



## **Opening Remarks - Brussels PeaceGame**

Brussels, 10 October 2017

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Honored Guests,

It's a great pleasure for me to open today's PeaceGame event on Libya.

For the past four years, *Foreign Policy* magazine, with support from the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, has twice annually convened these PeaceGames. Last year, we were joined in this effort by the Harvard Belfer Center, ensuring that we can bring even more intellectual power to the table.

The PeaceGame is a unique effort to explore potential avenues to peacefully resolve some of the world's most intractable international conflicts. Similar to a war game, it uses fictional, but life-like scenarios to "game out" violent conflicts. However, unlike in the case of a war game, the goal is to identify practical ways to restore peace and stability and avoid violence and confrontation.

Our hope is that this exercise provides a forum for creative and interactive thinking about peace. A platform for leading minds in international affairs to bounce around ideas in an open and constructive fashion, while remaining realistic about the real-world constraints that continue to weigh against a peaceful solution.

Supporting peaceful political solutions to some of our region's most complex conflicts has been a long-standing priority for the UAE's foreign policy.

In the UAE, we know the value of peace and stability all too well. Our own remarkable development journey would not have been possible without stability. Peace has enabled us to grow our economy, invest in creativity

and innovation, and create a dynamic, and open society that many young people in the Arab world now enthusiastically embrace.

But we also know that we cannot be an island of peace upon ourselves. Our future stability and prosperity is intimately connected with the stability and prosperity of our region, which for too long has been plagued by conflict and crises.

The same is increasingly true for our friends in the European Union, who in recent years have been exposed to many of the negative consequences and spill-over effects resulting from regional crises and political instability in the Middle East. We strongly believe that the answer to these developments cannot be a withdrawal into benign isolation.

In fact, ignoring these crises, postponing our search for solutions, or being content with simply managing conflicts, often tends to further inflate the underlying problems and makes them even harder to resolve. This can have catastrophic long-term consequences that burden generations to come, as we have seen with the still unsolved Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and as we see happening before our very eyes in Syria.

In our interconnected world, turning our back on the problems of our neighbors is no longer an option. Instead, we have a shared interest and common cause to jointly restore stability and peace in our shared regions.

During the past four years, the PeaceGame has rotated regularly between Abu Dhabi and Washington D.C. I am therefore particularly pleased that today's event, the first to break this cycle, is taking place here in Brussels. There is perhaps no better location to discuss issues that Arabs and Europeans must tackle together.

Moreover, the topic of today's event could not be more timely and suitable. Europe and the UAE both have a shared interest in a stable and peaceful Libya. Both of our regions are threatened by the impact of instability and conflict in Libya, be it in terms of extremism, mass migration, or social and economic instability.

There now is renewed momentum for a peaceful solution in Libya, following the launch of the recent Action Plan by UN Envoy Ghassan Salamé. The UAE strongly supports the UN Envoy's efforts and works

closely with its European friends to promote a political solution that is Libyan-led and that is able to deliver the kind of inclusive and sustainable peace that the Libyan people deserve.

At the same time, we are clear-eyed about the many difficult challenges that remain in order to bring about such a resolution. I hope that today's event will allow us to explore practical ways of how to address some of these challenges in order to restore peace to Libya. As today's event progresses, I encourage us all to challenge ourselves to explore new solutions, rather than accepting established wisdom or giving in to cynicism.

Before I conclude, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the team of Foreign Policy and Harvard, who have worked so hard to pull this event together. I would also like to thank my own team for their contribution to this effort.

Thank you and I look forward to a fruitful discussion.

- His Excellency, Mohamed Issa Abushahab, Ambassador of the UAE to the Kingdom of Belgium and Head of Mission to the European Union