

United Arab Emirates  
**Good Governance**

First Edition

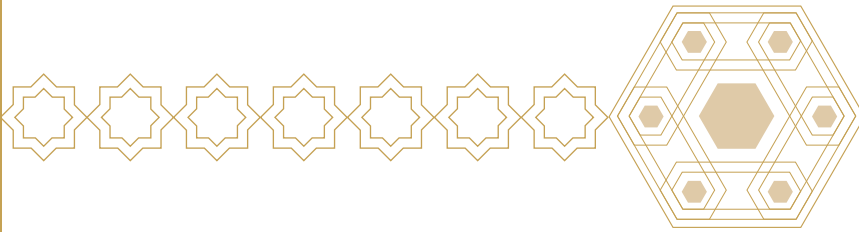
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# United Arab Emirates **Good Governance**



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In the Name of Allah,  
Most Gracious  
and Most Merciful



## PREFACE

Today's world abounds in concepts and slogans overlapping in significance, but the truest expression of their meanings and worth lies in their materialisation in the real world.

Looking at the continents and the varying systems and philosophies that make them work and endure throughout time, the United Arab Emirates stands out as one of the world's brightest examples and the most comprehensive and prominent coming-of-age stories, especially in terms of its relatively short lifetime which can only be described as “a race against time” in every sense of the expression.

Let us contemplate two significant periods

in the United Arab Emirates journey: the period leading to 1971, the year the UAE came to be in an era marked by widespread deprivation, and present-day UAE with its awe-inspiring civilisational and development boom... A success story marked by great achievements and wise leadership.

This book is a collection of glimpses and examples of the prudence and the good governance that shaped the United Arab Emirates and propelled it to a prominent position on the world map... a position that could only be claimed through unwavering resolve, willpower and determination to catch up on all aspects of progress and prosperity.

A scrutinizing, objective inspection of the many fortunes of the United Arab Emirates reveals prominent achievements and keen planning down to the the smallest detail and a sound structuring







of community and country. The notion of “good governance” - first used as a principle advocated by the United Nations Development Programme and adopted in September 2000 - is gauged by how well a government serves its people, is mindful of their needs at all times, and provides them with all the elements of progress through the proper implementation of programmes designed to this effect. Good governance can be defined as the collection of sound practices aimed towards achieving long-term development for the coming generations.

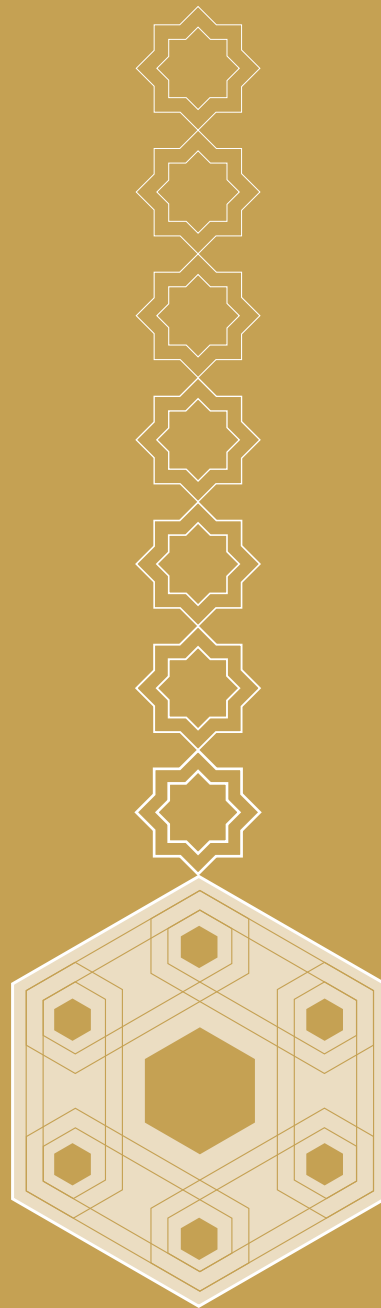
The successful journey of the United Arab Emirates continues to be seen as an exemplary model of planning, implementation and advancement against time, against odds.





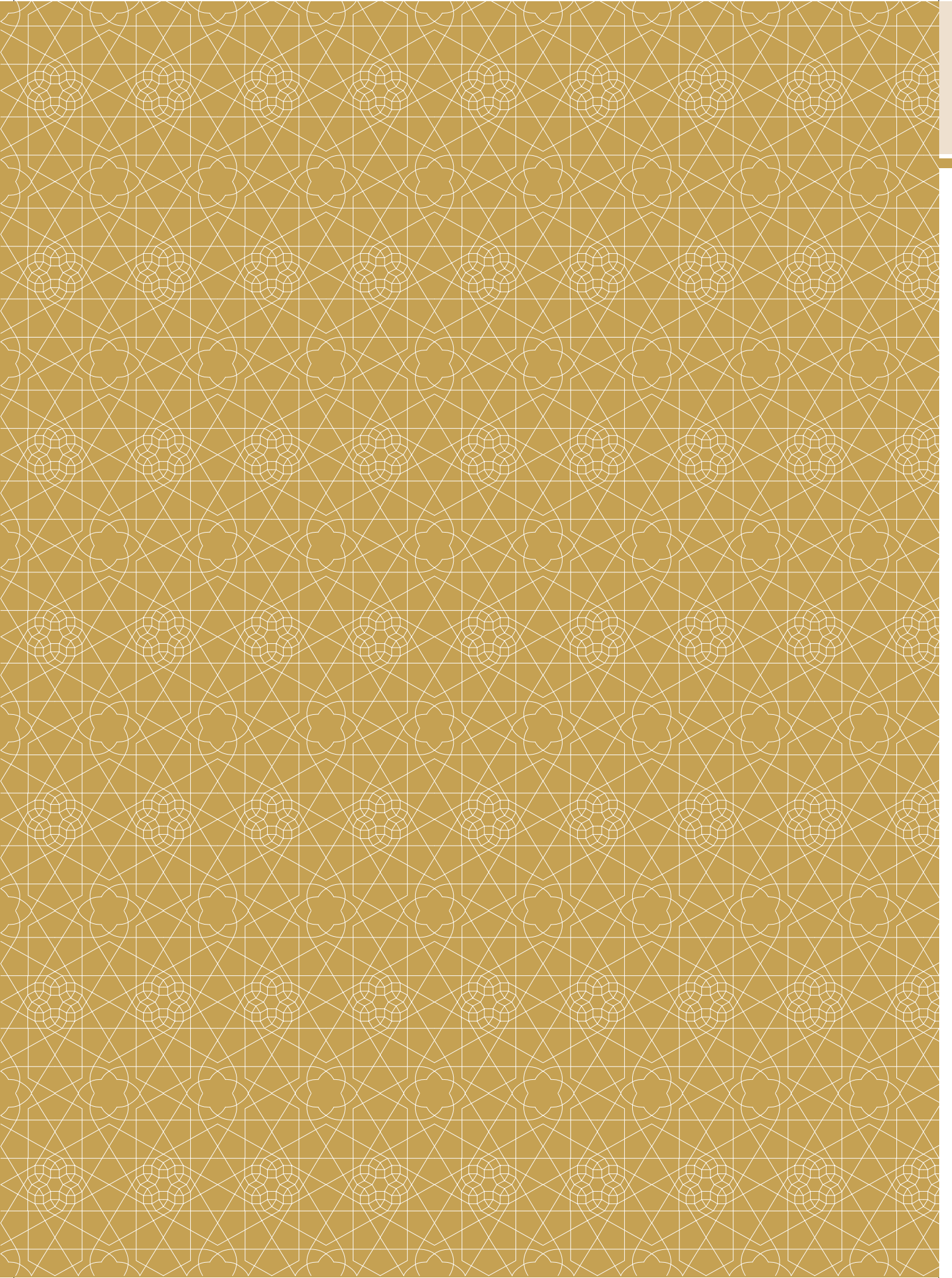






## Chapter I

# The Beginnings







## The Beginnings

It is through brain drain, resolve, optimal utilisation of potentials, intrepidity, willpower, innovation and creativity that nations evolve and shine. These same pillars have sketched the United Arab Emirates image of modernity and sustainable progress with an eye on the future.

In mythology, the phoenix, the long-lived bird obtains new life when it arises from the ashes with sturdier wings and a greater capacity to soar. And just like the mythical bird, the UAE, throughout the different sequences of its history, has risen from the ashes to become a vibrant core teeming with vitality.

The tough times were laden with challenges and complications, but the Emirati people's burning desire to survive never ebbs, their intransigent outlook remains unchanged and, just like them, refuses to be engulfed.

*He who abhors climbing mountains,  
Shall spend his life in holes;  
And he who has not embraced the love of life,  
Shall vanish and into oblivion fall.*

The sands of the desert breathed, and the United Arab Emirates emerged: a wild daffodil, a vehicle of history and a golden resurrection of the human spirit.

The UAE's development progressed at such an accelerated rate that, to accurately investigate it, researchers and observers had to monitor it month by month. The building of the country was off to a strong start: Radical changes were introduced at an unbelievably rapid pace in a matter of years revealing a gamut of issues, which proved to be remediable thanks to the relentless resolve to move forward. It was miraculous. A harsh merciless environment inhabited by an unyielding and hardworking people. A country that had nothing but faith, and an oil giant dormant beneath its sand dunes and waves.

There were no hospitals or schools save the scribes *al-kuttab*, and the rate of illiteracy stood at a whopping 98 per cent. There were barely any medical facilities available and Abu Dhabi's first hospital did not open its doors until 1967.

It is surely inevitable to be overcome by awe when one takes a close look at a relatively recent picture of Abu Dhabi, and at the events subsequent to the foundation of the United Arab Emirates, to see the radical and comprehensive transformation that materialised in a short period of time, all thanks to an unswerving will, a sharp intellect, a keen awareness of the requirements of sound planning based on modern criteria. All this coupled with adequate development programmes tailored to best suit the country's society and economy to keep up with



the changing times, but weaved around the nation's heritage and traditions in a way that entrenches the values of society.

An indomitable figure that forged a new chapter in the history of his nation, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan: a man of shrewd intellect, prolific vision, resolve, determination and infinite wisdom. Sir Wilfred Thesiger, the famous British explorer who documented his famous travels across the Empty Quarter, recounts in his renowned book *Arabian Sands* that he met Sheikh Zayed in April 1948 in Muwaiji: "He was a powerfully built man of about 30 with a brown beard. He had a strong intelligent face, with steady observant eyes, and his manner was quiet and masterful." Thesiger remarked that Sheikh Zayed was one man that he looked forward to meeting as "He had a great reputation among the Bedu. They liked him for his easy, informal ways and his friendliness, and they respected his force of character, his shrewdness and his physical strength."

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan - may he rest in peace - became Ruler of Al Ain in April 1946. Early on, he was aware of the harsh living conditions in the area. His greatest challenge was the lack of funds and the scarcity of water, but he never despaired. Sheikh Zayed devised a plan to get the residents of Al Ain out of the stifling bottleneck and drew water in the middle of the desert.

This was but one of many challenges he had to overcome. In its 1958 bulletin, the UNESCO mentioned that "the teaching

methods were rudimentary and failing due to the region's poverty and lack of resources and the literacy rate was a mere 1%.”

