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### **Qatar National Vision and World Cup 2022: A perspective from the other 180 degrees.**

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The massive international criticism of the last two years, driven by the allocation of FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar, sidesteps a number of key perspectives, which will make the preparation processes for and the implementation of this premiere global sporting event utterly unique, unlike any previous or future World Cup. Stakeholders on any side of this equation, pro or con, might want to consider these additional aspects:

For the first time ever, an event of this magnitude has to be implemented within such a small geographic region. Coming from large geographic entities like Brazil (8.5 Million km<sup>2</sup>) and Russia (17 million km<sup>2</sup>), with their very specific regional and logistical issues, the same size event will then take place in an arid country of just 11.000 km<sup>2</sup>, with currently developed areas of just above 1,500 km<sup>2</sup>. To compound this challenge, much of the real estate affected by the direct and the twenty-times larger indirect World Cup projects, is already densely inhabited by close to 1,7 million people; a number which is to grow to 2,7 million by 2022. Unlike large scale countries, stretching the effects of run-up and implementation across a large region and affecting relatively few people at any one spot, every aspect of life, business, social relations and human interaction in Qatar will be affected by these challenges for at least ten years counting.

While already hosting a plethora of international conferences and sporting events on an annual basis, Qatar has so far hardly experienced at any one time, the influx of more than a several thousand sports visitors, athletes, media and officials in total. With a service and support industry equipped to handle the current level of events, just this part of the economy must multiply exponentially to brave the challenge. At the peak of the World Cup, some additional 300.000 visitors, media workers, service providers and official sponsors will have to be taken care of.

In just a few years, there will be a tremendous demand to field this additional work force of several ten thousand educated, well trained and highly motivated staffers, in order to fulfil all conceivable additional service, support, management and organizational requirements. Unless all hired from outside of the country, just the human resource issue by itself, does thus have the potential to fundamentally reshape the role of women and expatriate residents and workers in this society.

As for the impact of all related construction projects on daily life, just consider this: with a current (2013) top-end hotel bed number of approximately 10.000, FIFA requires hosting nations to provide for at least 60.000 hotel rooms, about six times more than currently available. Whether the multiplier is actually six, seven or eight times than the current level, it might as well apply to any other services, HR, event, tourism, entertainment issues and infrastructure needs, necessary to eventually host the world.

While voices in the Northern hemisphere have demanded for World Cup to only be staged in a 'perfect location', this claim looks quite different if viewed from an African, Mid-Eastern or even central Asian perspective.

At this time, and for many World Cup cycles to come, Qatar is the only country in a cross-regional context of over three billion people, extending from the Maghreb, far across Central Africa and Asia, which is both able and willing to host and underwrite an event of such epic proportions. Not just in the Arab countries, yet all across the outlines regions, the staging of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar is perceived as a core part of an emancipation process from the domination of organized sports by the Northern hemisphere. If football wants to live up to its claim as the one unifying international game, then its marquee event must also be staged in all regions of the world willing to and able to make this commitment..

Above and beyond the required sporting venues, Qatar is also in progress to enhance, and in many areas to build from scratch, the core infra-structure, transportation and industry basis, necessary to sustain a World Cup. Unlike many previous hosting nations, where the games have often been the defining purpose of all investments, the World Cup in Qatar is designed to serve as a catalyst to drive and deliver an even much more ambitious goal. With National Vision 2030, Qatar has embarked on a 20 plus year unprecedented, comprehensive social, human, environmental, economic and development program. It is the clear goal of this master strategy to change the current national economy, based on the export of liquefied natural gas, 'towards a knowledge based economy.' While the total directly World Cup related projects might run up to USD 15 bn, Qatar National Vision includes projects valued in excess of USD 300 bn.

Utilizing the know-how, expertise and human resource amassed to initially deliver the 2022 threshold, and future potential catalyst such as the Olympics, Qatar is destined to embark on a challenging route to leverage its economic and human turn-around across the Muslim-Arab hemisphere. Already, Qatar has become the key player in numerous political, economic and broad based charitable involvements across the region, yielding a power of influence way above and beyond its modest size and population.

With a refined outcome of the Qatar National Vision processes, these newly developed national resources will then also provide key economic and political leverage towards Central and South East Asia with its strong Muslim communities. For more than ten years, the dominant national charity organization "Reach out to Asia - ROTA", as well as the cross-continental activities of Aspire Academy is testimony to this vision. This World Cup legacy will not just transform the entire country within the span of just one generation, but it is also destined to redefine the role of global sports in the mutual understanding and rapprochement of adjacent cultures.

In the end, the overall success of this World Cup will not be measured in tons of concrete poured and cast iron sheeted, but in the way, an entire population opens up, involves itself and welcomes the world to its doorstep. In Qatar, due its geographic limitations and the very limited time available, it will massively affect in a very engaging way every single person, male or female, citizens or resident to an extent, no other country has been exposed to in relevant history. This process, which will continue post 2022 with the demands of the National Vision, is thus destined to reshape the very fabric of society.

In today's globalized news and social media world, the internationally perceived success of 2022 will also be determined by the way Qatar manages to engage proactively with internal and external stakeholders early on. Much of the international criticism is strongly influenced by a genuine lack of proper information on the overall scope of World Cup in Qatar, its legacy for the National Vision and beyond. Leaving the field of shaping international public opinion open to just derogatory and semi-

informed detractors, contributes to create a biased image which will become more difficult to overcome by each day and story line taking us closer to 2022.

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