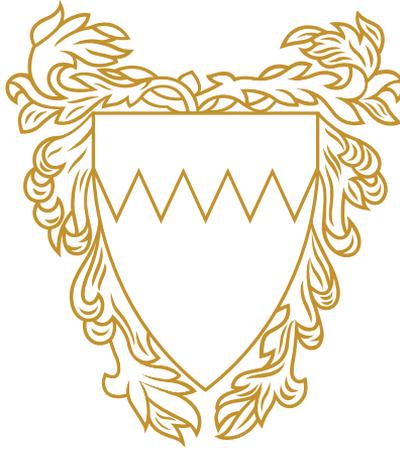




هيئة التشريع والرأى القانونى
Legislation & Legal Opinion Commission



National Action Charter

2020

Bahrain Institute For Political Development - BIPD

Building No. 362

Road No. 3307

Block No. 333

Um Al-Hassam - Kingdom of Bahrain



**His Royal Highness
Prince Khalifa bin Salman
Al Khalifa**
The Prime Minister of the
Kingdom of Bahrain



**His Majesty
King Hamad bin Isa
Al Khalifa**
The King of the
Kingdom of Bahrain



**His Royal Highness
Prince Salman bin Hamad
Al Khalifa**
The Crown Prince, Deputy
Supreme Commander & First
Deputy Prime Minister

National Action Charter

Amiri Order No 17.of2001

With Respect to the Ratification of the National Action Charter⁽¹⁾

We, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Amir of the State of Bahrain,
Having reviewed the Amiri Order No. (36) and (43) forming
the Supreme National Committee to draft the National Action
Charter,
and the draft of the National Action Charter,
and Amiri Order No. (8) of 2001 for inviting citizens to a
referendum on the draft of the National Action Charter,
and upon the decision of the Minister of Justice and Islamic
Affairs No. (6) of 2001 to announce the result of the referendum
on the draft National Action Charter,
and upon what was confirmed to us, by the general public
acceptance and overwhelming endorsement of the National
Action Charter, by the result of the referendum,
and as confirmation of the will of the people of Bahrain in
approving the draft of the National Action Charter, which
confirmed their desire to achieve a better and more prosperous
future, and to open up better prospects for the future of Bahrain,
which we want for a better and more beautiful future for us and
the generations to come,

1- This is unofficial translation, in case of a difference between the Arabic and the English text; the Arabic text shall prevail updated on 6/4/2020.

Hereby order the following:

First Article

We ratify the accompanying National Action Charter, which our loyal people approved on the referendum dated February 14th and 15th of 2001.

Second Article

This order shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall be enforced from the date of its issuance.

Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa

Amir of the State of Bahrain

Issued at Rifa'a Palace

On: 22nd Dhu al-Qi'dah, 1421 Hijri

Corresponding to: 16th February, 2001 A.D.

Bahrain Throughout History

Civilization and Growth

Since the dawn of time, Bahrain has left its footprints in the annals of civilizations. Regardless of whether the name “Bahrain” had a narrow or wider geographical definition, this archipelago is the heart of the Gulf region, where all civilizations conjured. Dilmun was the rendezvous point of the Old World extending from Sumer in Mesopotamia, to Magan in Oman moving to the Sind civilization which contributed to the prosperity of Bahrain as it became the centre of free trade and a vital port of call for the entire world over the ages.

Before the dawn of Islam, Bahrain embraced diverse ideologies and beliefs, a rare example in those times.

In light of such spiritual and intellectual tolerance, culture flourished, religions coexisted, and the poets of Bahrain contributed monumental works to Arabic poetry on human thought and existence; they heralded a new era for Arabs in the course of history.