People were reluctant to send their children off to school as they needed them to help with daily chores. As a solution, Sheikh Zayed issued a decision to pay each attending student between 3 and 5 dirhams and to provide them with a free daily meal and four outfits a year. His plan gradually bore fruit for Sheikh Zayed recognised that education is the shortest way and the main ingredient for a prosperous nation. Without education, society would surely wither away and die.

August 6th, 1966 marked a historic milestone in the life of the Emirati people. Before it, the Emirati were weighed down by hardship and deprivation: A harsh, lifeless yellow expanse and a roaring deep sea that swallowed many before it yielded what little bounty people could get their hands on to survive. Sheikh Zayed decided that boundaries should be abolished and psychological barriers broken down. Geography stands defeated before feelings, and emotions cannot be weakened by boundaries. The United Arab Emirates turned out to be quite an amazing accomplishment, a true miracle in the heart of the desert.

It is said that the scent of oud only comes out when burned. This is also true of the Emirates. To truly appreciate the greatness of the United Arab Emirates one has to be aware of



its harsh past.

Sir Albert Thomas (Archie) Lamb, who served as the British political agent in Abu Dhabi between 1965 and 1968 described the late Sheikh Zayed as “intelligent and patient. He holds his discussions logically and knows what he wants. He has a grasp of the main principles of governance as a statesman should.” In late 1969, C.J. Treadwell (Archie Lamb’s successor in 1968) noted that it was not unusual or uncommon for the ruler to stay up until 3 a.m. “discussing with a foreign visitor, his director of finance or another one of his overworked officers, or perhaps conversing with a nomad about falconry and wells”; hence, his description of Zayed as “a man of the people who stands naturally with the humblest of people and feels at home among them”. This is perhaps the best description of that ruler who has proven to be a real leader to his people. Zayed sought to build a new society underpinned by the principles of wellbeing, justice and dignity. His main goal was the happiness of his country and people. His aim was to establish a “modern and prosperous state”.

Sheikh Zayed is largely credited for the Emirates’ turnaround, as he was able to devise a vital political formula wherein he created balance between history and heritage on the one hand and modern constitutional theories on the other as he built his country. Realising the people’s ambitions and aspirations remained the higher authority’s main preoccupation and became

rooted in the political system of the United Arab Emirates. In light of its historic and political experience, the country developed its own model of governance for the people and from the people. This explains why Treadwell described the Emirati people as “happy families” in his summary report. Perhaps the essence of the “desert democracy” is best reflected in Sheikh Zayed’s words: “Democracy in the United Arab Emirates is not a collection of slogans or constitutional provisions. It is a practical reality, at the level of power and at the level of the people.”

Zayed’s meetings with his people constituted “a key principle of democracy and governance”, born out of his conviction that “the success of any governor is dependent upon a number of factors, particularly his belief in consultation, *shura*, and democratic governance.”

The London-based Times Magazine described Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan as “the man who could turn Abu Dhabi into the Florida of the Near-East.”

In proud, confident words, the late Sheikh Zayed summed up his country’s philosophy, politics and goals, and outlined its breakthrough from desert life to modernity while preserving its authenticity: “My wish is not to move the Bedu to the city but to bring the city to the Bedu.” And he said, “it is important to take pride in the past if we want to prepare for the future successfully.”



Ronald Codrai came to the Emirates in the late forties. His book, which he compiled during 40 years up to his death in 2000, *Faces from the Emirates* is a key historic record of the Emirates in the mid-twentieth century as seen through the author's lens. In his introduction, the author wrote:

“History without credible images or illustrations leaves a great deal to the imagination of the reader and, recounted by words alone, can be potentially misleading if false notions of people, events or places are created in the mind. There is no better mirror of society than the faces of its people. This is very appropriate to the theme of my book because the portraits of the people I had the pleasure and privilege of photographing half a century ago, in the territories which were later to become the United Arab Emirates, more than anything else, reflect the state of the society of which they are part.

Without the aid of any illustrations, what might you have imagined the people who lived in such primitive and deprived conditions, in such a harsh and isolated environment, to have looked like? If you had to rely solely on the written word to form a picture in your mind of the ‘fish eaters’ (as they were called by ancient Greek travellers), would they have resembled the pictures in this album? If not, then I shall feel well rewarded for having filled a small gap in the early history of the United Arab Emirates.

It is often said that a man's life is written in his face. I hope that some of this collection of photographs will enable the new generation to appreciate the true character and greatness of their forebears who, despite the rigor of their lives, wore understanding expressions and had smiling eyes. They were outstanding people and great subjects for my camera. In case the reader should gain the impression that these are merely the words of a foreigner romanticising about the lot of another people, I can do no better than quote one of them.

Recalling the days of privation, drought, poverty and sometimes hunger, he urged his listeners to learn from the fortitude and patience of their forefathers who survived such adversity. 'He who does not know his past will not understand the present, nor prepare himself for the future.'

Those words were spoken by someone of aristocratic tribal stock who, as much as anyone, understood the people of the days to which he referred, and who lived through the transition from these times to that of great wealth, to become the first president of those lands, now the United Arab Emirates: His Highness Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan."

December 2nd, 1971 saw the culmination of a series of historic events which abound in political, economic and social factors. The foundation of the United Arab Emirates came as a





pioneering experience in building a modern State, rectifying an aberrant situation and adjusting a dismembered political map. In record time, the United Arab Emirates has proven to be an exemplary model at all levels.

Wilfred Thesiger the British explorer roamed the Empty Quarter – one of the harshest deserts in the world covering roughly half a million square metres - and its surrounding region between 1945 and 1950. Upon his return in 1977, the decade-spanning changes he saw in the Emirates reminded him of those witnessed in Britain since the early Middle Ages and until the present time.

Sheikh Zayed had a strong desire to draw upon the model of modern civilization to benefit and fuel his country's development, to achieve progress that complies with modern-day innovations and doesn't clash with the Emirates' environment, and to raise his people's standard of living. Thanks to his foresight, he grasped the effects of civilization and reproduced the very best of its features in his country. Such was the secret behind his trips to countries of the world, taking stock of their varied experiences, even long before he took over the reins of government in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. During his time as Ruler of the Eastern Region, Zayed took to travelling with a view to open up to the world and keep abreast of the changing times, trying to apply what he saw in developed countries to his limited region using what limited means were available to him. His travels, which

began at a young age, helped him make many dreams come true. According to the late Sheikh Zayed, “modernity” means that the nation lives the spirit of the times, achieves progress and prosperity in the various aspects of life, interacts with the product of the human mind and contributes to the achievements thereof in view of providing a life of comfort and wellbeing to its people and motivating them to make the best of their God-given natural resources in building a sustainable source of wealth, namely the human intellect and its innovations:

**“Our main goal is to provide a better life for all our people in the United Arab Emirates, to reinforce the pillars of our emerging country in order to achieve progress and prosperity in various fields and to ensure security and peace of mind in our land, with special focus on forming good citizens who represent the country’s real assets and its main resource for the present and the future.”**

It takes wisdom to blend authenticity with modernity. The two need to be balanced to avoid the preponderance of the material aspect of modern civilization over the spiritual aspect and the values, and to prevent the nation’s identity from dissolving and its features from fading away on the one hand, and on the other hand its customs, traditions and cultural heritage from being exaggerated to the point of rigidity, which paralyses progress.



Such balance represented a unique phenomenon in the mind of the late Sheikh Zayed. Thanks to his comprehensive outlook, he realised that material and scientific achievements without ideals and human and spiritual values make for a lifeless, meaningless body. Similarly, ideals without material and scientific achievements are nothing but confused dreams, which, albeit beautiful, remain illusions. Merging ideals with scientific achievements is the ideal solution to such a difficult equation; marrying constants and variables, authenticity and modernity.

The late Sheikh Zayed was constantly preoccupied by the sense of belonging. He was about to undertake a development project which required the expertise and philosophies of the West, and yet he was fully aware of the need for a selective choice in line with the nature, culture and religious and social values of the Emirati people. In his mind, no change or modern civilization could ever supersede their roots nor their past (by that, he means the deep understanding of the nature of society and its cultural particularity which sets it apart from other societies). His was a total understanding of his people's character, mentality, customs, traditions and values. He wanted a change which would not come as a shock, but rather as a smooth flexible transition compatible with the people's notions and dimensions. He wanted the Emirati people to continue taking root in their land, this land which they have not forsaken in times of need; hence, their wellbeing shall not come at the expense of their roots.

The late Sheikh Zayed has discerned the nature of Bedu and had to give them a reason to hold on to their land, not only by words but also by hard work and by providing the funding needed to translate ideas into reality. He was the child of this land and as such, he was close to his people. He spent time with them and was aware of their issues, hardships and ambitions. He knew what was on their mind and where they were heading. Sheikh Zayed understood that the Emirati towns are not to be built like towns in other countries. He wanted villagers and Bedu to keep on living the life to which they were accustomed, but sought to raise their standard of living and to provide them with a handsome income that would make them forget the years of deprivation.

The late Sheikh Zayed was driven by his attachment to his roots. He attributed the concept of the Union to his intellectual background which he defines as follows: “Our Arab Islamic heritage underlies our belief in the Union. Islam united Arabs and fused them into one power, one good nation which has guided other nations towards the most complete of canons, the most supreme of values and the most upright path towards the happiness of humanity.”

Sheikh Zayed’s conscious openness to developed communities constituted one of the main pillars of his developmental approach which embodies his progress-oriented way of thinking whereby opening up to other civilizations should be prudent



and based on their usefulness.

“When we adopt technological innovations, we don’t necessarily adopt the behaviours of their inventors,” he said.

Sheikh Zayed made sure to found his country’s modern progress on the informed awareness of the particularity of the message of Islam which Allah bestowed upon man to be a source of enlightenment, guidance, and to harness Muslims’ potentials in order to build the world and explore its secrets to reach the truth of the Creator, as stated in the Holy Quran: *﴿Act! Allah will behold your actions and (so will) His messenger and the believers.﴾*

In an interview with the French newspaper *Le Monde*, Sheikh Zayed said: “I have wondered whether Islam is against development and scientific progress. Is it against prosperity, wellbeing and the improvement of a society’s standard of living? On the contrary, the principles of Islam demand all that and urge Muslims to go after it.”

In response to a question by British writer Claud Morris, author of the valuable book *The Desert Falcon: The story of H. H. Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahiyah, President of the United Arab Emirates*, he said: “First and foremost, I would like to say that there is no conflict whatsoever between Islam and the need for material progress or the means of modern education and commerce.”

The late Sheikh Zayed drew from the spirit of Islam his resolve to overcome the obstacles which hindered progress and development. He tackled the challenges of the harsh environment by relying on an in-depth understanding of the secrets of the Holy Quran. Going against the experts' advice to spare his efforts and money and to give up trying to turn a barren desert into a lush green land, he explained his success in taking up such a challenge: "In our attempt to overcome the barren desert and turn it into a prosperous, fruitful and giving land, we drew our resolve and patience from our faith in the Almighty and in His power, pondering over the words of the Holy Quran ﴿ *He giveth life to the earth after it is dead.* ﴾

True to his commitment to humanity and to saving the world from its lapses and the people from their sufferings, he nobly offered a helping hand in difficult times in countless situations, thus fulfilling his obligations towards the human community. He was aware that Islam ordained righteousness and cooperation, and called for peace, which leads to a world marked with freedom, equality, brotherhood, honour and dignity.

