Supreme Leader's Speech in Meeting with People of East Azerbaijan - 18 /Feb/ 2015

The following is the full text of the speech delivered on February 18, 2015 by Ayatollah Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, in a meeting with the people of East Azerbaijan. The meeting was held in Imam Khomeini Hussainiyah on the anniversary of the uprising by the people of Tabriz on the 29th of Bahman of 1356.

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

First of all, I would like to welcome all the dear brothers and sisters who have taken this long trip and who have enlightened our Hussainiyah with their presence and purity and with spiritual qualities which are thankfully abundant among the dear people of Azerbaijan and Tabriz. I would like to express my gratitude to them, particularly to the dear families of martyrs and disabled war veterans and to the honorable ulama and officials. The 29th of Bahman of each year is really an auspicious day for us. It is really a source of satisfaction for me to visit - on such a day and in this Hussainiyah - a number of the dear youth and the dear, courageous and religious people who have emerged successful out of different tests in the history of our country. I consider this day to be an auspicious day in the real sense of the word.

Thankfully, this meeting is full of enthusiasm and meaning. As you said in your beautiful song, "(Our) youth are prepared and liberated" [speaking in Azeri]. I agree with what the song says. There was one sentence in your song which said, "Satan cannot possess us" [speaking in Azeri]. This is really and undoubtedly the case. What we remember from the experience of Azerbaijan and Tabriz and from different events and peaks and troughs confirm and strengthen this. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Mr. Shabestari. His existence is a blessing and boon for Tabriz. The existence of a committed and insightful clergyman who appreciates the value of revolutionary forces is an opportunity for every city, particularly for a city like Tabriz and a province like Azerbaijan province. I hope that by Allah's favor, this opportunity will be seized.

I have said many things about the virtues of Azerbaijan and Tabriz and I completely believe in them. I only want to add that the people of Azerbaijan and Tabriz have shown that they play a leading role, that they understand the developments of the times and that they act on time. They are brave and they do not allow problems to intimidate them. Besides, they are religious in the true sense of the word. These are facts. Anyone who is familiar with the history of Azerbaijan confirms these. On the issue of the Constitutional Movement of Iran, before that on the issue of the tobacco boycott and fighting against the English company, after that on the issue of the National Movement which took place after the 1320s - that is to say, in 1330 and 1331 - and in the course of the Islamic movement and in the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Azerbaijan and Tabriz took action on time, they entered the arena sooner than others, they took a leading role, they showed courage and bravery and all their elderly, youth, men and women set Islamic and religious faith as their standard.

The same has been true after the victory of the Islamic Revolution until today. The eight-year Defense Era, the glorious Ashura Army, the existence of great, spiritual and divine commanders such as Shahid Bakeri and other such personalities and different other events confirm this. The people of Tabriz began the 9th of Dey one day sooner than all other areas in the country. Their movement began on the 8th of Dey. Such things are significant and they are signs. I am not saying these things to flatter you. Rather, my purpose is to make it clear that this area of our country has these great capacities. This system and this Revolution have a long way ahead of them and these characteristics can prove useful in taking this long path.

The presence of the people on the 29th of Bahman of 1356 was similar to what Imam Sajjad (peace and greetings be upon him) and Zaynab al-Kubra did. They did not allow the event of Ashura to be forgotten. On the 29th of Bahman, the people of Tabriz too did not allow the movement to be forgotten. Otherwise, they wanted to consign to oblivion the massacre of Qom and the presence of the people, but the people of Tabriz did not allow this to happen. I do not forget that in those days, there were certain rumors that the taghuti regime had sent their outstanding military personalities to Tabriz to prevent the people from holding rallies, but the people created the 29th of Bahman anyway and it has thrived until today. The reason why I insist on meeting you on this day is because of its significance.

The affairs were in the hands of the people. The scene and the initiative was in the hands of the people. This was Imam's (r.a.) skill. This was the feat that our magnanimous Imam (r.a.) achieved. He entrusted the scene to its true owners. The country has legitimate owners. During the time of taghut, they used to say that the country belongs to someone in particular. Who did it belong to? It belonged to the Shah. This was while he was a parasite and a load. He was not wanted in the country. He was not the owner of the country. The true owners of the country are the people. It is true that the country has owners, and who are the true owners? It is the people.

