ which can only cause/ division and anxiety among people and communities,/ and animosity, tension between cultures,/ a clash of civilizations,/ and in its extremist form destructive wars./

In this context/ allow me to give you a glimpse of historical facts/ that are relevant to our exhibition./

- Oman converted to Islam in full and complete conviction/ during the life of the Prophet Mohammad, around 630 AD./ The conversion of the Omanis to Islam/ was peaceful and

non-violent./ Throughout the Islamic history,/ Omanis played instrumental roles/ in spreading the message of Islam and its values/ to other parts of the world/ due to its strong merchants and trading links./

- At present/ more than 95% of the populations in Oman are Muslims,/ of who the followers of the Ibadhi ideology/ form a majority./ However,/ other Islamic factions,/ such as the Sunnis and the Shiaas,/ also exist in Oman/ and live in harmony with other religious groups./
- For many who do not know much about Ibadhism,/ I can say that/ it is one of the earliest schools of Jurisprudence in Islam,/ which was founded by Imam Jabir bin Zaid/ in the first half of the Islamic century./ Its philosophy is based on the principles of/ religious tolerance,/ nonviolence,/ and dialogue./ It has full consideration and respect/ for other religions, beliefs and cultures./
- Oman is a country/ which offers a welcoming home/ for a number of religious institutions./ Diverse religious groups thrive in the Sultanate/ with their distinct religious beliefs and practices./ Also Oman is among the first countries in the Gulf region/ with Hindus and Buddhists temples,/ and the Capital Muscat/ hosts many different Christian groups,/ fellowships,/ and assemblies,/ thus, becoming a melting pot/ of different cultures and traditions/ from many places across the globe./

With such historical background in mind,/ and while Oman is proud of its deep rooted Arabic and Islamic heritage/ it plays an advocacy role/ in promoting ideas of moderation and tolerance./ In this respect,/ the Sultanate is much aware of its responsibility/ as an active member of the international community,/ and therefore,/ has taken many practical steps and activities such as/ organizing many regional and international conferences/ for interfaith dialogue and understandings,/ and establishing several Sultan Qaboos Chairs,/ which are endowed at prestigious

universities around the world/ with objectives to encourage the idea of a global community/ living in peace,/ harmony,/ mutual understanding,/ and freedom of religion./

Last but not least,/ I would like to take this opportunity to thank/ H.E DR. HAWLICEK,/ President of the Austro-Omani Friendship Society/ for her continuous support and efforts/ to promote Oman- Austro relationships,/ as well as MR. FRITZ EDLINGER/ SG of the Austro-Omani Friendship Society./ Also I want to thank/ Dr Mohammed Almamari,/ adviser at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs in Oman,/ who came from Oman/ for this event,/ and special thanks to/ MR. GEORG POPP/ the SG of the German-Omani Society,/ and MR. ALEX MOLL,/ the initiators and organizers/ of so many successful events about Oman/ including this one,/ and DR. GERHARD BISOVSKY,/ the Director of the VHS MEIDLING,/ who has the generosity to host for the second time/ an event about the Sultanate,/ and to all of you/ who took from their precious time/ to attend our event tonight.

Thank You and MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL

SEHR GEERTE DAMEN UND HERREN
ICH HOFFE, SIE WERDEN DIESEN ABEND GENIESSEN