Bahrain was one of the first to have accepted Islam as its religion and believing in Allah wilfully. Also, Bahrain was an early, staunch supporter of Islam. It carried its banner across the Gulf down to India. Bahrain’s assets, meanwhile, became an important source of Muslims’ Treasury. (Baitulmal). Its people made early contributions to the Islamic civilization, the science of jurisprudence and language, particularly during the Caliphate

period. Such contribution made even more natural that Islamic value of tolerance, justice and piety have been deeply embedded into the very conscience of the people of Bahrain.

The natural geography of Bahrain offered a prolific environment for human activities, covering agriculture, trade, and diving. With a very favorable geographic location and abundant resources, Bahrain was always a temptation for invaders and avaricious individuals who were met with resistance from the people of Bahrain. In light of such resistance and struggle against different foreign and regional forces, Ahmed Al Fateh was able to lead Arab forces in the last quarter of the 18th century to defeat all foreign forces and unite the country under the rule of Al Khalifa in both Zubarah and Bahrain regions.

The desire of the people of Bahrain for Shaikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa to rule of the country and to avoid foreign domination, was the first manifestation of public national will among the people of Bahrain. It has gone into the annals of history as the first oath of allegiance to a young ruler who epitomized his people's dream of a national rule. For the next sixty-five years, this rule ensured the country's security, maintained the cohesion of the people and their leadership and maintained its political and economic stability which led Bahrain successfully to steer into the modern era.

Despite foreign powers taking an adverse stand towards calls by the people of Bahrain for Shaikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa to constitute a Shura Council, the positive response on his part

came in line with the political awareness of the joint national movement between the people and the leadership, of the course the national action should take.

Shaikh Hamad bin Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa, who succeeded his father as ruler and having the support and allegiance of his people, had realistic perspective of international conflicts. With his forward-looking approach, he paved the way in developing the country to usher itself into modern times by introducing a modern education system, an effective governmental administration, modern municipal facilities, and an appropriate legal framework in light of the country's development following the establishment of the oil industry in Bahrain.

When Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa took over as ruler in 1942 A.D., Bahrain was suffering from the Second World War and its repercussions on the Gulf region and the economic hardship, and consequentially international and regional upheavals. Nevertheless, Bahrain managed to surmount such difficulties and to continue building the State and developing its vital institutions and facilities. Furthermore, it devoted national unity, people-leadership cohesion and citizens participation in managing the affairs of the country despite the pressures of foreign forces.

The reign of Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa was one with rich growth and political achievements. For he has established the State of Bahrain. He proclaimed Bahrain as an independent State with a modern institution, thus putting an end to foreign

ambitions and claims.

In a survey conducted by a United Nations fact-finding commission, the entire people of Bahrain expressed their unequivocal resolve to protect their fatherland as an Arab independent State and renewed their oath of allegiance to Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa. In response, Shaikh Isa promulgated the constitution of the State of Bahrain that reflected true constitutional and democratic principles. Under Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa, Bahrain gained its full independence as a State that upholds democracy, institutions and rule of law. The decision made by Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa on launching real constitutionalism in Bahrain through free and direct elections to form a national council under the constitution is a milestone in the history of Bahrain.

The unequivocal support expressed when His Highness Shaikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the Amir of Bahrain, assumed leadership, evidences the people of Bahrain's will and support to his reign from its outset. Under His Highness' reign, Bahrain has witnessed a vigorous leap forward to further democracy in response to people's aspiration to a modern state that continues to enjoy security, stability and prosperity, and which has complete constitutional institutions capable of meeting the aspirations of both the leadership and the people, and where justice and rule of law reign supreme in light of these historical circumstances, the people of Bahrain are full of confidence and determination to have a bright future filled with freedom, equality, justice,

democracy and participation in governance by all.

The State of Bahrain that has gained political independence through the joint perseverance by both the wise leadership and Bahrain's faithful people, and has preserved its unity and territorial integrity, including its land and territorial waters that is not subject to compromise in any way and under any circumstances. This is expressly reflected by Article 1 of the constitution of Bahrain, which prohibited: "conceding its sovereignty or surrendering any part of its territory."