When the task is entrusted to the people - who are the owners of the country and the future - then the purpose will be fulfilled. In every era in the Islamic Republic, this should be the officials' plan and goal. Tasks should be entrusted to the people with thoughtful planning and by considering all details. This is how tasks can be carried out. Since the beginning of the Revolution until today, whenever we entrusted a task to the people, it was properly carried out and whenever we entrusted a task to officials and heads of the country in an exclusive way, that task was left undone. I do not say that this has always been the case, but it was often left undone or it was done in a very slow way. But whenever the people took over, the task was accomplished.

And this is not particular to us. I should say that this is not particular to us Iranians. If people in any area take the task in their hands and if those people have a purpose - I do not mean those people who have no goals, who wander around and who are busy with their everyday life - then things will go well. They can carry out any difficult task such as military and security tasks. When the people take over the scene, things will move forward. Take a look at the present time and see how many times the Lebanese Resistance overcame the vicious army of the Zionists in less than 10 years. First, it was the Lebanese Resistance and later on, it was the Palestinian Resistance. First, the Lebanese Resistance threw the Zionists out of southern Lebanon. Later on, it crushed them in the 33-day war. America helped the Zionists. So did traitors in the region, but the resistance force - which was based on the people, which was religious and purposeful and which knew what it was doing - managed to throw all of them out of the arena.

Recently too, the blow which the resistance force delivered to the Zionist army and which is still fresh is among the achievements that have not been forgotten. The same is true of the Palestinian Resistance. A group of people who had limited capabilities and weapons and who lived in a small area managed to defeat them in the 22-day and 8-day wars and in the 51-day war which broke out in the Ramadan of last summer. They managed to defeat them because the people were committed and because they supported the Palestinian Resistance. The Palestinian Resistance managed to defeat and humiliate the vicious army of the Zionists and it made this army accept the truce. Take a look at the recent events in Iraq. Those who had been provoked by America, the Zionists and others came to the gates of Baghdad, but the popular forces of Iraq managed to deliver a blow - with the support of the army - to the forces which are called DAESH. The same is true of Syria. In that country too, popular forces came to the army's help. People are like this. Whenever the scene is entrusted to people, to popular motives and to various forces comprised of people, tasks will be accomplished.

One of the signs of this is the 22nd of Bahman. I really do not know how to thank the dear and great people of Iran and I do not know how to describe their presence in this year's 22nd of Bahman rallies. According to the reports that have been delivered to me - and these reports are accurate - in almost all capitals of provinces, the turnout was larger

than last year. The rallies were held in a thousand cities. Based on experts' calculations, the population in almost every capital was larger than last year.

In some cities, the people held rallies in the cold and under heavy snow and rain. In some cities like Ahwaz, the people held their rallies in a dust storm. Are these minor achievements? Thirty six years have passed from the Revolution. In which place in the world do the people commemorate the anniversary of their revolution in such a magnificent and glorious way? This is because the task is in the hands of the people. The Revolution and the Islamic Republic have pinned their hopes on the people on the issue of the 22nd of Bahman and commemorating the Revolution. Tasks are entrusted to the people. The people move forward like this. This is a general principle. Whenever we enjoyed the presence of the people on major and minor issues, we witnessed such miracles.

Today, I would like to speak a little about the economy of the country. It is several years now that I have been stressing and highlighting economic issues in the beginning of each year. This country is a large country. It is vast and heavily populated. The domestic market of our country is a 70-plus million market. This is very significant and valuable. Take a look at our resources and capabilities, whether our manpower - this country enjoys a large number of youth who are competent, educated, motivated, enthusiastic and prepared to work - or our natural sources of wealth. Despite these resources, we have economic problems. Where does the problem come from? What is the solution? What measures should be adopted?

I will tell you that after the end of the war - that is to say, the year 1367 when the eight-year Defense Era came to an end - all arrogant powers formulated certain plans in order to prevent Islamic Iran from becoming an influential economic power in the region. They made efforts and they worked on it. Well, when the war came to an end, we began to plan for economic matters and for progress. We became busy with planning. They found out that if they do not stop Iran and if they do not intervene and interfere, Islamic Iran would become an economic power in the region with its capabilities - on that day, we also benefited from the holy existence of our magnanimous Imam (r.a.) and he was still alive - and by relying on Islam and the people. They found out that under such circumstances, Iran would influence regional and global economy.

