

**REMARKS BY
HIS MAJESTY KING ABDULLAH II
WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM ANNUAL MEETING 2013
DAVOS, SWITZERLAND
25 JANUARY 2013**

Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim

Thank you, Professor, and thank you all. It is a pleasure to be here once again. Klaus, my friend, the direction of world events has, more and more, borne out your insights when you founded this Forum. This was never a gathering about ideas alone. It was and is a forum for action.

My friends,

These last years have seen turmoil and challenge - across the globe, no less than in my region. Political and economic systems on every continent have been put under the microscope. People are looking for answers. And the time for answers is now. Nothing is more counterproductive, nothing is more dangerous, than the old attitude of 'let's wait, and see'.

Today, we hear some say 'wait and see' about a two-state settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. They say the times are too uncertain, there are other priorities, let's just wait. But today's unprecedented threats to regional and global stability and security don't wait.

We hear some say 'wait and see' about the Arab Spring. They say there are too many unknowns ... or they fear they won't 'own the game'. But today, no-one can afford to sit on the sidelines of change. Our citizens want their goals now, and that means moving forward together - from the old status-quo to a new dynamic; from protest to stakeholding; from self-interest to public interest.

We hear some in the West look at the transformations in the Arab world and say “let’s wait” for the dust to settle and “let’s see” if democracy takes its course. But pluralism, diversity, and respect for the other need proactive support. If those who are striving to do the right thing are left to stand alone, yesterday's oppressive regimes may simply end up being replaced by new - possibly worse - oppression. Determined engagement is needed to foster equality, the rule of law, and respect for the universal, indivisible rights of all peoples.

Last, we hear some in the global business community say, 'we will wait and see'. But success in my region cannot afford to wait. Businesses and investors that get in now will lead - and send a powerful message to future consumers and leaders: we are with you, on the ground, building the future.

My friends,

Jordan remains a secure, safe haven at the heart of the region because it rejects the 'wait and see' approach, and tackles its challenges. We have

seen that this week, in Jordan's landmark parliamentary elections. Voters chose 150 members of parliament from a record number of candidates - including record numbers of women candidates, as well.

These elections reflect a simple recognition: Every citizen must be empowered as a stakeholder if our nation is to achieve its full potential. The Arab Spring gave Jordan an opportunity to renew the momentum of change. We seek a level, broad reform path, based on the rule of law. Comprehensive, consensus-based change aims at strengthening representation, enhancing the separation of powers, and protecting civil rights and freedoms, especially for women and minorities.

Consultations with parliament will start in the next few days for the designation of the new prime minister. Serious policy decisions are on the leadership agenda – job creation, energy, services, further political reform. But I want to say that, in the most profound sense, it is our citizens who are the first leaders. Their civic responsibility did not end on Wednesday, when ballots were cast. Their continuous engagement is essential: to hold parliament and government accountable ... to expand Jordan's political-party culture ... and to keep political and economic reform real.

In the economy, we have important strengths to build on. A central position in the region, with access to over one-billion consumers worldwide. A diverse and innovative work force. Strengthened safeguards against corruption. Investment friendly policies and legislation.

For more than a decade, economic reforms, along with responsible macroeconomic management, have encouraged new and expanding industry sectors. ICT, for example, has grown, in little more than a decade, from seedling enterprises to an industry that creates and manages 75 percent of all Arabic-language internet content from the region. Across all sectors, there's been a four-fold increase in exports since 2001. Per-capita GDP has more than doubled. We are open for business, open to innovation, and open to entrepreneurial initiative.

Are we satisfied with our progress? No. The global economic crisis has hit us all. In Jordan, our young people - the vast majority of the population - suffer unacceptable levels of unemployment. We have lost markets due to the crisis in Syria; and the energy crisis cost our treasury heavily. But Jordan's challenges have only made us more determined - and we are making the tough decisions for a safe and prosperous future.

Let me add, that even as our people struggle with hardships, and notwithstanding our limited natural resources, Jordan is hosting almost three-hundred-thousand Syrian refugees. Regarding this situation, I urge once more a stepped-up world response to the Syrian crisis. The weakest refugees are struggling now just to survive this year's harsh winter; more international support is desperately needed. The international community must also come together now, decisively, to end the bloodshed. What is needed is a real and inclusive transition plan ... one that guarantees the

country's unity and territorial integrity ... by giving all, all Syrians a stake in the country's future. Anything else invites fragmentation, extremist power-grabs, and more conflict and instability ... with a disastrous impact on the region and world. Let's not 'wait and see'. The time to act is now.

My friends,

The entire world is watching our region move into a new era. One critical shortfall at the heart of the region remains: The continued denial of Palestinians' right to their own state. For decades, Jordan has taken risks for peace, because we know that the risks of continued conflict are much, much worse.

In my region, long-term security demands an end to crisis. However people voted in this week's Israeli elections, peace and security must be the deepest wish of all Israelis. The Arab Peace Initiative provides a path: a two-state settlement giving both sides what they need and want, with an independent, sovereign, and viable Palestine, and a secure Israel ... enjoying peace with all its neighbours, and normal relations with all Arab states.

The Arab Spring cried out for respect for human dignity - not for some but for all. There is no time left for Israel to play the waiting game. I have called on the international community to join Jordan in breaking the impasse and pressing for active negotiations to end this conflict once and for all. We must act while there is still a chance.

My friends,

Here at the World Economic Forum and beyond, global leaders have a unique ability to make a difference. To cross the borders that divide people. To negotiate difficult paths. To help a new generation experience the reality of global justice and opportunity.

It is to continue this important work that I warmly invite you all to the World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa, in May at the Dead Sea. The challenges our region faces have also re-doubled the opportunities to forge new partnerships to stimulate employment, foster entrepreneurship, and build infrastructure. At the World Economic Forum in Jordan, you will find a welcome to that future. Don't wait. I am looking forward to seeing you all there.

Thank you.