The most important pillars underpinning the Emirati society are best reflected in Sheikh Zayed's words: "The role of Islam is apparent in a community whose sense of belonging to its Arab heritage forms a beacon that lights its way and outlines its particularities in deciding the principle of fraternity among people, shunning all forms of bigotry and discrimination among



nations and building societies and countries fully committed to ideal human principles and virtues.”

In Sheikh Zayed’s mind, man was the true wealth of the Emirates. For this reason he insisted on introducing scientifically calculated development plans, which sought to enhance man’s abilities at various levels to ensure a strong and successful nation in the future.

“Building man in the coming phase is a national prerequisite to building factories and facilities because no prosperous country can ever exist without good, upstanding people, and because we are working at fostering a future generation which would make us proud and would be able to meet its responsibilities,” he often said.

That was the beginning of the journey. Zayed’s progress-oriented thinking sought first and foremost to focus on man as the sustainable wealth of his country. Man would in turn proceed to build the country’s modern sectors; hence, this thinking was oriented towards instilling the pillars of social development that eventually made colossal achievements within a short timeframe. The late Sheikh Zayed introduced the concept of social development loud and clear: “My fellow countrymen, it is not by mere wishes that countries are built, nor is it by dreams that hopes are realised.”

Thanks to his insight, he realised that the economic factor,

albeit an important one, was second to the workforce in the process of development. His was a progressive economic perspective that aimed to achieve sustainable development by investing in people for they would be entrusted with managing the capital and the natural resources to ensure a successful development process: “We have focused our efforts on people for they are the main ingredient for a sound community.”

Zayed reiterated this comprehensive idea of development on several occasions: “Many tasks lie ahead of you at the Ministry of Energy and Industry. You should conduct study upon study and research after research. You should inquire into everything, what is going on today and what will happen tomorrow and the day after. Our aim is to achieve the happiness and wellbeing of all and so each person should be aware of his responsibilities and obligations.”

According to Sheikh Zayed, man is not only the individual who plans the development process or holds an office, but also a group of individuals who work within different institutions with the aim to develop the country.

**“The process of development and building is not solely dependent upon those in positions of responsibility, but requires joint efforts from all citizens, from workers to employees, students, soldiers, police officers and others.”**





The importance of the community lies in the people who add value to material life. The greatest achievements, without people, would be meaningless. It is with man that life and progress begin. “Man is the backbone of any cultural movement. Our interest in man is indispensable as he is the centre of any true sustainable progress. No matter the buildings, facilities, schools and hospitals we establish, the bridges we build and the embellishments we introduce, these will all remain material, soulless and unsustainable entities. Man is at the centre of everything. With his mind, art and potential he is capable of preserving achievements, developing new projects and growing with them.”

Establishing the modern State and the large-scale development projects undertaken during the first decade of the life of the United Arab Emirates were not the outcome of a specific development plan, they were the fruit of comprehensive in-depth development carried out under the directives of Sheikh Zayed. “Only Allah knows how I watched over every single project we undertook in the United Arab Emirates,” he said. Man is concurrently the instrument and the goal of development. Development plans and projects are but the means to the main end, namely social wellbeing. “Our main goal is to provide a good life to our citizens. They are the real wealth of this country, today and tomorrow.”

The new leader inherited a legacy of heavy responsibilities

that arose and accumulated from a harsh social, economic and political reality: A land barren in its entirety with yet unknown bounty, a people dispersed in seven emirates, limited education with limited outputs that were far from sufficient to meet the needs of a rising country.

The majority of the people led a nomadic lifestyle. Those living along the coastline depended in their livelihood upon a sea fraught with difficulty and dangers. Farming was practiced, but it barely sufficed to meet the needs of the people. Primitive traditional houses were strewn here and there along so-called towns, *hawadher*, with houses unfit for a comfortable living.

Before this deteriorating situation and with the first signs of an oil wealth coming to the surface, the country was in dire need of a miracle and thus began the thousand-mile journey.

Having played a key political role uniting the people of the seven emirates under the banner of an emerging country, Zayed went on to focus all his efforts on bringing about comprehensive development. Thanks to his insight, coupled with unfaltering loyalty to his country and to his people, Sheikh Zayed realised the requirements of a comprehensive integrated development process at all economic and social levels, which were also necessary to ensure change.

Development includes every human action that is “purposeful and organised at the individual or group level. It basically means



building one's capacity to use the human potential with a view to increase individual and group productivity in economic and social activities, from a lower level to a relatively higher level and over a reasonable period of time”.

Since before taking over power in Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed was certain that the emirate had the potential to be a unifying power for the other emirates. Many of the decisions he took after becoming Ruler of Abu Dhabi in 1966 came as a translation of views he had held for a long time. His ideas evolved and matured with the extensive experience he gained as Ruler's Representative in Al Ain. It was during this time that he amassed the expertise and the confidence that would serve him well when he would later become Ruler of Abu Dhabi.

Accordingly, the late Sheikh Zayed painted in his mind and heart the image of the Union with the brush of a genuine believer in the need to revive Arab unity and re-assemble the dismembered limbs of the greater Arab body. He used to his advantage the favourable response of the rulers of the other emirates to the idea of unification as well as the interactive spirit of unity among the peoples of the Gulf region who were dreaming of some sort of unity among Arabs. Speaking about the Union, Sheikh Zayed said:

**“The Union is my wish and my supreme goal for the people of the Arab Emirates.”**

As a ruler, Sheikh Zayed adopted the principle of consultation or *shura*. He was brought up to the true Islamic values and principles and developed his peerless personality during his time as Ruler's Representative in Al Ain. He instantly occupied a special place in the hearts of his people who showed him great love and loyalty. In the words of the British Captain Anthony Shepherd's in his book *Arabian Adventure*: "Zayed is admired and respected by the Bedu living in the desert, he is undoubtedly the strongest figure in the Trucial States. He was one of the few great men I have met."

His description of Zayed matches that of the British author Colonel Boustead who wrote in his book *The Wind of Morning*:

**Zayed is a man revered by his people. He is always kind to everyone and very generous with his money.**

When Sheikh Zayed was appointed Ruler's Representative in Al Ain, he began practicing the principle of consultation with his people. A closer look at the components of his consultative approach reveals his philosophy on consultation in building the country and the community.

Upon his appointment as Ruler of Abu Dhabi on August 6th, 1966, Zayed proceeded to set the rules of contemporary government administration. He was well aware that in the post-1966 period, he would be building a new community which



would extend to future generations. As of August 6th, 1966, Sheikh Zayed, now in a position of responsibility, set out to engage his people in the decision-making process and proceeded to form the Abu Dhabi Planning Council. At first glance, the council seemed like a unique concept in the emirate; that was not the case, however, as the late Sheikh Zayed followed in the footsteps of his ancestors. Tradition had it that the rulers of Abu Dhabi surrounded themselves with a council of tribal chiefs and scholars whom they would consult with in important matters. Once he took over the reins of power, Sheikh Zayed adopted the principle of consultation and exchange of opinions, forming the aforementioned planning council of experts with whom he would exchange opinions and whose ideas he would listen to intently with a view to meet the needs of his people and provide them with the best possible services. This would allow him to achieve his ultimate dream of building a modern State which would retain its cultural and spiritual particularities, take pride in its legacy and remain open to the latest human and technological developments without nonetheless losing its identity, sense of belonging and culture.

*Shura* was one of the most important concepts which formed in Sheikh Zayed's mind and heart. He adopted it as an approach in governance and a method in country administration. This consultative approach in administering the country, dealing with the tribes and ruling Al Ain City back then was by no means new to him when he became Ruler of Abu Dhabi. On July 1st,

1971, he proceeded to form the first consultative council in Abu Dhabi whose task was “to assist the ruler in performing his duties”. Through the council, Zayed seemed to set an example of people’s participation in the administration of their country following in the footsteps and customs of their forebears.

Emiri Decree no. 32/1971 stipulated the establishment of the National Consultative Council with the following members:

1. Mr. Abdullah bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Dhaheri
2. Mr. Khadim bin Mohammed Al Rumaithi
3. Mr. Mohammed bin Zahra Al Khaili
4. Mr. Mohammed bin Butti Al Qubaisi
5. Mr. Sultan bin Matar Al Hulami
6. Sheikh Butti bin Hamed Al Qubaisi
7. Sheikh Mohammed bin Murshid Al Humairi
8. Mr. Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Suwaidi
9. Mr. Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Qamzi
10. Mr. Mohammed bin Saleh bin Aziz Al Mundhiri
11. Mr. Rashid bin Khadim bin Hulaiman Al Shaari
12. Mr. Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Bandouq Al Qamzi



13. Mr. Ahmed bin Khalfan bin Jabara Al Marri
14. Sheikh Sultan bin Suroor Al Dhaheri
15. Mr. Ahmed bin Sultan bin Ghanoum Al Hamli
16. Mr. Mohammed bin Jaber bin Rashid Al Hamli
17. Mr. Manih bin Abdullah Al Muhairi
18. Mr. Jabara bin Hassan bin Jabara Al Marri
19. Mr. Matar bin Hadher Al Muhairi
20. Mr. Mohammed bin Al Fandi Al Mazrouei
21. Sheikh Salem bin Musallam bin Ham Al Ameri
22. Mr. Ghanim bin Hamila Al Mazrouei
23. Mr. Abdullah bin Ahmed bin Khalaf
24. Mr. Abdullah bin Sultan bin Rashid Al Rumaithi
25. Mr. Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Sayegh
26. Mr. Haji bin Abdullah Hussein
27. Mr. Faleh bin Jaber Al Hababi
28. Sheikh Salem bin Rakadh Al Ameri
29. Mr. Saeed bin Abdul Rahman Al Nasser

30. Mr. Rashid bin Abdullah Al Neyadi
31. Mr. Khalifa bin Saeed bin Huweidan Al Qatbi
32. Mr. Saif bin Meadhad Al Mashghooni
33. Mr. Saif bin Saeed Al Sabousi
34. Mr. Naseeb bin Ahmed Al Humairi
35. Sheikh Saeed bin Mubarak Al Rahmi
36. Mr. Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Masaood Al Mehairbi
37. Mr. Ahmed bin Hadher Al Marikhi
38. Mr. Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Fahim
39. Sheikh Nasser bin Saeed bin Suwaid Al Mansoori
40. Mr. Ali bin Abdullah Al Zaabi
41. Mr. Hassan bin Rahma Al Zaabi
42. Mr. Saqr bin Hamdan Al Falahi
43. Sheikh Sultan bin Qeran Al Mundhiri
44. Mr. Faraj bin Ali bin Hamoodah Al Dhaheri
45. Mr. Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Brook
46. Mr. Hamel bin Khadim Al Ghaith





47. Mr. Rashid bin Awaida
48. Sheikh Zaitoun bin Mohammed bin Zaitoun Al Shaari
49. Mr. Mohammed bin Maktoum Al Sharifi
50. Mr. Saeed bin Issa Al Khaili

Article 2 of the law establishing the Abu Dhabi National Consultative Council stipulates that the council shall include a maximum of fifty members who possess knowledge and life experience to represent the different aspects of the emirate. Sheikh Zayed informed the members loud and clear of the council's mission and of the extent of their responsibilities as representatives and partners in government: "It is incumbent upon the members of the Abu Dhabi National Consultative Council to take part in building the country and setting the governance rules on solid foundations with the aim of providing our people with a life of freedom."

