

Statement of the National Institution for Human Rights on the International Day of Democracy

Manama, September 15, 2011

On September 15 of each year, the world celebrates the International Day of Democracy, which was adopted by UN General Assembly during its sixty-second session by its Resolution ((2007) 62/7/A), dated 13 December 2007. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also refers to democracy in Article 21, paragraph (No. 3) stipulating that: *"The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures"*.

Accordingly, democracy represents a translation of the common aspirations the peoples all over the world and an indispensable means for achieving human development as a whole, in addition to being a universal value based on the will of the people expressed freely to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems, and full participation in all aspects of their lives.

Within this context, the NIHR congratulates the political leadership and the people of Bahrain on this occasion, and join world in commemorating the International Day of Democracy. The NIHR also emphasizes the importance of concerted internal national efforts in order to consolidate the values of genuine democracy to achieve development in all areas through legal and peaceful means.

The NIHR points out that there is no single model of democracy in the world can uniquely define the concept of democracy. However, striving to achieve the aspirations of the people and hard work in this area is in itself a democracy, through which work can be done to build an advanced society in accordance with frameworks and institutions actively joining forces to achieve comprehensive development in all fields. The final outcome of this represents the aspirations of the people without discrimination based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political opinion or any other opinion, national or social origin, class, birth and gender or any other status.

In this context, the NIHR wishes to note the efforts made by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, may God protect him, regarding the overall process reform, whose launch coincided with the beginning of the twenty-first millennium by striving to consolidate the State governed by law and institutions, stressing popular participation in to achieve citizens' aspirations, as stipulated in the text of *"Citizens, both men and women, are entitled to participate in public affairs and may enjoy political rights, including the right to vote and to stand for elections, in accordance with this Constitution and the conditions and principles laid down by law."*

Accordingly, as the NIHR believes that the developments the Bahraini society has witnessed in the past ten years highlight the importance of what has been achieved in terms of reforms in all fields in response to the aspirations of the Bahraini people, confirming in the same context that what has been achieved on the ground is an important incentive to continue to pursue the democratic process and comprehensive reform to achieve a future better.

For its part, the NIHR considers its role a fundamental pillar in the democratic process in the Kingdom of Bahrain through the promotion, development and protection of human rights, in addition consolidating, disseminating awareness of these values, and contribute to guaranteeing the exercise of these values, based on the Royal Order No. (46) -2009 on stipulating the NIHR's jurisdiction.