The COVID-19 pandemic currently ravaging most of the world’s nations has surely placed ensuring global unity (without which it will be impossible to win against this evil quickly enough and with more or less no grave consequences) in the fight against the virus on the planet’s agenda. Many politicians and experts believe that the current situation worldwide will only become worse without extensive international cooperation and coordination among various countries.

In the present climate, the role played by the small nation of Qatar during the ongoing crisis seemed all the more positive. It provided assistance to and cooperated with countries affected by the pandemic. And in fact, from the very start of the outbreak Qatar actively helped China, Iran and Italy. According to Italy’s former Minister of Foreign Affairs and former High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, nations like Qatar realize that the world needs to come together in order to survive this crisis. “In an interconnected world like ours, the only effective way to take care of yourself is to take care of others. Solidarity is the new selfish,” she has said.

Doha’s belief that human solidarity and international cooperation will help the world, in the end, successfully deal with the ongoing crisis stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic is truly relevant today. The ability of many nations’ healthcare systems to function is severely undermined due to the rapid spread of the Coronavirus. Hence, they require assistance from other countries in order to stop the global outbreak and reduce the number of deaths. For example, besides medical aid already provided to Italy, which included a field hospital, equipment and medical supplies, Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani ordered additional assistance to be sent. Recently, 29 tonnes of this medical aid package arrived in Italy. It was brought by the Qatar Emiri Air Force. The plan is to deliver the assistance weighing 260 tonnes altogether via 12 flights, in total.

In the meantime, a cargo plane with goods and medical supplies arrived in Tehran. It was a gift from the Qatari leadership to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The aircraft brought more than 15 tonnes of products and equipment, provided to Iran for its battle against the Coronavirus. Over the past one and a half months, the Qatari government sent two more batches of medical supplies and medicine to its neighbors. In light of the collaboration between the two nations and subsequent measures taken by Minister of Energy of Iran Reza Ardakanian as the head of the Iran-Qatar Joint Economic Cooperation Commission, Tehran had earlier received its second 8.5-tonne medical aid batch. And on 14 March, Doha had sent the first part of the package that included 5.5 tonnes of medical, healthcare and hygiene products.

In response, Iran has dramatically increased food exports to Qatar. The head of Industry, Mine and Trade Organization in Bushehr Province (in the south of Iran), Seyyed Hossein Hosseini, stated that exports from this region had increased by 37% last year (which ended on 19 March 2020 according to the Iranian calendar) in comparison to the previous one. He said that 830,000 tonnes of goods worth $157 million had been exported to Qatar. Such figures indicate a significant growth in deliveries.

According to Gulf Times, “in a major bid to ensure food security and combat epidemics, Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF)” in collaboration with the Ministry of Municipality and Environment (MME) “will soon announce the second cycle of ‘Food Security Call in four priority areas for the country’. “The new cycle aims to boost local food production in the priority areas, such as local supply chain; technology to accelerate the development of highly productive and healthy animals, including combating epidemic diseases; technology to accelerate local production of
high-quality vegetables; and sustainable aquaculture,” Dr. Abdul Sattar Al-Taie, the Executive Director at QNRF, told the Gulf Times.

“QNRF runs a diverse and rich portfolio of funding programs which falls under three main suites: competitive funding research programs, capacity building programs, and research connection programs, all of which are run strictly on competitive basis to ensure quality and equal opportunity,” Dr al-Taie added. He said that “in the first cycle of the food security call, QNRF received 48 proposals”. Overall, 46 of them passed through the “stringent two-tier evaluation process”. “Out of these, nine proposals were awarded after a competitive review process. Five of the awards went to researchers at Qatar University, three to Hamad Bin Khalifa University and one to Texas A&M University in Qatar. These winning proposals focused on a multitude of themes including aquaculture, vegetable production, protected agriculture (greenhouse and hydroponics), and the use of advanced technology to enhance local food production,” the Executive Director of QNRF revealed.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Qatar is actively continuing the work on government infrastructure projects in order to successfully complete all the preparations for the hosting of millions of visitors from all over the world during the FIFA World Cup 2022. It is a great achievement for Qatar to be able to meet all the nation’s medical needs for successfully tackling the global pandemic and to continue running the government as usual at the same time. The importance of the preparations was underscored by the fact that the Emir of Qatar chaired the first meeting of the Board of Directors of the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy in 2020. It took place with the aid of visual communication technologies ensuring that all the public health and safety requirements were met.

During the session, plans for preparing for the FIFA World Cup 2022, and developing businesses and initiatives in connection with the event were presented. They are all running smoothly and efficiently at present. Projects aimed at stopping the spread of the Coronavirus among migrant workers and ensuring their health and safety are in the works. By using the latest technologies as a tool to make sure various agencies continue to function, including those involved in the construction of sports facilities, Qatar has demonstrated that it can achieve the necessary balance between ensuring the smooth running of various government agencies and the introduction of wide-reaching social benefits for its entire population.

In Qatar, it is clear that all the Qatari citizens have to collaborate and pool efforts with one another in order to successfully deal with the economic consequences of the pandemic, such as low crude oil prices and the possible global recession. The current state of affairs indicates that, from an economic and financial perspective, countries that are part of the global economy as well as those whose earnings mainly come from the export of energy resources will face hardships in the future.

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