



**Speech of His Highness Sheikh Nasser
Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah
at the University of Bologna on the occasion of
receiving the medal of "Sigillum Magnum"**

On Friday, the 23rd of May 2014

Professor Ivano Dionigi,
magnificent Rector of the University of Bologna
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I address you today with warm greetings from the land of the ancient Near East, the very old land of the Arabian Peninsula, that links East to West, which cherishes the memories of the ancient past that brought together our ancestors through all the ancient civilizations, the Delmun, the Babylonian, the ancient Egyptian, the Phoenician, the Greek and the Roman.

As I stand today between the walls of the University of Bologna, I recall a thousand years of human memory, to recall the historical moment when the establishment of this university was announced in the period that Petrarca called the dark ages. The establishment of this university was the first light in those ages, and led the way to the Renaissance. I would like here to thank Professor Ivano Dionigi, and the academic staff of Bologna University for granting me the medal of "Sigillum Magnum", as I would like to mention that I have been honoured by the blessing consent of His Highness Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber



Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, for being granted this medal.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to stand here in front of you today; in this ancient and scientific edifice of the Republic of Italy, to assure every one of our deep respect and appreciation for the industry of knowledge, for the sponsorship of the cultural creativity, and for the adherence to the value of science. These three elements are the ones that elevated the human race, established its civics, and made this civilization. These three elements are the ones which framed and moulded the mechanisms of modern thinking and contributed to the establishment of a bridge for communication and dialogue between nations and individuals, so as to enhance the journey of world peace and to establish the bonds of understanding, rapprochement and friendship among the peoples of the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Contemporary science with its systems and mechanisms is the result of the accumulated knowledge rooted in the depths of time, and with contributions from nations and civilizations of this planet. It belongs to all human beings around the world regardless of nationality or religion. Successive generations have contributed to its development and growth, starting from the scientists of Delmun, Sumer, Babylon, Memphis, Thebes, Athens, Sparta, Phoenicia, Alexandria, Antioch, Rome and Carthage. No single gender, set of people or race control Knowledge. It has always been biased towards those who cradle it, those who provide for it a proper environment in which to grow and prosper, and those who spend on it



generously. That's why it has moved from one nation to another and from one geographical area to another. And Italy, this ancient country, was and will remain the cradle of the Roman civilization, which extended its values, knowledge and sciences to most parts of the world, and it is to say that Europe benefited from this civilization throughout the period of the Middle Ages and the era of feudalism. Thus, it was natural for this land to be the incubator for the first seed of the modern renaissance and to launch the first sign of the Age of Enlightenment, starting from the poet Dante Alighieri, through Petrarch and Marsilio Ficino, Castiglione and Machiavelli, to the great painters such as Giotto Di Bondone, Masaccio, Piero della Francesca, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Perugino, Michelangelo, Raphael, Botticelli, Leonardo Da Vinci and Titian, and the genius architects like Brunelleschi, Leon Battista Alberti, Andrea Palladio, and Donato Bramante, whose works included Florence Cathedral, St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and the Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini. If the beginning of the modern cognitive revolution in Europe dates from when Copernicus launched his theory stating that the sun was the center of the universe instead of the earth, then history will never forget Galileo Galilei as being on top of that list of immortals, after giving his life in defense of the theory based on a foundation of physics.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Establishing a university means teaching how to think. As the Chinese philosopher Confucius says: "No one acquires knowledge until he learns how to think." A university degree does not mean that one has become knowledgeable; it means that he has become able to know. There is no doubt that the prestigious University of Bologna has the honour of



being a pioneer in the industry of knowledge in modern Europe. It is not only the oldest university in Italy, but also the oldest and the most majestic university in Europe, and the first university in the world to award the "Ph.D" Degree in 1219; studying in this university puts one at the same level of great students like Dante Alighieri and Francesco Petrarca. Its scientific classrooms have produced intellectual, scientific and cultural figures who have had the greatest impact on the enrichment of human knowledge, the development of scientific theories and the creativity within the fields of culture and arts.

As I value the role of the University of Bologna in the enrichment of human knowledge, I would like to express my pride in being granted the medal of "Sigillum Magnum", which is the medal that was awarded to political and religious leaders, as well as to scholars who played an important role in the service of knowledge, science and international peace. I am proud to be part of this esteemed and remarkable category of men, and hence, I feel a bigger responsibility towards playing a wider role to serve the knowledge, science and international peace, whether in Kuwait, in the Gulf region, in the Arab and Muslim world or in the rest of the world.

Allow me to take this opportunity to highlight the interest of Kuwait in supporting knowledge and scientific research. Despite the small population of Kuwait, there are fifteen universities and colleges, and some of them are affiliated to Western universities. The expenditure on education and scientific research, from public spending alone in Kuwait is estimated at nearly 12% of the state budget, and in addition, the private sector spends on more than 150 educational institutions. However, we are trying to increase



this number in order to further develop our educational and research sectors, and we are working on strengthening the relationship between our universities and large universities in the world, such as your honourable university, so that we can benefit from the expertise contained in the area of the production of knowledge and scientific research, and lead our universities to an advanced level of development on both scientific and educational levels. And I sincerely hope that the people of Kuwait will benefit from this in the near future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the end of my speech, I would like to reiterate my sincere thanks to the academic staff of your esteemed university, and to its Magnificent Rector, Professor Ivano Dionigi, for granting me the medal of "Sigillum Magnum", while insuring my deep pride in receiving it. This reflects the profound bond of friendship between our two peoples, and the mutual interest to boost the bridges of communication, rapprochement and dialogue.
My best wishes to all of you.