Sheikh Zayed's reason for forming the Abu Dhabi National Consultative Council was to relate the concept of consultation, which he had learnt from his ancestors long before the birth of the country's modern institutions, to contemporary governance. He judiciously chose its members to represent the people of different inclinations, ages and cultures, and gave them full immunity under the law to perform their tasks in form and, more importantly, in content. He made sure they understood their role and responsibilities as partners in administration:

“Through consultation, we revive our ancestors’ past in present times. We all agree that you will bear with us the responsibility of governing the country. The principle of consultation has endured for centuries in this country and it shall continue to exist forever.”

In 1971, after the Emirates entered into an agreement to form the Union, a constitution was drafted to temporarily and transitionally regulate the new political, economic and social situation over a period of five years, whereupon it would be assessed and a new permanent constitution would be drafted in light of the strengths and weaknesses of the experience, hence the name “Interim Constitution”.

On July 18th, 1971, in Dubai, the Interim Constitution of the United Arab Emirates was signed by the rulers of the emirates of the federation with the exception of the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, which joined later in an independent document on February 10, 1972.

Article I of the Interim Constitution stipulates that the United Arab Emirates is an independent, sovereign, federal state. Article 152 stipulates that the Constitution shall take effect from the date stipulated in a declaration to be issued by the Rulers signatories to the Constitution.

On December 2nd, 1971, also in Dubai, a declaration was issued by the Rulers of the Emirates giving immediate effect to



the provisions of the Interim Constitution of the UAE.

Issuing an interim constitution in the political circumstances of the time in 1971 proved to be a wise decision. The new Union was still in the embryonic stage, protected closely by devoted patriots, lest it falters and fails like other similar Arab experiences.

A constitution to regulate the affairs of the new federal state represented in itself a significant evolution in the region's modern political history. Like any new development, it was to be rolled out prudently and gradually to properly lay the ground for its success. These considerations were reflected in the flexibility and caution that impinged the provisions of the interim constitution.

The Interim Constitution of the United Arab Emirates acknowledges inherent rights and freedoms such as the principle of equality, and the principle of personal freedom such as freedom of opinion and freedom of movement and the right to security and freedom of residence, religious freedom and freedom of assembly and association and freedom of occupation. In addition to inherent rights and freedoms, the Constitution guarantees social rights and freedoms by instating the principle of social justice, which requires the State to provide for the welfare of families, childhood, motherhood, minors and others who are unable to care for themselves due to illness, disability, old age or forced unemployment. The Constitution

stipulates that the right to education and healthcare shall be ensured by the State. It also regulates employer-employee relationships, and guarantees cooperation between the public economic activity and private activity by protecting public and private funds.

In terms of individual rights and freedoms, the Constitution was modeled according to modern constitutional principles that guarantee respect of individual freedom and the State's obligation to ensure the social rights of individuals.

This is the UAE's first constitution as a State and the first written constitution to be published in all member emirates. Prior to the Union, the affairs of emirates were run according to customary laws and practices. With the Union, there was a need for an official written document to announce its establishment and regulate its principles of government.

Producing a written constitution was a milestone in the Emirates' history. Documentation reflects the state's alignment with contemporary constitutional systems and contributes to developing political awareness among citizens.

Due to aforementioned considerations the constitution was provisional with temporary provisions that were sufficient to make that first transition into the realm of political and constitutional development, and to prepare the people, during the transition period, for the federal system of rule in future



years, based on sound foundations.

In this regard, in the preamble, the Constitution states, “Desiring also to lay the foundations of Union Law in the coming years on a sound basis, corresponding with the realities and the capacities of the Emirates at the present time, enabling the Union, so far as possible, freely to achieve its goals, sustaining the identity of its members where this is not inconsistent with those goals and preparing the people of the Union at the same time for a noble and free constitutional life, progressing by steps towards a comprehensive, representative, democratic regime in an Islamic and Arab society free from fear and anxiety... For all these reasons and in order that the preparation of the permanent constitution for the Union may be completed, we proclaim before the Supreme and Omnipotent Creator, and before all people our agreement to this provisional Constitution, to which our signatures were appended, which shall be implemented during the transitional period indicated in it.”

The first item in Article 144 of the Constitution states, “bearing in mind the provisions of the following paragraphs, the provisions of this Constitution shall apply for a transitional period of five Gregorian years beginning from the date of its entry into force in accordance with the provisions of Article 152.”

Article 152 states, “This Constitution shall take effect from the date stipulated in a declaration to be issued by the Rulers signatories to this Constitution.”

The declaration was issued on December 2nd, 1971, giving the Interim Constitution effect for five years.

It was only normal that the UAE’s constitution would present predominant Arab and Islamic characteristics. The establishment of the League of Arab States in 1945 came as an expression of solidarity among Arab states and as a united front defending their interests. Liberation movements across the Arab landscape soon followed. Nations that have been living under the yoke of colonisation rose to claim liberty and take their rightful place alongside sisterly independent Arab States in the Arab League, where they would assume their part in the joint Arab action and responsibility. It all coincided with an awakening that swept across Arab populations and calls for the revival of Arab nationalism following decades of colonisation. It was a movement to re-establish Arab peoples’ faith that they are an integral part of a wide-ranging Arab nation and that their Arab countries are all bound by the unbreakable ties of common faith, language, history and destiny.

It was natural that the UAE Constitution would stem from Arab values and embody Arab beliefs. Hence, the name chosen for the new State was the United Arab Emirates, clearly emphasising its commitment and affiliation to its Arab origins.



The series of constitutional provisions that followed brought out the Arab features that make up the UAE's profile. Article 1 of the Constitution states that the United Arab Emirates is an independent, sovereign, federal state, which consists of the following Emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al Quwain, Ras al Khaimah and Fujairah.

It then adds that any other independent Arab country may join the Union, provided that the Supreme Council agrees unanimously to this. Evidently, restricting adherence to Arab countries only was meant to maintain the Union's Arab identity.

Article 6 of the Constitution stipulates that the Union shall be part of the Great Arab Nation, to which it is bound by the ties of religion, language, history and common destiny, emphasising the UAE's belonging to the Arab Nation of which it is an integral part. The same article goes on to further stress that the people of the Union shall be a single people, and shall be part of the Arab Nation.

Affiliation with the greater Arab Nation was reflected in the Union's politics, which were geared towards solidarity with Arab states for their common interests and for common good. To this effect, Article 12 of the Constitution states that the foreign policy of the Union shall be directed towards support for Arab and Islamic causes and interests.

In addition to underlining the UAE's Arab identity, the Constitution also highlighted its Islamic character, as affirmed in Article 7, which stipulates that Islam shall be the official religion of the Union. The Islamic Sharia shall be a principal source of legislation in the Union, and the official language of the Union shall be Arabic.

Further along, Article 32 guarantees that the freedom to hold religious ceremonies in accordance with established custom shall be safeguarded, provided such ceremonies are consistent with public order and with public morals, confirming the provisions of Article 25 that affirms that all persons shall be equal before the law. No discrimination shall be practiced between citizens of the Union by reason of race, nationality, religious belief or social position.

When it comes to the state's activity, Article 24 clearly stipulates that the basis of the national economy shall be social justice. The support of the national economy shall be sincere cooperation between public and private activity. The aim of the national economy shall be the achievement of economic expansion, increased production, the raising of standards of living and the achievement of prosperity for citizens within the limits of the Law.

In light of this, the Constitution has approved State intervention in economic activity. According to the provisions of Article 24, economy is based in social justice, which naturally





calls for State intervention to ensure and guarantee justice and prevent exploitation. On the other hand, economic activity isn't purely or exclusively individual, it is supported by the State's activity and the cooperation between the private and the public sectors to achieve economic objectives.

It isn't for individuals to determine or guide the economic objectives of the state. These are set forth in the Constitution, within clear frameworks and in view of specific purposes, namely achieving economic development, increasing production, improving living standards and ensuring prosperity for citizens, as regulated by law.

In Article 20, the Constitution stipulates, "society shall esteem work as a fundamental basis of its development. It shall strive to ensure that work is available for citizens and to ensure that they are prepared for it. It shall take such steps as are necessary to ensure this by providing legislation to protect the rights of the employees and to protect the interests of the employers, bearing in mind developing international labour legislation."

The text also guaranteed the right to individual property in Article 21, which affirms, "Private property shall be protected. Conditions relating thereto shall be prescribed by law."

Social rights are equally guaranteed in the Constitution. Article 16 states, "Society shall be responsible for protecting childhood and motherhood and shall protect minors and others unable to

look after themselves for any reason, such as illness or incapacity or old age or forced unemployment. It shall be responsible for assisting them and enabling them to help themselves for their own benefit and that of society.” The same values were echoed in Article 17 that stipulates, “Education shall be a primary means of social development. It shall be compulsory in its primary stage and free at all stages within the Union. The law shall prescribe the necessary plans for the propagation and spread of education at various levels and for the eradication of illiteracy.”

Article 19 further reaffirms the state’s commitment to social rights and freedoms. It states, “Medical protection and means of preventive treatment and treatment for diseases and epidemics shall be guaranteed by society for all citizens. Society shall promote the spread of hospitals, clinics and facilities for both general and special treatment.”

The Constitution based the direction of the state activity on modern social doctrine. It approves state intervention in economy, protected individual property and guaranteed social freedoms, striking a balance between authority and freedom and ensuring security and prosperity for individuals and to the community as a whole.

Chapter three of the Constitution is dedicated to freedoms, rights and public duties. Article 25 clearly states, “All persons shall be equal before the law. No discrimination shall be practiced between citizens of the Union by reason of race, nationality,



religious belief or social position.”

Articles 26 to 34 addressed public freedoms starting with personal freedoms. Article 26 states: “Personal freedom shall be guaranteed to all citizens. No person may be arrested, searched, detained or imprisoned except in accordance with the provisions of the Law. No man shall be subjected to torture or other indignity.” Other personal freedom guarantees are detailed in Articles 27 and 28 respectively, which state “No punishment shall be imposed for any act of commission or act of omission which was completed before the issue of the law which provided for such punishment,” and “Punishment shall be individual. An accused shall be deemed innocent until he has been convicted by means of a legal and just trial. Physical and mental abuse of an accused person shall be prohibited.”

Other freedoms were also guaranteed by the Constitution, namely the freedom of movement and residence for all citizens, as stipulated in Article 29. Freedom to hold opinions and express them orally, in writing or by other means of expression shall be guaranteed within the limits of the law, as provided for in Article 30. Article 31 guarantees freedom of communication by means of the posts, telegraph or other means of communication and their secrecy shall be guaranteed in accordance with the law. The freedom to hold religious ceremonies in accordance with established custom is safeguarded in Article 32 and the freedom of assembly and the freedom to hold meetings is guaranteed

in Article 33, and Article 34 provided that every citizen shall be free to choose his occupation, trade or profession within the limits of the law... no person may be subjected to forced labour except in exceptional circumstances provided for by the law and in return for compensation, and no man shall be enslaved.