The State of Bahrain has played an active political role within the Islamic, Arab and International Community. It has manifested its unwavering belief in its role as one of the constituents of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as well as its resolve to closely work with other member States to further galvanize the GCC system to meet the aspirations of its people.

Whereas, the State of Bahrain has established a modern institution based on democracy, constitutional institutions and the rule of law since its independence; whereas, the State of Bahrain has fully assumed its full role as a State both in terms of its inter- national relations, as well as its sovereign institutions that are based on justice, equality and care for citizens' rights since independence;

Whereas, His Highness the Amir, may Allah protect him, aspires to further deepen democracy through a more balanced structure that ensures the constitutional political partnership between the Government and people, the separation of the three powers,

the strengths of the judiciary mechanisms, and allows for the creation of a constitution court, financial and administrative audit courts;

Whereas, the royal's will is established to usher the state, in the beginning of the third millennium, as a truly modern state that is empowered with a full-fledged political and constitutional framework conducive to proper responses to local, regional and international developments; and Whereas, the outcome of the State of Bahrain's experience in the political and economic work over the past three decades requires taking into account the new political, economic, social and legislative development, and in order to face the upcoming challenges, with all developments globally,

The opinion settled that national, political and constitutional constants in the identity of the state should be taken as an affirmation of the constitutional, democratic and hereditary monarchy, as the country's King serves a division and represents a symbol of his independent identity and aspirations towards progress, and to introduce modernization in the country's constitution by taking advantage of the democratic experiences of different nations to expand the circle of participation in the burdens of governance and administration, as what some of these experiences have proven from adopting the two-chamber system in the legislative work allows combining the advantage of benefiting from the wisdom of those with knowledge and experience from members of the Shura Council and the

interaction with majority's opinion from all schools of thought through a freely and directly Elected Council.

Chapter I

Basic Principles of the Society

No society can be as stable for scores of centuries and as successful in building a distinctive civilization as the Bahraini society unless the mentioned society is characterized by a set of core values that ensure its cohesion, progress and development and strengthens its entity as a state. With its solemn belief in the Islamic faith and Arabic identity, the Bahraini society has been attached to a set of core principles that are congruent with Arab-Islamic values.

These core values must be upheld and safeguarded as they are opted by the entire society. They have always been and maintained through generations for the purpose of maintaining a virtuous society. Hence, these core values and principles shall not be violated by any public authority or any citizen in the interest of the society and the State.

These core values and principles can be enumerated as follows:

First: The Objectives and Basis of Governance

The purpose of governance is to protect the country, promote its position, maintain national unity and achieve comprehensive, sustainable development in political, economic, social, cultural and other fields.

Justice is the basis of governance. Equality, rule of law, liberty, security, peace, education, social solidarity and equality of

opportunity for citizens are pillars of society that the State guarantees.

These basic values that are firmly adhered to by the State of Bahrain, the Amir, the Government and people of Bahrain for a bright future, have been the basis of governance over the years. They are reinforced by compassion, cooperation and cohesion between the ruler and the people. Justice is one such principle that has remained an article of faith in Bahrain's society along with the values of solidarity and cordiality.

Second - Guarantees of Personal Freedoms and Equality

Personal freedoms are guaranteed and equality between citizens and justice and equality of opportunity are core principles of the society. The State shoulders the responsibility of ensuring them for all citizens equally and without distinction. This is based on a broader principle, namely, that people are equal in human dignity, a principle that has been consecrated by Islam for fourteen centuries. Addressing believers during his last pilgrimage (Hajjatul Wada'a), Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) laid emphasis on this principle by saying that people are as equal as dents of a comb are, that no Arab claims a preference over a non-Arab (Ajami) and no white man can claim preference over a black man except in terms of righteousness and good deeds. A natural flow of this great principle of Islam and indeed humanity is a set of related principles, namely:

1- All citizens are equal in terms of rights and duties before the

law, without distinction of gender, origin, language, religion or belief. This has been reiterated by H.H. the Amir in his first address to the people in the wake of his assumption to power.

