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# His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan



HH Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler of Abu Dhabi, was elected as the new President of the United Arab Emirates on 3 November 2004, to succeed his father, the late HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, UAE President from 1971 to 2004, from whom, he has said, he learned "the need for patience and prudence in all things."

Since becoming UAE President, HH Sheikh Khalifa has presided over a major re-structuring of both the Federal Government and the government of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The appointment of a new Cabinet in February 2006, with Vice-President and Dubai Ruler HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum as Prime Minister, saw major changes in the portfolios with, crucially, the creation of new ministries devoted to the streamlining and modernizing of the business of government, a new focus on community development and, through the new Ministry of Federal National Council (FNC) Affairs, an important step towards reform of the political process with the introduction of indirect elections for half of the FNC's membership.

In his message to the nation on the occasion of the UAE's National Day on 2 December 2005, he noted:

“*The years ahead require a bigger role for the Federal National Council by empowering it to be an authority that would provide great support and guidance for the executive arm of the government. We shall work to make the Council more capable, more effective and more sensitive to the issues affecting the nation and the people. This would be done by ensuring a more participatory process and the entrenchment of the policy of “Shura” consultation. And through a gradual, organized course, we have decided to start activating the role of the FNC through electing half of its members through councils for each emirate and appointing the other half. By doing this, we will embark on a march that culminates in more participation and interaction from all the citizens of the country. . . . Today, we stand at a threshold of a new era, whose ultimate objective is to entrench the rule of law and due process, accountability, transparency and equal opportunity.*

HH Sheikh Khalifa has also undertaken extensive tours throughout the UAE to study the needs of the Northern Emirates, during which he has given instructions for the building of a number of projects related to housing, education and the social services.

HH Sheikh Khalifa has overseen dramatic changes too in the government of Abu Dhabi, where particular attention has been paid to two aspects - improvements in terms of efficiency and cost for services provided to the public and the opening up of much of the economy so that greater scope has been provided for direct private investment and for public-private partnerships. During the early years of the Federation, he believes, it was right and appropriate for government to play the leading role, but now, with a burgeoning private sector and with a well-educated population, the time is right for government, both local and federal, to step back and to concentrate on the core areas of government responsibility.

The re-structuring of government, he believes, will only be effective if the people of the UAE take upon themselves the task of contributing effectively. “We have already begun preparing for the new era by promulgating legislation [and] placing some regulatory measures on the existing departments, institutions, activities and relations,” he said in his December 2005 National Day message. “This is to tighten up the loose ends, to straighten the curves, put an end to wrongdoings [and] . . . to improve production and services.” He continued:

“*It is high time for our political, religious, cultural, information, educational and civil society institutions to take up their responsibilities to instill in our society the values of love of work, to change the negative perceptions about vocational work. It is high time to make them understand the true meaning of work – that it means*

*responsibility and reflects human, civil and religious values. These institutions also need to work hard to diversify the skills of the national human resources, to raise productivity, encourage investment in human resources development, improve voluntary work and create awareness on this noble work and its significance to individuals and society in general.*

While emphasizing the need for a re-structuring at home, not just in terms of government, but also in the way in which the UAE's people look upon their own duties towards society, HH Sheikh Khalifa has, at the same time, continued to ensure that the country pursues an active foreign policy.

HH Sheikh Khalifa is a strong supporter of the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), believing that the success and achievements of this body reflect the depth of understanding reached amongst its leaders. That support was re-affirmed at the 2005 GCC summit conference, held in Abu Dhabi, while he has exchanged numerous visits with the leaders of other GCC states, which have provided him with the opportunity to discuss both ways in which the GCC can continue to develop and other issues of regional and wider importance.

One of the wider issues, of course, has been the continuing turmoil in Iraq, and HH Sheikh Khalifa has pursued a consistent policy of supporting the efforts by Iraq's elected representatives to restore peace and stability, both through offering diplomatic support and through a wide range of assistance for reconstruction of Iraq's shattered economy. At the same time, he has urged the various communities in Iraq, whether regional or religious, to recognize that their future is best guaranteed by working together and by promoting the unity of both the country and its people.

Another issue seen by HH Sheikh Khalifa as being of crucial importance is that of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people. As has been the case since the creation of the Federation in 1971, the UAE has continued to express its support for the Palestinian people, with HH Sheikh Khalifa demonstrating his own personal interest by funding a major housing program, Sheikh Khalifa City, in Rafah in the Gaza Strip.

At a political level, HH Sheikh Khalifa noted in a speech on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in November 2005 that the UAE remained committed to work for the restoration of security, peace and stability in the region, saying that this, as well as economic and development cooperation between countries of the region including Israel, "cannot be achieved while Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and Arab territories continues, but only through compliance with obligations as provided in the Road Map and the Arab peace initiative that calls for justice, ending the Israeli occupation and establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital."

