Keynote Address by Chairman, Gulf Research Center-The Role of Centers for Research, Political and Strategic Studies in the Arab World: Challenges and Prospects

23-24 November 2005

Millennium Hotel-Sharjah

**In the Name of Allah the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful**

**Your Excellencies,**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my pleasure to welcome you in Sharjah and to express my deep appreciation for your participation in this important symposium organized by the Gulf Research Center (GRC) and the Arab Association of Political Science, to discuss the role of centers for research, political and strategic studies in the Arab world especially in the light of the current developments and future challenges.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

You may well agree with me that this symposium comes at a time when the Arab world is indeed in need of serious, balanced and objective research that would pave the way towards progress, and to find feasible solutions to the current domestic problems and external pressures.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Though scientific research is one of the main prerequisites of achieving progress, it is not, unfortunately, one of the priorities in the Arab world. Consequently, the crisis of research has become one of the most prominent symptoms of Arab retardation and a factor for the continuation of the same. This crisis has many indicators which include the humble budgets allocated to scientific research, the dominant bureaucracy in many of the research institutes, the negligible Arab contribution to publishing, the gap between the research centers and the executive bodies and the ever expanding digital gap between the Arab world and the West.

Given that the research centers in the Arab world are part and parcel of the scientific research with its problems and challenges, the Gulf Research Center and the Arab Association of Political Science, have taken the initiative of organizing this symposium to discuss the real dimensions of the role expected by the research centers in the Arab world, and to identify the main obstacles and problems hindering their efforts such as budgets and financing, the human resources, setting priorities right and publishing, besides finding the best possible way to overcome these impediments and consolidating cooperation and coordination among the concerned research centers in order to enhance scientific research in the Arab world.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In spite of the fact that Arab research centers are involved in organizing conferences and symposia on many various issues, none of these, during the last few years, as far as I know, was dedicated to discussing the conditions of the centers and the requirements of activating their roles. I do hope that your presence here today will be the first step toward discussing these vital issues frankly and seriously.

The problems faced by the research centers go beyond financial issues and administration. Many of these centers are accused of following and implementing the agendas of other parties. These accusations always have adverse ramifications. Let me take this opportunity to reiterate that the Gulf Research Center is keen on maintaining its independence and transparency. The annual GRC budget, revenues, expenses and activities are published online on the GRC website.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

We hope that this symposium will be the beginning of a fruitful cooperation and creative communication among the research centers in the Arab world. More meetings and joint activities, could lead to the establishment of an Arab association of centers for research, political and strategic studies in the near future. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that the GRC is ready and willing to put its expertise and experience in the IT systems at the disposal of the Arab research centers.

It is also my pleasure to announce that we are in the process of preparing a bibliography of all the research centers in the Arab world in order to facilitate cooperation and coordination among them.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

I should like to avail myself of this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the Arab Association of Political Science and its President, His Excellency Dr. Ali Eldeen Hilal, for organizing this important symposium which I do hope will be followed by other events to activate the role of research centers and enhance cooperation among them.

Thank you.