On the issue of public rights, the Constitution states that public service shall be open to all citizens on a basis of equality of circumstances between them, in accordance with the provisions of the law (Article 35), and that homes shall be inviolable and may not be entered without permission from their inhabitants except in accordance with the provisions of the law, and in circumstances laid down therein, (Article 36).

Article 37 prohibits deportation or banishing of citizens from the Union and Article 38 prohibits the extradition of citizens and political refugees. Article 38 prohibits general confiscation of funds and Article 41 guarantees that every person shall have the right to submit complaints to the competent authorities.

As for public duties, the Constitution states in Article 42 that payment of taxes and public imposts determined by law shall be an obligation upon every citizen. In Article 43 it affirms that the defence of the Union shall be a sacred duty obligatory upon every citizen, and in Article 44 it says that the respect of the Constitution and the laws and regulations issued by the public authorities in execution thereof shall be a duty to all inhabitants



of the Union.

The union between the seven Arab Emirates was a significant event and a milestone in the political history of this region. The proclamation of the nascent state's constitution was a harbinger of change that would bring about profound development in the political system of rule in this region.

As soon as the Union became a reality, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan proceeded to form the Federal National Council to become one of the principal authorities, which he had sought to enhance and empower to support the UAE's evolution. His Highness Sheikh Zayed - may he rest in peace – saw the FNC as the embodiment of national will for development and growth in all sectors.

Sheikh Zayed had a deep vision for the FNC's role in designating the landmarks and characteristics of evolution, in cooperation with the executive branch. He often remarked that building a country is the responsibility of one and all, and all efforts must join together to ensure its prosperity. Sheikh Zayed was well aware of the responsibility placed upon the members of the Federal National Council and the vital role they could play in supporting the march of construction and evolution both domestically and on the international scene.

As per Article 78 of the Constitution, the President of the Union shall summon the Federal National Council to convene

its first ordinary session within a period not exceeding sixty days from the entry into force of the Constitution. Accordingly, the FNC's first session was to convene before January 30th, 1972.

In late January 1972, the necessary preparations to summon the FNC to convene its first ordinary session were underway, and the FNC was formed, as the rulers of each emirate issued decisions appointing as many representatives for their respective emirates as was prescribed in the Constitution.

The UAE's first Federal National Council was formed with the following members:

**From the Emirate of Abu Dhabi:**

1. Faraj bin Ali bin Hammouda
2. Rashed bin Aweda
3. Rahma Mohammed al Masood
4. Mohammed Ahmed Al Otaiba
5. Ghanem bin Hamdan
6. Sultan bin Abdullah bin Ghanoum
7. Ali bin Abdullah al Zaabi
8. Mohammed bin Rashed al Mansouri

**From the Emirate of Dubai:**

1. Thani bin Abdullah



2. Helal bin Ahmed Lootah
3. Mohammed bin Abdullah al Moussa
4. Ahmed Mohammed Hareez
5. Saeed bin Jomaa al Nabooda
6. Mohammed bin Mohammed bin Mejren
7. Ahmed Mohammed al Budur
8. Fadel bin Ahmed al Mazrouei

**From the Emirate of Sharjah:**

1. Ahmed bin Nasser bin Ahmed
2. Hamad Abdullah al Owaiss
3. Essa Ali al Mazrouei
4. Mohammed Hamad al Medfaa
5. Mohammed Obaid al Shamsi
6. Khaled bin Ahmed bin Khadem

**From the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah:**

1. Salem Ibrahim Darwish
2. Mohammed Hamid al Basti
3. Ahmed Saeed Ghobash
4. Yussuf bin Omran
5. Mohammed Jassem al Kharaz

6. Ahmed Abdullah bin Jumaa

**From the Emirate of Umm Al Quwain:**

1. Ahmed Nasser al Ossaiba
2. Rashed Saeed Bouqfeil
3. Ahmed Sultan al Jaber
4. Hamad bin Ali al Modad

**From the Emirate of Fujairah:**

1. Abdullah Sultan al Salmi
2. Rashed Mohammed Saif
3. Mohammed Saif Abdullah
4. Saeed Mohammed al Roqayani

**From the Emirate of Ajman:**

1. Mohammed bin Rahma al Ameri
2. Hamad bin Mohammed Abu Shehab
3. Abdullah Ameen
4. Sultan bin Majed Hassan

Once the Federal National Council was formed, the President issued a decree summoning it to convene its first ordinary session of the first legislative chapter on February 12, 1972.





Along with these constitutional procedures, certain executive procedures were required. The FNC at the time was a constitutional entity that had yet to be assigned a headquarters, a budget and a general secretariat to secure its services.

The first headquarters for the FNC was to be the meeting room used by the National Consultative Council at the old palace, Qasr Al Hosn.

A project was developed for the FNC's budget and submitted to the Cabinet for approval and listing in the state budget, which was under advisement at the time prior to the FNC's meeting on February 12, 1972.

Since the establishment of the Federal National Council was an unprecedented experience in the history of the Emirates and of the Union, it was agreed that a first meeting would be held as an introductory conference amongst members and to elect the FNC's speaker and office committee members. The meeting was indeed held on the eve of the first FNC meeting at the Dhiyafa Building in Abu Dhabi City. Members arrived one after the other to complete the quorum. They weren't strangers to one another. After all, the peoples of the Emirates were all members of a single community that comprises many families bonded by kinship or friendship. It was an assembly of beaming faces and gleeful hearts.

And with the prevailing joy, a medley of pouring emotions

could be seen in people's eyes, excitement mixed with a desire to get through the day and venture into tomorrow where only a few hours separated them from the birth of the parliamentary experience.

The 13th of February 1973 was a memorable day in the history of the United Arab Emirates. For the first time, the first session of the Federal National Council was inaugurated, announcing a new age and the birth of a democratic governance system in the Union.

This isn't to say that democracy didn't exist in the Emirates prior to the Union. In fact, it existed in numerous aspects of governance throughout the Emirates, albeit in a different form.

Democracy in the contemporary sense consists of a parliamentary council, which comprises members of the people representing the people and participating in the government of the state. Such form of democracy wasn't known in the Emirates until the establishment of the Federal National Council.

Democracy in essence, however, was present through the time-honoured principles of freedom and consultation known as *Shura*. These are principles ordained by Islam over 14 centuries ago. They are embedded in the Arab civilization and deeply engrained in the souls of Emiratis. It was customary that the emirates' rulers' *majlises* bring together the influential and the sage amongst citizens where they would deliberate and offer



consultation on emirate affairs and occurring events.

Democratic practice in the UAE began under the auspices of Sheikh Sultan bin Zayed Al Nahyan who, expressing the inherent nature of democracy in the country said:

**“Some may think that this society didn’t know democracy in the past, but this is a misconception. Our forefathers believed in the principle of shura and practiced it long before our time. They did what we do today, but in their own way and within the prevalent concepts of their time. The principle of shura shall remain a fundamental tenet in our lives. I can see our children continuing to implement this principle in the ways that agree best with the conditions of their time.”**

Addressing foreign reporters during a meeting with the press on June 10, 1973, Sheikh Zayed said:

**“There are those who claim to be democratic, but it is mere empty words. Democracy for us starts with the fulfillment of justice. Undermining justice goes against democracy... Certainly, justice doesn’t satisfy everyone, but it satisfies the majority of the people.”**

An inspection of the articles of the UAE Constitution pertaining to the Federal National Council reveals Sheikh Zayed's unwavering commitment to the principle of *shura*.

The FNC was inaugurated in a solemn ceremony that was attended by the President His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the Vice President His Highness Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum and all of the members of the Supreme Federal Council, the Rulers of the Emirates, along with a number of crown princes and members of ruling families in addition to the Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, senior officials and heads of Arab and foreign political delegations.

It was a joyful ceremony that started with a speech from the president greeting members of the FNC, wishing them luck in their patriotic endeavours before giving the signal for the inaugural speech.

Writing the first-ever inaugural speech for the FNC wasn't without hurdles. The provisions of the Interim Constitution stipulated that the speech at the inaugural session should relay the state of the federation along with the significant issues and occurrences that took place during that year, and it should describe the government's anticipated projects and reforms for the new session.



The first federal government had been formed on December 9, 1971, only two months before the inaugural FNC session, which didn't allow it sufficient time to agree on projects and develop action plans. The government hadn't achieved much by that time, which presented a bit of a predicament. Other than a few developments on the internal and external scenes, including Ras Al Khaimah Emirate's decision to join the federation, the UAE's membership in the Arab League and the UN, the formation of the federal government and the limited number of special laws that were issued, such as the law on the flag of the UAE and the law on the jurisdictions of ministries, there weren't any noteworthy events or developments to mention in the inaugural speech.

Hence, the speech as it was drafted in the end began with a mention of the aforementioned developments before it went on to centre on the government's resolve to uphold the principles, objectives, foundations, rights and freedoms established in the Interim Constitution..

On the matter of the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah's membership in the federation, the speech said: "With the Grace of Allah, the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah has joined the federation of the United Arab Emirates. During its session on the 25th of *Dhu al Hijjah* 1391 H., corresponding to the 10th of February 1972 A.D., the Supreme Federal Council unanimously approved Ras Al Khaimah's decision in response to national aspirations and to participate in the realisation of the objectives and purposes

set for the federation.”

With regard to the UAE’s accession to the Arab League and the formation of the first federal government, the speech mentioned: “Once the Constitution came into force and the Federal State was established, it was recognised by the rest of the world. The United Arab Emirates became member of the League of Arab States where it shall strive alongside its Arab brethren to support Arab issues, driven by the conviction that the fate of our people is linked to the fate of the Arab Nation as a whole. The UAE has also joined the ranks of the United Nations as a member to take part in its actions driven by our belief in international cooperation for global peace and the prosperity of humanity.”

The speech went on to announce: “The first federal government was formed with members selected among citizens renowned for their competence and loyalty. And as per the provisions of the Constitution pertaining to the stipulation of laws to regulate matters and affairs, a number of federal laws have been issued on the Official Gazette, the federal flag, the Federal Armed Forces, the jurisdictions and powers of ministries and federal employees.”

The address set out the objectives of the federation as follows: “To maintain its independence, sovereignty, security and stability, to fend off any aggression against it as a whole or against any of its member emirates, to protect the rights and freedoms of the



people of the federation, to achieve close cooperation among the member emirates for their joint interests and purposes and for their prosperity and progress in all domains, and to provide for the welfare of all citizens, provided that each member emirate shall respect and observe the independence and sovereignty of each of the other emirates in terms of their respective internal affairs within the confines of this Constitution.”

The speech went on to announce: “The Constitution has established a number of important principles that represent the people’s ideals, values and aspirations for a better life. It consecrated the principles of equality and social justice, security, equal opportunity for all citizens as well as solidarity and compassion. The Constitution upheld the family as the main pillar of society, founded on religion, morality and loyalty to the homeland. It provided for maternal and child care and for the protection of minors and all those unable to care for themselves. It provided for free education, which shall be compulsory for all in the primary phase, in addition to healthcare, professional training and work opportunities for citizens.”