Therefore, they planned to prevent this. Their plans were not related to nuclear issues. Even before nuclear issues arose, our enemies began to make efforts. It is only 10, 12 years that nuclear issues have arisen and their plans began before that - that is to say, in the year 1367, 1368. Those individuals who are well-informed know that the plans of westerners and mainly America were based on circumventing and going around Iran. They wanted to go around Iran on the issue of transferring gas and oil pipelines. They wanted to go around Iran in major passages in the air, on land and in the sea. They wanted to go around Iran in the area of communications networks. This was a kind of imposing sanctions in a quiet and secret way. They wanted to do something to frighten all parties of any important activity that Iran wanted to do. These are events that have taken place in our country.

Those individuals who make extravagant claims and who do not have enough information should not say that no one has hatched any plot. This is not the case. Many efforts have been made. The enemy formulated a plan in this regard and it has implemented it step by step until today. What you witness today is the outcome of the domestic movement of the country and the enmity of the enemies. The enemy should not be forgotten. In the area of the economy, he did planning in the real sense of the word. In some areas, he entered the area in an outspoken way and in some areas, he entered the arena secretly. But well-informed individuals were aware of his activities and they knew what he was doing. Who is the enemy? The enemy is America and a few European countries which follow America. These plans are not related to the present time.

Well, what is the cure? It is clear that the enemy shows enmity. Do we expect the enemy to do anything for us? No, we cannot expect the enemy to do anything and we cannot blame him. Do we blame America? No, not at all. One blames one's friends. Well, it is in the enemy's nature to show enmity. So, what is the solution? The solution is that a people make efforts on their own and do something to counteract or reduce the enemy's blow which is certain. This

is the cure. My dear ones and you dear youth, you should pay attention to these points.

There have been two great problems in our economy: one is that our economy was based on oil and another is that it was governmental. Our economy is based on oil. What does it mean? It means that we extract oil - which is our permanent investment and which has a value added - from under the ground and we sell it in the crude form so that we can use the money for the affairs of the country. There is no greater loss. Oil-based economy is like this. Well, oil can be changed into products. I estimate - some scientific analyses confirm my estimation - that the value of the oil that we change into petroleum, gasoline, white oil as well as other substances that have not been produced by human beings yet can increase by hundreds of times. We are not aware of this. We extract oil from wells so that we can sell this resource and use the money for different affairs of the country.

This resource is not reproduced under the ground. It is among finite resources. We cannot say, "When we extract all of it, it will be produced again". This is not the case. When we extract it, it will finish. Oil and gas are like this. There is really nothing worse than this. This is one of the sinister legacies of the former taghuti regime. Of course, this is an easy way of earning money and some officials in different eras have preferred to use this easy money. This is one problem.

The second problem is that our economy is governmental. Since the beginning of the Revolution, we entrusted the economy to the government because of the outlooks and viewpoints that existed in those days. It was we ourselves who did it and it was not imposed by others. Now, it is very difficult - no matter how hard we try - to entrust economy to the people with accurate planning and in a way that justice is observed. We announced the policies on the Article 44 of the Constitution which meant that we should put an end to governmental economy. In this same Hussainiyah, I explained to officials - they gathered upstairs for the meeting - how much money we need and that it is not possible to gain this money unless we do so. I explained to them that the policies on Article 44 of the Constitution should be implemented the way we announced. These tasks should be carried out.

Well, in the beginning of this year, last year and the years before that, I spoke about the economy. To be fair, officials have tried hard. I confirm the efforts that are being made. During the recent years, efforts have always been made, but it is not enough. What we want to say is that these efforts should be given fresh impetus.

Today is the 29th of Bahman. Last year on the 29th of Bahman, we announced the policies on the economy of resistance to different organizations. One year has passed from that day. The economy of resistance is necessary for a country. It is necessary whether sanctions exist or not. The economy of resistance means that we build the economic structure of the country in a way that global fluctuations cannot influence it. It should be developed so that we do not lament if the price of oil goes down from 100 to 45 dollars. We should develop it so that we do not lament if the Americans threaten to impose sanctions on such and such a product or if they really impose sanctions on them. We should develop it so that we do not lament because the Europeans have imposed sanctions on our shipping companies. If the economy of resistance exists in the country, none of these global fluctuations can harm the people's lives. The economy of resistance means this. It means building the economic structure of the country in a way that popular forces can be benefitted from.