- 2- Personal liberty is guaranteed under the law. No person shall be arrested, detained in custody, inspected, or determine their residency or restrict their residency or movement ,except in accordance with the law and under judicial supervision.
- 3- No person shall in any way be subjected to any kind of physical or psychological torture ,inhumane ,humiliating or degrading treatment .Any confession or statement obtained under torture ,threatening or persuasion shall be null and void .An accused shall not be subjected to any physical or psychological abuse .Law guarantees punishment to those who commit an offense of torture or physical or psychological abuse.
- 4- An offence or punishment shall only be established by the law .No person shall be convicted of any offence except for the violation of a law in force at the time of commissioning the act charged as an offence.
- 5- Punishment is personal .An accused person remains innocent until convicted in a fair trial in which all guarantees are provided with a view to ensuring to an accused person the right to defence throughout the investigation and prosecution under the law .A person accused of an offence shall have the right to be defended by a lawyer of his choosing .The right to litigation is ensured under the law.

6- No entry or inspection of places of residence without consent of its legal occupants unless such entry or inspection is deemed extremely necessary by way of exception ,such an entry or inspection may be carried out in cases specified by law and under judicial supervision.

7-Personal correspondence shall enjoy inviolability and secrecy. Mail, cablegram, telephone, electronic and other correspondence shall be protected and shall not be monitored or inspected except in cases deemed necessary that are specified by law and subject to judicial supervision.

Third - Freedom of Belief

The State ensures freedom of belief. Freedom of conscience shall be absolute. The State maintains inviolability of houses of worship and guarantees freedom to practice religious rites according to the prevailing custom of the land.

Fourth - Freedom of Expression and Publishing

Every citizen shall have the right to express his opinion verbally, in writing or in any manner of expression of personal opinion or creativity. Accordingly, freedom of scientific research, publishing, journalism and printing are guaranteed within the legal framework.

Fifth - Civil Society Activities

With a view to enabling the society to make use of all civil capabilities and activities, the State guarantees the freedom

to form civil, scientific, cultural, professional associations and unions at a national level for legitimate purposes through peaceful means under terms and conditions as may be prescribed by law. No one shall be forced to join an association or union or to remain a member thereof.

Sixth - Family is the Cornerstone of Society

Based on the firm belief that family is the cornerstone of the society and that good family is fundamental to a cohesive society, as well as key to upholding religious and ethical values and national sense of belonging, the State protects the legal form of family as well as maternity and childhood, provides care to children, protects them from exploitation and moral, physical and spiritual negligence. In particular, the State pays special attention to physical, moral and mental development of youth.

In this respect, the State guarantees necessary social security for citizens in cases of aging, disability, orphanage, widowhood and unemployment. The State also secures social insurance services for citizens in such cases. The State secures health care and puts in place health policies that are conducive to achieving the objective of health for all.

The State guarantees the solidarity of the society in sharing burdens arising from natural calamities and disasters, compensation of those who may be injured due to war or on account of military duty.

The State endeavours to support women's rights and the enactment of laws on protection of family and family members.

Seventh - Work as a Duty and a Right

Employment is a duty of every citizen. This is in the interest of individual dignity and public good. Subject to public order and ethics, every citizen has the right to carry on any occupation, trade or business.

The State ensures employment opportunities under fair terms and conditions for citizens within national economic development programs, taking into account that save in a case prescribed by law, and for national necessity with fair consideration, no one shall be forced into employment or labour.

Subject to rules of social justice, the law regulates the relationship between employees and employers based on economic principles.

Eighth - Education, Culture and Science:

The State promotes science, literature and arts. It further encourages scientific research and ensures education and cultural services for citizens. Education shall be compulsory and free in initial stages determined by law which also prescribes literacy plans.