In matters related to rights, freedoms and public duties, the speech stated: “The Constitution clearly states that all individuals shall be equal before the law. No discrimination shall be practiced between citizens of the Union by reason of race, nationality, religious belief or social position. The Constitution has guaranteed citizens all types of personal, social

and economic freedoms.”

In the conclusion of the inaugural speech, it was pointed out that “the people of this country shall concert their efforts to forge a life in this bountiful land. They look up to your august council to realise their hopes for a bright and prosperous future for all of us and for future generations. Your esteemed council can play an important role in the realisation of this people’s hopes and in the establishment of a dignified and prosperous society.”

His Highness saw the Federal National Council as the face of the nation and the echo of its heartbeat. For him, the FNC was the place to relay and discuss the issues that concern the people. This is in addition to the council’s role as a legislative body that supports the government and takes part in national responsibilities.

For Sheikh Zayed, the FNC joined together some of this land’s finest citizens whom, having survived partition and hardship, have now a role to play in the new union and in the march of progress. For him, the council members represented the leaders of the future.

Sheikh Zayed - may he rest in peace, expected the FNC to play a fundamental role in the UAE’s political, economic and social life. He hung his hopes on it and exerted every possible effort to ensure its success.





Speaking of the council members, Sheikh Zayed said: “The members of the Federal National Council are our sons and brothers. We must rely on them and listen to their opinions for theirs is a great responsibility towards the nation and this country. They must follow up on every detail, big and small, and collaborate amongst themselves to be the watchful eyes over their compatriots, and the sentinels guarding this country against harm.”

When it came to the implementation of the principle of consultation, *shura*, Sheikh Zayed was always driven by a spirit of optimism. He had limitless confidence in his own people and saw them as sincere and loyal, which facilitated participation and communication not only between the ruler and his subjects, but also amongst citizens.

In an address to the members of the FNC on July 19, 1972, Sheikh Zayed said: “I ask you to state your honest opinion in all cases brought before you, and don’t pay heed to anyone, for you are not here to represent yourselves, but a whole nation. Your council is a national council and you must demonstrate diligence in the way you approach matters of public interest. You are the faithful keepers of the hopes of this people and you are the sentinels of the future of this country. This council doesn’t submit to the control of any person or body and the Constitution has guaranteed you all your rights, which must

reassure you to express yourselves freely. We shall be open to all your constructive suggestions and shall endeavour to always respond to them adequately.”

*Shura* in Sheikh Zayed’s mind was synonymous with responsibility, which encompasses commitment, hard work, follow-up and accountability.

In the third ordinary session of the first legislative chapter, Sheikh Zayed addressed the members of the FNC and said: “The meeting of your esteemed council in this session completes the constitutional institutions that were established in the federation’s constitution. It signals the real beginning of a new phase in the life of our rising state.”

In his speech before the FNC at the opening of the third session of the third legislative chapter, Sheikh Zayed stressed the importance of the people’s participation in the development of the homeland. “The task of building the future of this country shouldn’t be shouldered by the government alone. The people, whom you represent, must also participate with opinions, thoughts and advice and by hard work, creative effort and sincere cooperation,” he said.

On the 29th of April, 1975, Sheikh Zayed took part in a historical FNC session that represents his first true participation in a debate on the role and obligations of the members in dealing with citizens’ affairs. On that 13th session of the second



ordinary session of the second legislative chapter, Sheikh Zayed addressed the council members saying: “I am pleased to be here among you and to speak to you freely. I appeal to you in all honesty and frankness to be honest with one another and with the people. You need to be honest to be sincere. One can’t be sincere and calculating at the same time. Openness is required amongst the members of a family and the citizens of one country. It is an obligation. We are all in the same boat in this country, we go down together and we survive together.”

For Sheikh Zayed, consultation and freedom are national duties upon each and every member of the population. “Each member of our people is free. Anyone who doesn’t call for freedom is falling short in the performance of his national duty,” he noted.

The customs and traditions of the Emirati society gave life and strength to freedom. The people and their leaders were all members of the same tribe. They often come together in friendly gatherings to discuss matters, voice grievances or resolve issues. In those gatherings known as *majlises*, affairs of public interest were often reviewed. Therefore, it wasn’t unusual that the FNC sessions would include objective criticism to government decisions or policies. These were objective, straightforward opinions put forth in a spirit of responsibility and in the aim of serving the best interests of the country and the citizens.

Sheikh Zayed – may he rest in peace – applied this principle with tribes and tribal chiefs. He was keen to consult with them in all matters and they felt free to offer their views in matters of all types, which left them with the reassuring impression that they were trustworthy partners in the decision-making process.

When planning for the future, his highness would often speak of the past and the many hardships that the people of the Emirates endured.

“Our young will be unaware of the hardships and pains we had to endure unless we tell them and unless they get the chance to listen to their parents and those who came before them. Unless they know of the harsh past, they wouldn’t know the real value of things. We must speak to our young of our youth and our generation. They must be aware of the difficulties we had to overcome... the deadly retardation, which was compounded by segmentation and division. I believe that you remember and value all that, but I ask you to remember it more often and to show more value, for he who doesn’t remember the past will not understand the present. When we tell our children about our past, we help them to value the present and to prepare for the future lest they experience the same deprivation we once experienced. Your children will believe no one more than they believe you. They will take our place in the future and we want them to be able to maintain their happiness, not to neglect it for the sake of luxury and comfort. Luxury and leisure lead to neglect. If one doesn’t work in times of peace and tranquillity,



one wouldn't be able to withstand difficulties in times of hardship," Sheikh Zayed said.

"I believe you all agree with me on this. I don't think there is one person present here today that ignores or doesn't recall those long hot and sour nights we had to endure eight years ago. It was a time of privation and partition. Each emirate was going its own way, all of us under the control of a foreign power. We can't forget what our situation was like back then... let us take stock of the happiness we have achieved today. Whereas once we barely existed to the rest of the world, here we are today known and recognised by the whole world. The UAE has now an important and respected role to play on the global scene. Countries that didn't know us in the past are now requesting to build relations with us. All of this has happened now, the respect... the honour... the glory."

Once Sheikh Zayed was done addressing the members of the Federal National Council, he opened the floor to questions and interventions, listening intently and emphasising the principle of honesty and openness that he impressed upon his listeners at the beginning of the session.

Among the various interventions during the session was an interlocution from a council member about the need to begin drafting the permanent constitution and to take accelerated steps towards completing public service and housing projects, and enhancing citizens' quality of life.

At the conclusion of the session, following the suggestions and opinions he heard from the floor, Sheikh Zayed replied: “In truth, the government is working day and night to improve the life of citizens. Capabilities and resources are useless unless we use them to provide healthcare and education and to facilitate transport and other essential services for our citizens.”

And he went on to add:

**“I call on the speaker of the house and the council members to direct their questions and inquiries directly to the members of the Cabinet and to me should they notice any shortcomings in matters related to the interests of citizens. I am prepared to talk to you at any time. If there are any reasons for such shortcomings, I shall inform you of them. Just as I ask you to be forthcoming with me, I promise to always be forthcoming with you.”**

Sheikh Zayed always insisted on attending the FNC opening sessions, demonstrating his support and asserting his keenness to bring the parliamentary experience to fruition. The FNC sessions would often end with a friendly gathering between Sheikh Zayed and the members.



Sheikh Zayed was a man who practiced what he preached. He truly believed in openness and consultation. He never sought to impose his views, but rather opted for democratic discussion and deliberation with council members. In fact, he thought openness amongst the members of the same community is an act of faith.

Freedom of expression was honoured not only by Council members, but by all the Emirati people. It was only natural for such freedom to be felt throughout the Council, as never has it been subjected to oppression, injustice or tyranny in the land of the Emirates. Never has it suffered apprehension, harm, whether to people or property, or any other form of pressure likely to restrict or smother it or to push it into some dark debasing corner. This is why freedom has remained uninhibited and pure in the land of the Emirates, alive and prosperous, spoken by the tongue and felt by the heart.

Such freedom drew its strength and growth from the traditions and customs that lie at the heart of the Emirati community. The ruler and his people were but one tribe, united by councils and gatherings where conversations were held, complaints brought forth, issues settled and public matters and interests discussed. It was in these councils that veils were lifted, boundaries were removed, hearts and minds were opened up and the shepherd was brought closer to his parish. These councils offered



a breeding ground and the right climate for this freedom to survive and grow.

It was not uncommon to hear objective criticism resounding in the Council hall, of positions, decisions or policies adopted by the government. The criticism was dished out directly, ungarnished, out of national valour and zeal, out of keenness on the interests of the nation and the people and out of a clear desire for reform and rectification.

In first five years of the UAE's life, namely the first constitutional phase, the voices raised and the interests and priorities expressed within the council were all aimed at helping citizens, improving their standard of living, creating a change in their lifestyle and compensating for their long years of pre-federation hardships. The new State was one of federation and it went on to prosper as oil production increased. It had the means to implement any programme or plan towards achieving general wellbeing and improving the life of its people.

Citizen development affairs revolved around several main topics, namely providing education and employment opportunities, expanding the scope of public services and providing housing.

These matters took up the greatest part of the council's work and were echoed in different aspects thereof. Indeed, citizen development was omnipresent in every reply the council drafted



to annual opening speeches, in every topic it discussed, in every recommendation it raised and in every comment it made on general budgets and closing accounts, and the council fought to rebuild life in the land of the Emirates and to achieve a better future for the country.

In 1975, the council announced its policy in reply to the annual opening speech as follows: “Our national journey on the road to development should seek to develop citizens and raise people’s standard of living in this good land. It has become incumbent upon us to make up for what our citizens have missed out on and to spare no effort in preparing them to take on the responsibility, play a pioneering role in building their country and keep up with modern living standards along with the development, progress and prosperity these entail.”

At the beginning, the council’s interests did not extend beyond the scope of the Emirates as it had no external parliamentary aspirations at any level whatsoever, the reason being the novelty of the experience which necessitated its focusing on internal affairs. The heavy burden laid upon its shoulders kept it busy from any external prospects. The council directed its potentials towards two main issues: conducting its external affairs with the government on the one hand, and conducting its internal affairs in its meetings and in the General Secretariat on the other hand.

The hopes placed on the FNC and the pressure exerted by the public opinion following its activity pushed it to pursue its

efforts in a political climate activated with news of its meetings, of its committees' sessions, of the discussions about draft laws and public matters going on at these sessions and of the recommendations which often ensued.

All that was new to the Emirates, arousing the public's interest in public matters and raising political awareness. News of the FNC was subject to comments in private *majlises* and elsewhere.

These comments which reached the ears of the council members, and the press, which recorded the minutes of the council sessions and published interesting shots and quotes, were, among other incentives, the driving force which turned the session day into an eventful one.

The FNC's interest in foreign affairs was aroused upon receiving an invitation to be the guest of the Kuwaiti National Assembly in the State of Kuwait for a couple of days.

