

Statement by His Highness the UAE President on the 52nd Union Day

◆ 1 December 2023 | 📍 Dubai

To the people of the UAE,

The second of December is one of the most beloved days for us in the UAE, as it is the day on which hearts united in building our nation. It is the day when shared ambitions came together and when the country's Founding Father, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, and his brothers, the Rulers of the Emirates—may their souls rest in peace—penned the first line in the UAE's story.

On Union Day, we foster a spirit of ambition in our country's youth so they may leave their mark on our nation, just as their predecessors did with their rich legacy. Union Day is a time for newer generations to understand that our successes are the result of our resolve, and that we share a responsibility in building upon these achievements.

We have achieved significant accomplishments over the years, and with God's blessing, we are heading towards a future that is brighter, more hopeful, and more prosperous.

While we advance, we honour all those who contribute to the UAE's continued journey of development, and we take pride in all of the residents who live alongside us with dignity and honour.

As we enter a new year of the UAE's history, let us reflect on the lessons of our past: that challenges can be overcome with determination, perseverance, and hard work. The people of the UAE are central to our efforts to progress. It is through devotion and selflessness towards the nation that true accomplishments are realised. Above all, unity and loyalty are the firm foundations laid by the late Sheikh Zayed and his brothers for our nation that underpin our achievements and will continue to do so in the coming decades, God willing.

In 2023, the UAE witnessed a historic milestone that added to its notable record in advancing scientific progress through the longest Arab space mission by astronaut Sultan Al Neyadi.

Through this accomplishment, we reaffirmed that our people are at the heart of shaping a better future. The UAE is a nation that never stops moving forward in all areas of development, as we believe that stagnation will only lead to regression.

This year's Union Day comes as the UAE hosts the largest international event on environment and climate, the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), with high-level global participation. The UAE's hosting of COP28 underscores its credibility both regionally and globally, as well as the prominent role our nation plays in global issues—especially climate change mitigation—and its longstanding support for sustainability initiatives.

It is our sincere hope that COP28 will forever be remembered as one of the most impactful global climate conferences. The UAE, in cooperation with its partners, will continue to work towards outcomes that benefit all people.

In this vein, the UAE remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering international cooperation, dialogue, and peace in the face of global challenges. By continuing to strengthen international engagement and build partnerships around the world, we will extend our support to countries and communities in need.

Our membership of the United Nations Security Council for the 2022-2023 term proved important in this regard. The UAE played a key role in the adoption by the Security Council in June of its historic resolution on tolerance, peace, and international security. This pivotal milestone, a world first, recognised hate speech and extremism as sources of instability and increasing conflict around the world.

The UAE's joining of the BRICS group, starting in 2024, further underscores our focus on international collective action to strengthen development and help ensure prosperity for people around the world.

Brothers and sisters,

Today, I am pleased to announce the Union aspirations for 2024 and call on every facet of our society, including government, the private sector, and civil society, to adopt this guidance in their projects, programmes, and initiatives throughout the coming year.

The first aspiration relates to Emirati values, which are a fundamental pillar of our society, reflecting not only our people, but also our nation and its reputation.

I call upon everyone to promote this Emirati spirit both locally and globally, so the world can see the pride we take in our own identity and our openness to other cultures. Our society's deep-rooted values should remain a constant guiding light for our unity, solidarity, respect for others, and support passed down from generation to generation.

In the workplace, strong work ethics, including dedication, hard work, integrity, and efficiency, should come to be seen as a distinctive Emirati trait.

Second, the UAE is a nation that pursues innovation, with its people at the forefront of progress. Lifelong learning is the fuel that propels our nation forward.

It does not stop at a certain level or age, nor is it confined to schools and universities. Rather, it is a continual endeavour throughout life, whether in the majlis, workplace, or home.

Lifelong learning leads to further success and self-improvement and contributes to the progress of society and humanity. The success of the people of the UAE contributes to the success of our nation as a whole.

I call upon everyone, including individuals, government entities, and the private sector, to make lifelong learning a core principle of our society so that the UAE becomes a hub of learning and future skills development that can unlock new opportunities for progress.

Third, sustainability is not a new pursuit for the UAE; it is deeply rooted in our society due to the challenging conditions faced by our ancestors. The late Sheikh Zayed was a patron of sustainability, which became ingrained in all of the UAE's endeavours.

While the Year of Sustainability in the UAE concludes at the end of 2023, sustainability remains embedded in our culture, practices, and many aspects of our daily life, and I invite everyone to continue supporting initiatives related to sustainability in the future.

The UAE is determined to honour the legacy of our Founding Father, and we ask the community to continue adopting sustainable practices. Globally, the UAE will continue its role in mobilising international efforts to support environmental action, protect life, and preserve resources for future generations.

Lastly, the world is evolving ever faster, and nations are racing towards development. In this race, education will be our mainstay in the pursuit of progress. Our place in the future will be determined by education, our status among nations will be shaped by education, and reaping the rewards of development and progress will be made possibly solely by education. I therefore urge everyone in this sector to continue working together to further enhance the quality of education available to the people of the UAE.

We aim to advance our nation's education, to innovate and go beyond traditional methods, and to create abundant opportunities for our youth to grow. Educational entities should place teachers at the heart of their strategic planning, unifying and coordinating efforts to ensure education leads to success in the race towards progress.

Today, I extend my blessings to the Rulers of the Emirates, Crown Princes, Deputy Rulers, and the loyal people of the UAE. I pray to God to preserve and protect our nation, and I wish you, its people, all the very best for the future.

May the peace, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you.

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