We should really ask for the people's help and we should do planning so that our economic structure is strengthened. Later on, I will give some examples of the tasks that should be carried out. The officials of the country should develop the economic movement of the country like this. If this happens, there will be a blossoming. If it happens, we will no longer be afraid of the enemy's threats, we will not shiver with the fear of others' sanctions and we will not go into mourning because of a reduction in the price of oil. This is the economy of resistance. Under such circumstances, the economy of resistance is dependent on the people and on domestic production.

An important issue about the economy of the country is that the dependence of the budget on oil should be cut. We should reach this. Of course, what I am saying to you now - and I have said it many times - is easy in words, but it is

very difficult in practice. I myself was involved in executive tasks for many years. I know that executive tasks are difficult, but I believe that this difficult task can be carried out. Taking action is more difficult than talking, but it is possible to carry out this difficult task by showing determination and by trusting our people, our youth, the domestic resources of the country and Allah the Exalted Who has promised to help us. One of the tasks, which is the most important one, is that the budget should rely on domestic production - that is to say, on the income that the people earn and the taxes that they pay. Now, I want to say a few things about taxes.

My dear ones, paying taxes is a responsibility. In the present time, we take tax from the weak - we take it from government employees, workers and ordinary bazaaris - but we do not take tax such and such a big investor and tycoon who earns money in dishonest ways. They escape taxes. These are crimes. Escaping taxes is a crime. Those who avoid paying taxes to the government are, in fact, making the country dependent on oil revenues - this is while the income that they earn is in the shade of the environment that the government has created and therefore, they should pay their taxes. And when the country becomes dependent on oil revenues, the same problems that I referred to will arise: one day, they impose sanctions on our country, one day, the price of oil reduces and one day, they bully it. The country will be in this situation. The issue of paying taxes is very important. Of course, I have heard that the officials in charge of taxes are doing some planning. They are carrying out good tasks, but they should be carried out sooner. The people should be asked for help and they should offer help. This is the first point.

The first important task that should be carried out is to make the budget of the country and the administration dependent on the people's income - that is to say, on taxes which is related to production and business.

Another point is to improve quality. This is one of the common phrases that is used. I would like to say this in simple Farsi. Our producers and manufactures should try to reduce the cost of production and improve quality by decreasing unnecessary costs. This is improving quality. Of course, part of production costs is related to things which are out of manufacturer's control. For example, high inflation, workers' wages and the price of substances. Part of the cost is related to these things, but part of it is also related to unnecessary spending and extravagance. These things should be prevented.

Another important issue is making maximum use of domestic capacities. Our country is located in a sensitive area. We have many neighbors. We have seas everywhere and we have access to the entire world. If you look at the map of our country, you will see that it is a very important and sensitive junction on land and in the air. It has access to international waters. These are very important opportunities. As well as resources and facilities, there should be planning and thinking. We should make maximum use of these opportunities.

Another point which is related to the people is consuming domestic products. I have repeated this many times in the speeches that I delivered in the beginning and other times of the year. In the present time too, I would like to say it to you: the people should use domestic products. They should not go after foreign products. Now, it is common to say, "brands". They say that such and such a thing is a brand. What is brand? You should use domestic products. The people of Iran should not use foreign products and those products whose Iranian version exists. They should use them in a completely zealous and prejudiced way. I am not only addressing this to a particular group of people. Well, when we say this, a group of religious people immediately listen and they send us messages asking if they should use such and such a foreign product. So, I am not only saying this to religious individuals and to those who listen to us because of religious reasons.

I am addressing this to any person who is interested in Iran and the future of the country. I am addressing this to those who think about the future of their children because they are the ones who will live in this country in the future. When you use foreign products, you are actually helping foreign companies, workers and manufactures to increase their products. This will harm domestic production and it will lead to its failure. I am saying this to all the people, particularly those who are big consumers. This also includes government officials and employees. They too should use domestic products in their buildings and for their different needs.

Avoiding extravagance is another issue. We should avoid extravagance and wasting money, public resources, water, bread and soil. Soil is a source of wealth. Water is a source of wealth. Bread is a precious product. They should be careful. Everyone should be careful and they should have a sense of responsibility. They should not destroy these resources.