The law also regulates aspects of caring for religious education in the various stages and types of education, including national education and by strengthening the citizen's personality and pride in national unity and Arab nationalism.

Universities are considered as beacons of intellectual radiance and scientific advances a fact that necessitates ensuring academic freedom, the practice thereof and maximizing their access to

knowledge. The State encourages private education and the establishment of private universities and institutes. Also, the State shall support science and technology research institutions, a better linkage between education system and labour market with a view to ensuring availability of qualified labour force that meet current and future requirements.

Chapter II

Ruling System

For centuries, ever since the ruling family assumed rule of the country, Bahraini society has been distinctive as to the basis of relationship between the ruler and the people. This has been one of cohesion, direct contact and mutual understanding in the interest of both citizens and the country. True to this tradition, the people of Bahrain now have the resolve that salient features of the government system in the country should be as follows:

First - The Amir

Ruling system of Bahrain shall be a constitutional, democratic and hereditary monarchy as may be prescribed by the constitution and the Amiri Decree on succession. The Amir is the Head of State. His person is inviolable. He is the Supreme Commander of Armed Forces, the symbol of national stability and the fulcrum of ruling system of the State of Bahrain.

The Amir exercises his powers through his Ministers who are accountable to him. He appoints to, and relieves from, premiership and ministerial posts within his powers as prescribed by the constitution.

Second - Constitutional Form of the State

In view of the stability enjoyed, progress achieved, strides made and challenges surmounted by Bahrain by the Grace of God

Almighty, and in view of the fact that it has assumed its full-fledged role as a State both in terms of international relations and sovereign institutions based on equality of all citizens, common good and national unity, it is deemed proper that Bahrain should join democratic constitutional monarchies with a view to meeting peoples aspirations to further progress.

Third - Islamic Shari'a and Legislation

Islam is the religion of the State. Islamic law (Shari'a) is the main source of legislation.

Fourth - People are the Source of all Powers

Ruling system of the State of Bahrain is a democracy where all powers vest with the people. Sovereignty is exercised as prescribed by the constitution.

Fifth - Separation of Powers

With a view to consecrating a stable democracy, the ruling system is based on the separation of, and cooperation among, the three powers namely, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary as set forth in the constitution. H.H. the Amir is at the helm of the three powers.

Sixth - Rule of Law and Independence of the Judiciary

Preserving the rule of law is the basis of ruling in the country. The independence and immunity of the judiciary are two fundamental guarantees for the protection of rights and freedom. The State shall complete the judicial system as prescribed in the Constitution. It shall specify the judicial authority vested with the jurisdiction over disputes related to the constitutionality of laws and regulations, and the public prosecution.

Seventh - People's Right to Participation in Public Affairs

Citizens, men and women, have the right to participate in public affairs and enjoyment of political rights in the country, starting with suffrage and the right to contest in accordance with the provisions of the law.

Chapter III

Economic Fundamentals of the Society

The State of Bahrain has made great strides in the field of economic development and raising the average per capita income. This has been achieved despite high population density and scarce natural resources including land and water. It is due to wise policies put in place by the leadership and government to ensure a streamlined effective use of available resources that Bahrain has achieved such an outcome. This has helped Bahrain achieve a higher level of human development and economic freedom. However, policies that would ensure a stable economic growth rate that offsets high population growth rate must be put in place. This charter reiterates that the State of Bahrain is solemnly attached to the following economic fundamentals:

First - The Principle of Free Economy

The economic system of the State of Bahrain is based on individual initiative, freedom of capital movement in terms of investment and transfer while supporting and emphasizing on the role of the private sector in the development of resources as well as in stimulating the economy. In past eras, this economic system has provided for a tangible economic and investment activity and resulted in substantial capital inflows for investment in the country.