The FNC accepted the invitation without hesitation in a bid to meet its Kuwaiti counterpart, share its experience and exchange opinions.

The visiting delegation was welcomed by the Kuwaiti National Assembly, but also by the Kuwaiti government and people, and received all sorts of invitations throughout its stay. Kuwait's interest in this visit did not come as a surprise as this meeting was a first in the region at parliamentary level, not to mention that it brought together brothers whose friendships,



neighbourly ties and relationships established by marriage were rooted in history.

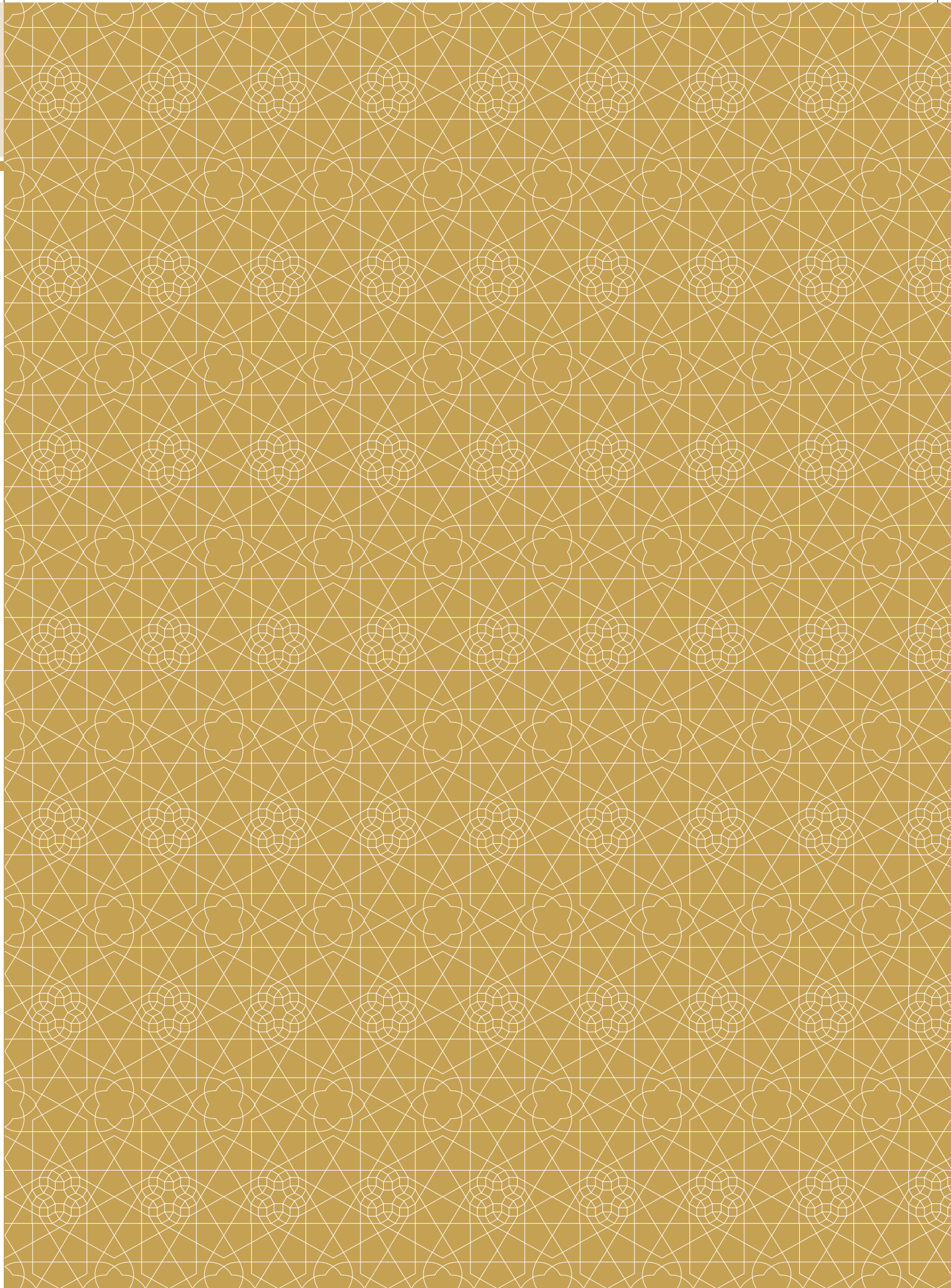
The visit represented a golden opportunity for the council members to get acquainted with Kuwait's long and rich experience and became even more aware of the key role played by parliaments and the national responsibilities they take on.

The Federal National Council is a source of enrichment for political activity, a beacon of freedom and democracy and a driving force for growth and progress in the Emirates. It was not established on the spur of a temporary historical moment, but came from a sagacious political decision, to stay, to go on and to evolve with the development of the country's federal institutions.

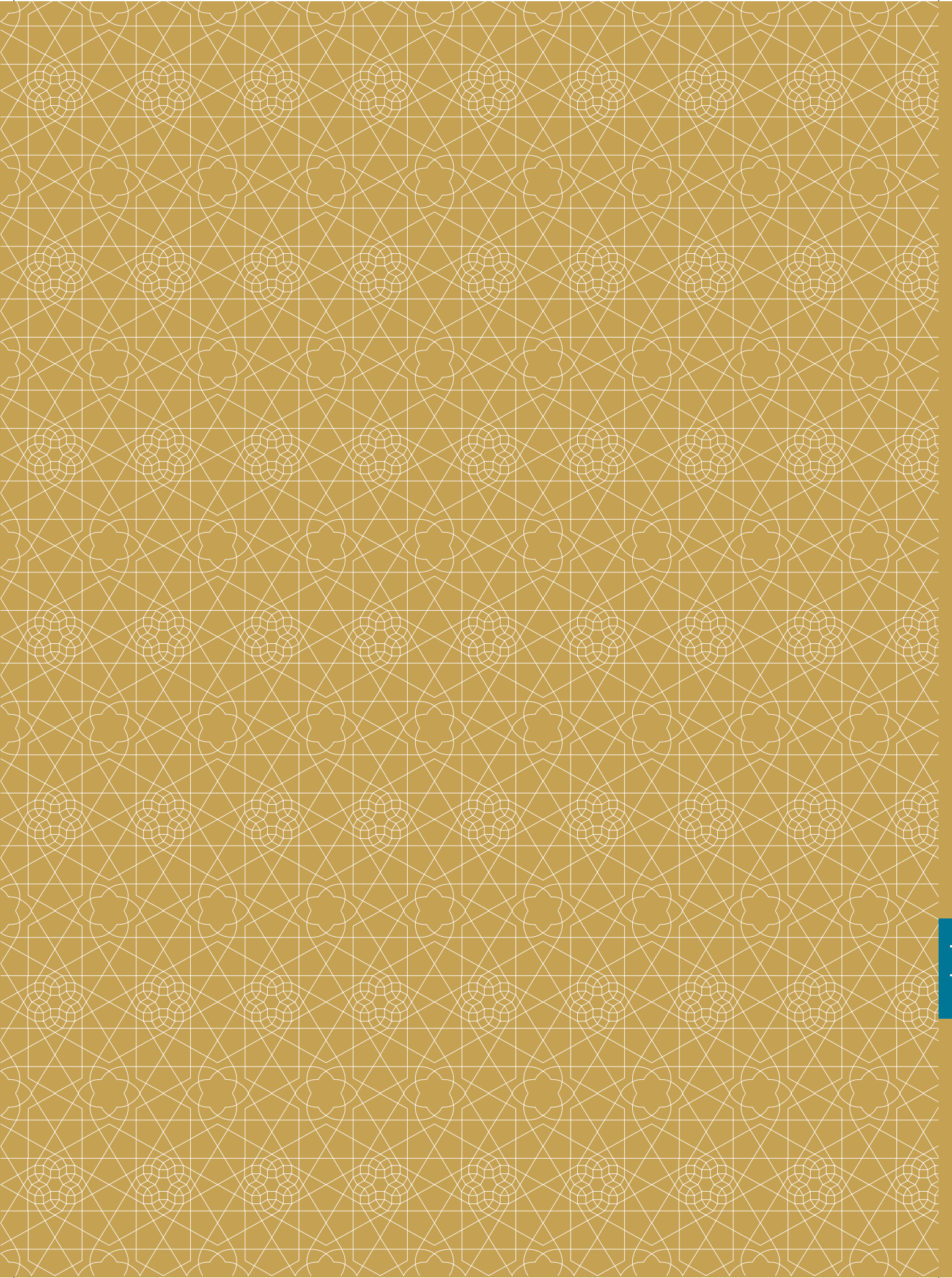
It is an experience stemming from the principles of consultation which first took root in the history, values and practices of the region, where the concepts of consultation and dialogue have been instilled in the minds of the people and adopted by the leaders in conducting national affairs.

Sheikh Zayed has made history where motivation abounds. A nation's history, in some cases, can be a burdensome and crippling. In other cases, it can be a source of vigour and motivation. The history of the Emirates belongs to the latter category. It is a history manifesting Sheikh Zayed's authenticity, wisdom, resolve and will, which have translated aspirations,

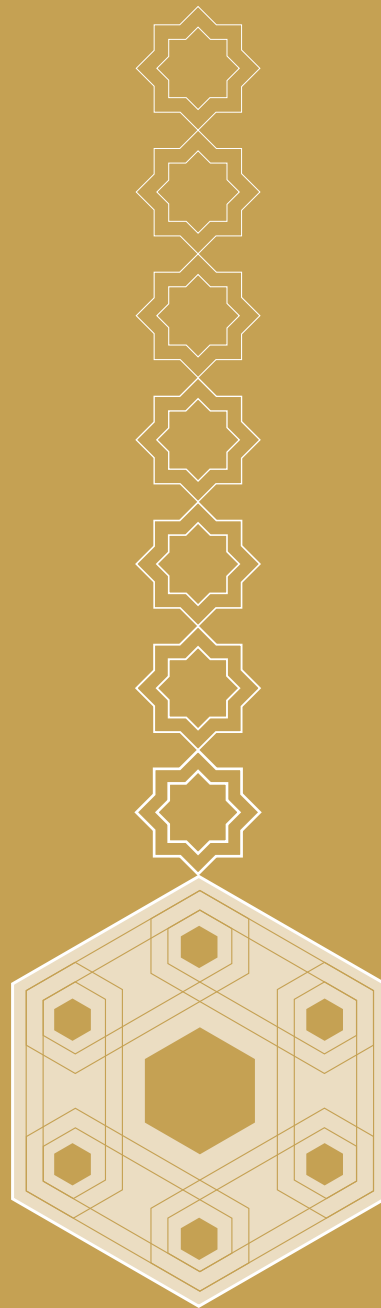
hopes and dreams into realities.