HH Sheikh Khalifa said: "We have rejoiced over the Israeli military pullout from Gaza Strip and have regarded it as a first legal step which must be followed by other comprehensive and serious withdrawals from all the Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967."

HH Sheikh Khalifa has demonstrated his commitment to continuing to build relations with other countries both by receiving visiting leaders, from countries in Asia and Europe, as well as from other Arab countries, and by paying visits to Central Asian states, with whom he has been an active proponent of closer ties ever since they emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. He has also proved to be a generous donor of emergency assistance at times of natural disaster, responding immediately in sending help after events such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the autumn 2005 earthquake that devastated much of northern Pakistan and neighboring parts of India.

HH Sheikh Khalifa assumed his posts as Ruler of Abu Dhabi and President of the United Arab Emirates in 2004 after many decades working closely with his father, HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founder of the Federation.

Born in the inland oasis-city of Al Ain in 1948, HH Sheikh Khalifa was educated in the local school. On 18 September 1966, following his father's assumption of the post of Ruler of Abu Dhabi, HH Sheikh Khalifa was appointed as Ruler's Representative in the Eastern Region of Abu Dhabi and as Head of the Courts Department in Al Ain.

On 1 February 1969, HH Sheikh Khalifa was nominated as Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, this being followed on 2 February 1969 by his appointment as the Head of the Abu Dhabi Department of Defense, in which post he oversaw the building up of the Abu Dhabi Defense Force (ADDF), which later became the nucleus of the UAE Armed Forces.

On 1 July 1971, as part of the restructuring of the government of the emirate, HH Sheikh Khalifa was appointed Prime Minister of Abu Dhabi and Minister of Defense and Finance. On 23 December 1973, HH Sheikh Khalifa assumed the post of Deputy Prime Minister in the second UAE Federal Cabinet. Shortly afterwards, when the Cabinet of Abu Dhabi Emirate was dissolved, as part of the process of strengthening the institutions of the UAE Federation, HH Sheikh Khalifa was appointed, on 20 January 1974, as the first Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, which replaced the Emirate's Cabinet.

Under his direction, and in accordance with the instructions of HH Sheikh Khalifa, the Executive Council oversaw the realization of a wide-ranging development program in Abu Dhabi, including the construction of housing, water supplies and other essential services, roads and general infrastructure that led to the emergence of the city of Abu Dhabi as the modern city that it is today.

Of particular importance in terms of ensuring that citizens were able to benefit from the country's increasing wealth was the establishment by HH Sheikh Khalifa in 1981 of the Abu Dhabi Department of Social Services and Commercial Buildings, charged with the provision of loans to citizens for construction.

The establishment of the department, popularly known as the “Khalifa Committee,” followed another decision taken by HH Sheikh Khalifa in 1979 to alleviate the burden on citizens of the repayment of loans from the commercial banks.

A further step to ensure that citizens were able to build the properties that they needed, both for residential and for investment purposes, came with the creation by HH Sheikh Khalifa of the Private Loans Authority, early in 1991.

HH Sheikh Khalifa has also been involved extensively in other areas of the country's development. In May 1976, following the unification of the armed forces of the Emirates, HH Sheikh Khalifa was nominated as Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces. In this capacity, he devoted much attention to the building up of the country's defensive capability, through the establishment of many military training institutions and through the procurement of the latest military equipment and training.

HH Sheikh Khalifa has held a number of other top posts in the Abu Dhabi government. Since the late 1980s, for example, he has been Chairman of the Supreme Petroleum Council, responsible for oversight of Abu Dhabi's upstream and downstream oil and gas industries, although he has also actively encouraged diversification of the country's economy away from dependence on its depletable reserves of hydrocarbons.

He is also Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Investment Council (which replaced the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) in mid-2006 and manages the emirate's financial reserves and investments) and Honorary Chairman of the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi (EAD) and was until 2006 the Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD), which oversees the country's international development assistance program.

He has stated that his key objectives as President of the UAE will be to continue on the path laid down by his father, whose legacy, he says, “will continue to be the beacon guiding us into the future, a prosperous future where security and stability will reign.”

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President Sheikh Khalifa

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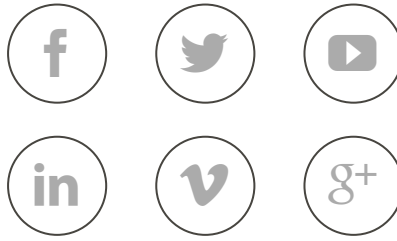
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