An open-door policy must be accompanied by a new public administration mindset, one that is oriented to streamlined procedure, transparency, elimination of jurisdictional overlapping, improved services and updated economic legislation within a framework of integrity and equal opportunity. In order for auditing and administrative supervision to be effective and for bureaucracy to become more transparent ,there is a need to institute an Auditor General and an Administrative Supervisory Authority.

Second - Private Ownership

Private ownership is inviolable .Subject to law ,every person has the right to dispose of his property .Subject to a fair compensation, a private property shall be expropriated only for public good purposes within the scope set forth in and as prescribed by law.

Third- Economic Justice and Balanced Contracts

Private ownership, capital and work are individual rights of a social nature. Law organizes such rights and the practice thereof on an economic and socially equitable basis. Law determines rules that ensure a balanced relationship among elements of production as well as balanced contractual relationship.

Fourth- Diversification of Economic Activity and Sources of National Income

The State of Bahrain has been a pioneer of diversification of economic activity and sources of national income among Gulf Arab Countries. The purpose being to avoid dependence on a single main source of income, to be able to ensure a reasonable standard of living for future generations and to avoid vulnerability to external economic fluctuation. As a result, Bahrain has grown into an important regional financial centre and an internationally acclaimed tourist-attracting point. Through support made available to manufacturing, high value added, informatics and service industries, it has been possible to develop a platform for economic development and to offer employment opportunities to citizens.

Fifth - Environment and Wildlife

Due to increasing pressure on scarce natural resources, the state seeks to optimize the exploitation of natural resources, environmentally friendly development, and citizen health. It also takes into consideration global directives in preventing and addressing major environmental problems, by setting a national strategy for environmental protection and taking all appropriate legislative measures and measures to reduce pollution from its various sources. Other incentives being put in place include: offering facilities to manufacturers to shift to clean production and requiring that Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) be

made before a project is launched. Moreover, the State puts in place measure to protect wildlife, particularly different habitats of fauna and flora of which Bahrain is famous for, by setting appropriate plans for land use, coastal zone management, and the establishment of a system of natural reserves along the lines of the Al Areen and the Hawar Islands sanctuaries and the surrounding waters being of a worldwide fame for its rare species of animals and birds.

Sixth - Public Property and Natural Resources

Public property is inviolable. It is incumbent upon every citizen to protect it while public authorities are under a duty to take all necessary measures to maintain it. All natural resources are owned by the State. The State shall maintain, and put in place best economical ways and means to invest, the same .

Seventh - Labour and Training

The State of Bahrain takes into account that the greatest assets it possesses are its own citizens who have proved themselves in educational and cultural attainment, and distinctively so. Therefore, providing citizens with support through continuous training and retraining would ensure infusing fresh blood and experience into the labour market to ensure greater employment opportunities for citizens.

Chapter IV

National Security

National security is the safeguard of the country, its territorial integrity and its socioeconomic and political gains. It supports comprehensive development efforts particularly under the contemporary regional and international changing circumstances. One of the most important pillars of National Security is to strengthen the Bahrain Defence Force with a view of enabling it to perform its duties and obligations to its fullest. Also, it calls for providing the necessary equipment and other related requirements for the public security forces in order to ensure that they perform their duty in maintaining security and public law and order throughout the country. It is a necessity to strengthen the National Guards as a line of support for both BDF and Security Forces, as it is considered as a military depth for the Bahrain Defence Force and a security shield for the National Security forces in protecting the country. The entirety of these efforts would support development efforts and maintain economic achievements, protect every inch of land, sea and air of Bahrain. The belonging to the national security services is a duty and an honor to every citizen.

Hence comes the importance of the Bahrain Defence Force. It is a symbol of national unity, a support to our brethren and nation to ensure security and stability, not only for our country but also for our beloved Gulf region, and the great Arab World. Needless

to say that, true to traditions of Bahrain, Bahrain Defence Force has been, indeed, a defender of our country's culture, ethics and well-being. It has been, since day one, a message of goodwill and peace to mankind, an honest reflection of the values we all stand for. The fact that the Supreme Commander - God Bless Him - of this national institute, is its first soldier and founder since 'the first light' is a source of full- fledged faith therein.

