

**Dear Excellencies, Friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am much honored and privileged/ to be among you this afternoon/ to welcome you and say few words at this special event/ which comes at a very important time of mankind relationships/ marked increasingly by tensions,/ turmoil,/ hatred,/ hostility,/ and lack of trust and decency between people worldwide./

While our exhibition is a symbolic introduction/ to Oman's cultural and historical aspects and development experience,/ it is also as the case of Oman/, a reflection of how people of different cultural and religious' background/ can live and thrive in peace and harmony under the same sky./

Since our exhibition coincides with the beginning of the Holly Month "Ramadan",/ please allow me to take this opportunity/ to congratulate ourselves and all Muslims around the world on this occasion,/ and wish them a happy and successful Ramadan./ **"Ramadan Kareem"**.

Our exhibition titled/ **"Sultanate of Oman- Modern Life with Old Tradition"**,/ which will be opened until the 12th of August/ is a show case of Oman's Geographical features,/ history,/ cultural diversity,/ tradition,/ religious practices,/ and economic development during the last forty years./

While the Sultanate did not shy/ to embrace modernity and needed development,/ it tried its best to preserve its Arab and Islamic identity./ This balance and unique blend between maintaining old traditions/ and perusing necessary development/ gives most visitors to Oman a panoramic view/ of how these two world views coexist in harmony.

In the context of Oman's cultural and Islamic heritage,/ the Sultanate's history goes back to more than 3000 years./ Oman was also known as "Magan" to ancient civilizations,/ and due to the existence of many famous historical and cultural sites,/ the UNESCO has classified some of these sites as a World Heritage./

As for its Islamic heritage,/ the Sultanate converted to Islam in full and complete conviction/ during the life of the Prophet Mohammad around 630 AD./ Throughout its Islamic history,/ Omanis played important roles in spreading the noble message of Islam/ and its benevolent values to other parts of the world,/ in Asia and Africa/ due to its central geographical location,/ and its strong maritime and trading links./

At present,/ more than 95% of the population in Oman are Muslims,/ of whom the followers of the Ibadhi ideology form a majority./ Ibadhism is one of the earliest schools of thought in Islam,/ which was founded in the first half of Islamic century./ Its philosophy is based on the principles of peaceful

coexistence,/ religious tolerance,/ nonviolence, and dialogue/ as a mean to solve differences between people./ 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 communities thrive in the Sultanate/ with their distinct religious beliefs and practices./

In this respect,/ since the beginning of the Renaissance Era in 1970,/ the Sultanate has taken many initiatives to promote the basic values of/ peace, respect and tolerance,/ and has worked to build bridges of understanding and coexistence/ between communities and cultures around the globe./

For that purpose,/ the Sultanate organized many regional and international cultural conferences,/ and interfaith dialogue events,/ and established several Sultan Qaboos academic Chairs/ in many well recognized and renowned international universities,/ with an objective to encourage the idea of global community/ living in peace, harmony, mutual understanding, and freedom of religion./ We all hope that such cultural activities,/ similar to our exhibition today,/ will give us a sense of connectivity and belonging/ which goes far beyond the boundaries of/ all kind of fanaticism, hatred, and stereotyping./

Finally,/ I would like to take the opportunity/ to thank many individuals and organizations/ who helped in organizing this fabulous event./ Let me start by thanking:/

- the Ministry of Dewan Royal Court,/ the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs,/ the Association for Fine Arts, and Oman Photography Club./

- the UNOV officials,/ especially Mr. Philippa Lawrance Head of the Protocol Department,/ Mr Sakerah, and their team/ for hosting our exhibition and for their valuable assistance and support./

- H.E Dr Hawlicek,/ president of the Austro-Omani Friendship Society,/ and Mr. Fritz Edlinger,/ secretary general of the Austro-Omani Friendship Society,/ for their continuous support and efforts/ to strengthen our relationship./

- Dr. Mohammad Al Maamari,/ the scientific adviser of the Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs,/

- A special thanks to Mr. Georg Popp,/ Mr. Alex Moll and Michael Dickinson,/ from Arabia Felix- Germany,/ the initiators and organizers of many successful events about Oman,/

- Mr. Yaqoob Alriyami/ and alhmade Altagir,/ Omani artists and photographers,/ who came from Oman/ and exerted great efforts for the success of this event,/

- I thank all of you/ for coming to participate with us/ the opening ceremony of this event./

Thank You again and May Allah/God Bless You All