Another issue is knowledge-based companies. I would like to stress the importance of these companies. Today, we have many educated youth. A few weeks ago, high school students held an exhibition in which they really showed us many astonishing and impressive achievements. They were mostly young. They were some high school students. Well, this is our resource and wealth. Knowledge-based companies should be established. Such companies are not particular to industry. They should be established in the area of industry, agriculture, public services and assessing needs. They should look and see what different economic organizations need and what their shortcomings are. Then, they should meet their needs. Knowledge-based companies can be active even in this area.

Combating smuggling in a serious way is a necessary task in the economy of the country. Another issue is confronting those who owe banks. There are some people who use bank facilities in dishonest ways. They get loans from banks and they use it for other purposes which are not to the advantage of the country. And they do not pay the loans off. Such individuals are really criminals. I am not saying that anyone who owes banks is a criminal. Some people may owe banks but we should help them. There are some individuals who owe money to banks, but who should receive help as well. But there are some people who should be put on trial and questioned. These tasks should be carried out in the country.

Who should carry out these tasks? We issued many warnings in recent years. Officials made many efforts as well, but neither my warnings nor officials' efforts are enough. These are not enough. Serious tasks should be carried out. The people too should help the administration, officials and the judiciary branch so that they can carry out these tasks. We can do so. We can resist the uproar that our enemies have created on the issue of sanctions and other such issues. We can frustrate their goals. If we do not carry out these tasks and activities, then the result will be what you witness in the present time. The enemy sits and dictates terms for our nuclear plan. Then he says that if we do not accept these terms, he will impose such and such sanctions. Well, this is the result.

The enemy is making maximum use of sanctions and their goal is to humiliate the people of Iran. Their goal is to stop the great movement that could only be launched by the people of Iran. They want to stop the movement of the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic. They want to stop our movement towards the new Islamic civilization because they know that this movement is completely against the interests of Zionist investors and oppressive and blood-sucking companies. They understand this and they see how this movement is developing in the world and how it attracts nations. This is why they want to stop it. Their sanctions, threats and unreasonable terms and conditions are because of this.

I believe that even if we accept what they dictate to us on the nuclear issue, their destructive moves and sanctions will not be stopped and lifted. They will continue to create all sorts of problems for us because they are opposed to the essence of the Revolution. Of course, I believe that our youth enjoy great capacities. Two days ago, basiji students sent messages to me complaining why we do not benefit from students in furthering the goals of the Islamic Revolution. This is a very important point. Those students who are in the middle of their education expect us to do this and they send us messages complaining why we do not benefit from them on the important matters of the Revolution in the region - whether military and security matters or different other matters. This is the spirit of our youth. You witnessed the spirit and morale of the people of Iran on the 22nd of Bahman. But on the one hand, the bullying and thuggish government of America does not stop its bullying despite all the defeats that it suffered in the region and on the other hand, its European cohorts impose new sanctions.

The people of Iran can impose sanctions as well. I need to say that if someone is supposed to impose sanctions, it is

the people of Iran. They will impose sanctions on them in the future. The most gas supplies in the world belong to us. It belongs to the people of Iran. Gas is a very important and effective energy and the world needs it. Poor Europe needs gas as well and it belongs to us. Iran has the most gas supplies in the world in the present time - this is based on current extractions. If we consider oil and gas together, the Islamic Republic of Iran has the most gas and oil supplies. We will impose sanctions on them in the right time and the Islamic Republic can do this.

The people of Iran and the Islamic Republic have shown that their determination is firm. Whenever the Islamic Republic of Iran addressed an issue - in any area - in a serious way, it showed that its determination is firm and strong and that it can work. On the issue of DAESH, they formed a coalition. Of course, they are lying and this is a hypocritical act. They wrote a letter to our Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying, "If you say that America gives weapons to DAESH, this is a lie and we are not supporting them". Well, a short time after that, the photos which showed that America gives weapons to DAESH were published. They talk and make claims, but they are lying and their lies are revealed easily and soon.

The Islamic Republic is not like this. Whenever we enter an arena, we act in the same way that the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) described: "We do not have thunder and lighting only unless rain follows it [Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 9]. Without a doubt, the people of Iran will stand on the peaks of glory and honor in the not-too-distant future and you dear youth will definitely see that future.

I hope that God bestows success on you. I hope that He will bestow His mercy and blessings on you. "Send my greetings to my dear ones in Tabriz and Azerbaijan" [speaking in Azeri]. I hope that by Allah's favor, you will be successful.