In a world where science and technological advances are revolutionary, sources of threat and harm to security are diverse, it becomes imperative to secure advanced weaponry and security and defence systems. Of no less importance is the human element. As those systems should be run by men, policies related to training of qualified personnel and care for the welfare of BDF personnel are sine qua non for ensuring Bahrain's security. In this respect, working upon enhancing the combat abilities, the administrative and technical capabilities of the Bahrain Defence Force personnel through training and organisation so that they reach the utmost level possible must be accorded a top priority. The BDF's ability to fulfill its mandate cannot be considered in isolation. It is organically linked to a clear defence policy that is supported by detailed programs designed to help achieve relevant objectives. This calls for a regular review of our strategic vision, adaptation to new technologies and definition of perceived sources of threat.

Chapter V

Democratic Life

Bahrain has experienced direct democracy ever since Al-Khalifa ruled the country. Constant contact and consultation between the ruler and people, free and full access by the people to the ruler has been and is still the approach adopted by the Government which has led to developing all ruling policies in a way that is consistent with the wishes and interests of the people. In fact, the Government remains to be fully receptive to the feelings of the people and, hence, has worked for the sole purpose of serving public good.

As mentioned earlier, democracy has been reflected in practice through the constitution and the elected National Council and further enhanced by the addition of a Shura (consultative) council that has proved to be a forum of serious discussion, examination and advice over an entire matrix of public issues of concern to the country. The Shura Council has also demonstrated a remarkable ability to cope with developments with the necessary flexibility. Its cooperation with the Government in public interest has been exemplary.

However, democracy is dynamic by nature, the broader its horizon, the greater the practice thereof. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that many deep-rooted democracies are bicameral ones, in which cases one chamber represented the whole gamut of ideas and views on current affairs as reflected by representatives of people from all brackets, whereas the other chamber would

serve as a forum of experts and expertise. The experience of those democracies has proved that bicameral system is of great importance in political terms.

In order to broaden people's participation in public affairs, in line with principle of Shura, a basic Islamic principle of the ruling system of Bahrain, and in true belief of the right of the entire people to practice their constitutional political rights, with a view to being congruent with deep-rooted democracies, it is in the interest of the State of Bahrain to adopt a bicameral system whereby the legislature will consist of two chambers, namely one that is constituted through free, direct elections whose mandate will be to enact laws, and a second one that would have people with experience and expertise who would give advice as necessary. This bicameral structure of the legislature, a balanced one indeed, would offer many interrelated advantages, including people's participation in legislation- related affairs and interaction among all ideas and orientations within a single legislative council.

This proposed structure of the legislative council would require an amendment to the constitution, would achieve the dual benefit of making use of wisdom and expertise on the one hand and a variety of views of the Bahraini electorate on the other hand.

Such an amendment would certainly allow for a wider horizon for a democracy that works for achieving development, stability and prosperity. It is a democracy that supports social peace and national unity.

Chapter VI

Gulf Relations

Bahrain, the government and people of Bahrain, firmly believe that the people of GCC countries share the same goals, interests and destiny. They share a mutual bond of blood relationships that are further galvanized by common history, culture and custom. These have been the grounds for Bahrain to be a founding member of GCC along with other brotherly Gulf Arab countries. Serious cooperation among GCC countries is of the utmost importance and is to the highest interests of all brotherly member states, including maximum development for the countries and the people of GCC. In this respect, GCC has proved to be capable of defending the freedom and sovereignty of its Member-States and to serve as a shield to protect their independence. Therefore, the State of Bahrain shall always work, with all its force, to strengthen GCC and to support the just causes of its brotherly member states. The State of Bahrain considers this as one of its policy core constants that are organically related to Bahrain belief that its security and prosperity are an integral part of the security and prosperity of other brotherly GCC member states.

The State of Bahrain shall work closely with its brotherly GCC member states for greater coordination, rapprochement and integration within GCC, particularly in those areas that still require a more effective coordination such as economic

integration, defence cooperation and information coordination as well as peoples' participation in GCC institutions.

Chapter VII

Foreign Relations

The State of Bahrain is proud of its Arab identity; its people are part of the Arab nation and its territory is an integral part of the Arab world. This sense of belonging is not only reflected in common language, religion and culture, but also, in common hopes, sufferings and history. Therefore, the State of Bahrain shall continue to effectively and closely work with other brotherly member-states of the league of Arab States. It shall continue to pursue its efforts, in close cooperation with other Arab countries, to further enhance the role of the Arab League in order to maintain the same as a political and legal institution that embodies Arab unity and furthers joint Arab action and common will. The State of Bahrain reiterates its support of all forms of inter- Arab economic cooperation. The manifestations of this considered policy of the State of Bahrain include the following: Bahrain offers unqualified support to Arab just causes. It is committed to stand by Arab brethren on their critical causes. In this regard, Bahrain supports and affirms the legitimate Palestinian rights, particularly the right of the Palestinian people to establish their independent state with its capital, Al-Quds Al-Sharif. It reiterates the need to secure the restoration, and respect, of all Arab rights under international legal rights. Within the framework of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and out of belief that Islamic values are based on

truth, goodness, justice and peace, the State of Bahrain believes that cooperation between the member states of this organization is of great importance in order to support the issues of national independence and the right of peoples to self-determination, as well as to reach a higher level of development in member states. The State of Bahrain hopes that the Organization of the Islamic Conference will achieve more efficiency and progress.

In terms of international political relations, the State of Bahrain maintains that world and regional peace is a core, strategic goal that justifies the greatest effort, and accordingly, it adheres to the basic principles that determine the necessity of settling all international disputes by peaceful means, and prohibits the use of force at the expense of the territorial integrity or political independence of any country. Hence, the State of Bahrain encourages and supports all international efforts made towards the peaceful settlement of regional disputes.

Its worth noting that since it joined the United Nations, Bahrain has contributed to all activities, resolutions, events, agreements and conventions, particularly those related to human rights, civil, political and social rights of citizens and women's rights, as well as contributing positively in the United Nations Specialized Committees .

On the international economic and trade relations level, the considered policy of the State of Bahrain stands for free international trade, movement of investment, capital and labour, taking into consideration the national interests of each country

separately. In so believing, the State of Bahrain maintains that each country enjoys the better title over its own natural resources that cannot be disposed of under any type of external pressure or dictation.

Outlook for the Future

In view of the consensus of both the Government and people as to the content of this Charter, taking into account that it serves as a future national action instrument, and implementation of the fundamental principles requires certain constitutional amendments. Therefore, it is deemed necessary to decide on the following:

First - The Name of the State of Bahrain

The constitutional amendment shall determine the official name of the State of Bahrain as may be determined by the Amir and the people of Bahrain.

Second - The Legislature

The provisions of Section Two of Chapter Four of the Constitution regarding the legislative authority shall be amended to be consistent with democratic and constitutional developments worldwide by the introduction of bicameral system. This would mean that one chamber is constituted through free, direct elections whose mandate will be to enact laws while a second one would have people with experience and expertise who would give advice, as necessary. Laws shall be enacted as prescribed in detail by the constitution and in congruence with constitutional norms and traditions followed in deep-rooted democracies.

The people's consensus on this charter is a true reflection of

their will to have a more stable, prosperous future under the leadership of H.H. Shaikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Amir of the State of Bahrain, may Allah protect him.

We pray to God Almighty to help us be among “those who faithfully observe their trusts and their covenants” as described in the Holy Quran. In God Almighty “we put our trust.” Verily, God Almighty “is the best to protect and the best to help.”

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