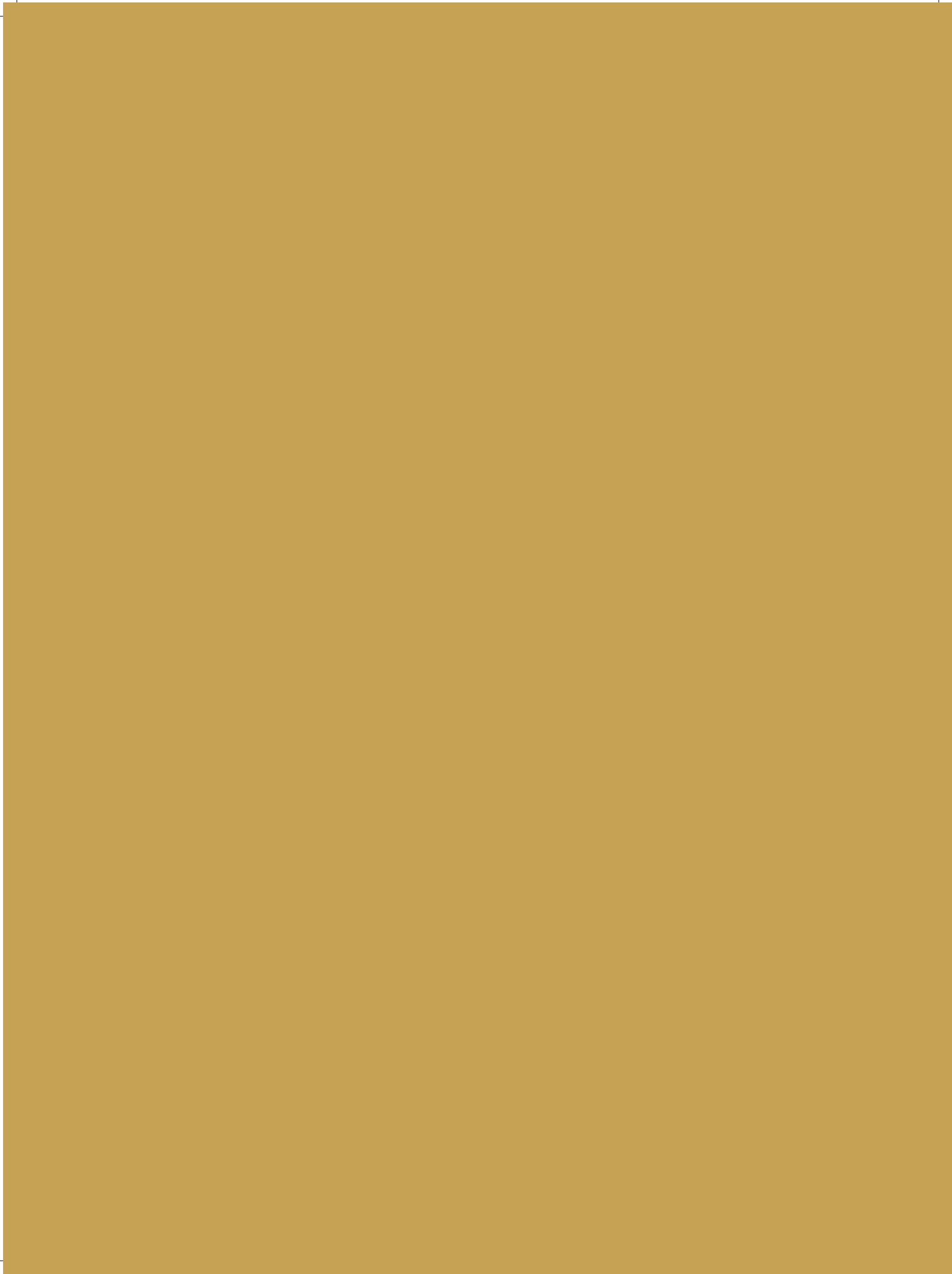






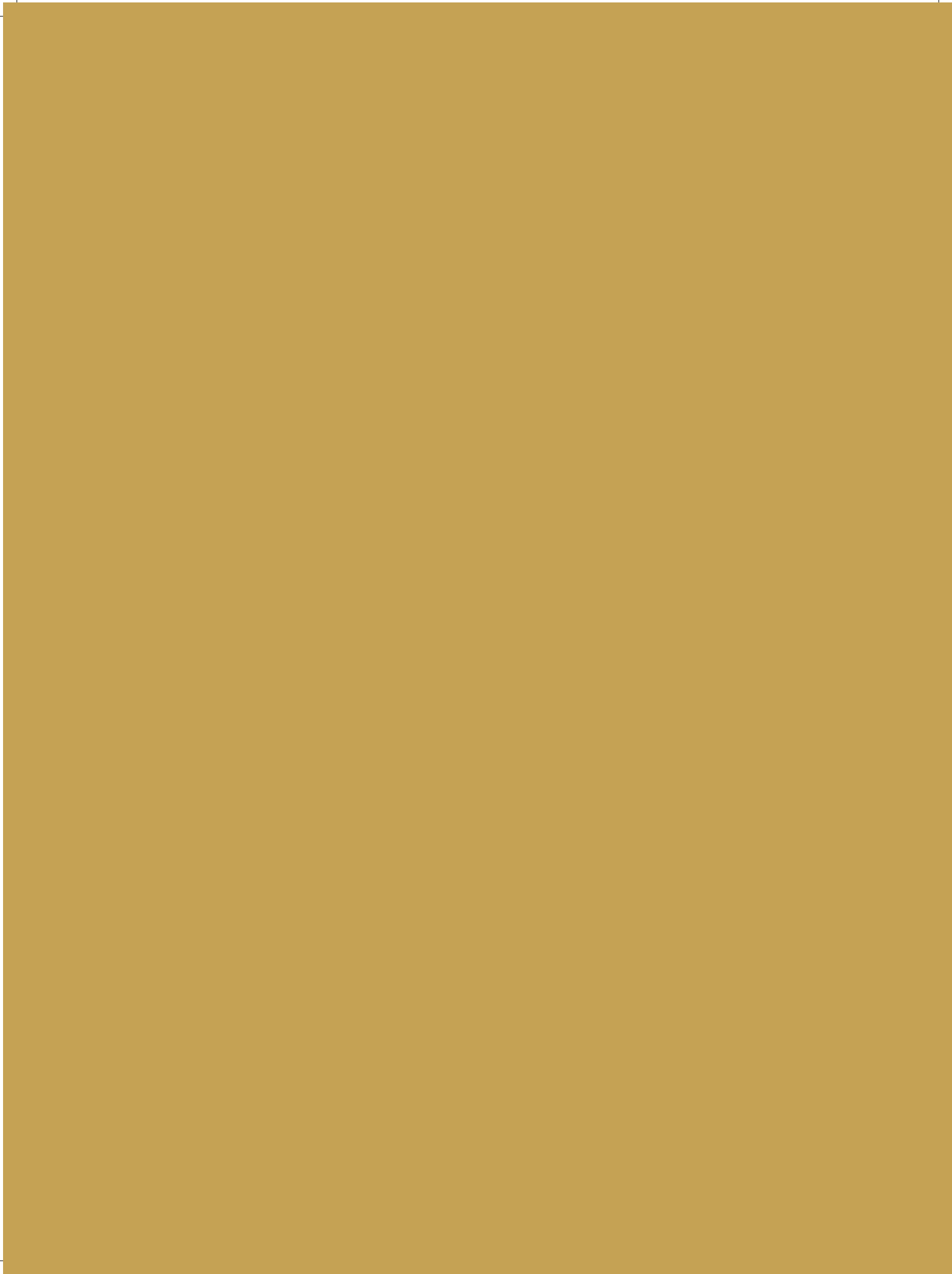


# Images of History



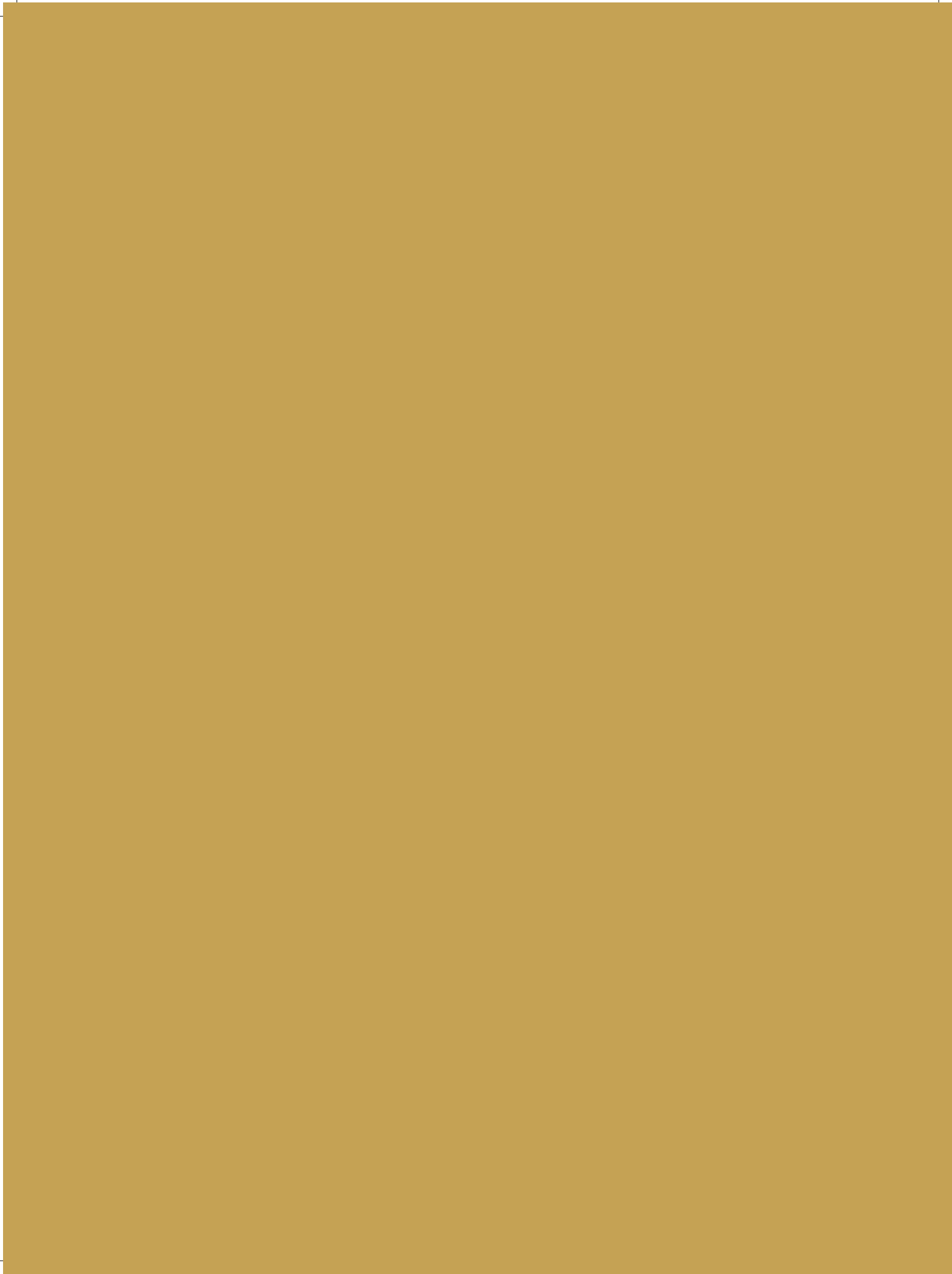


The late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.





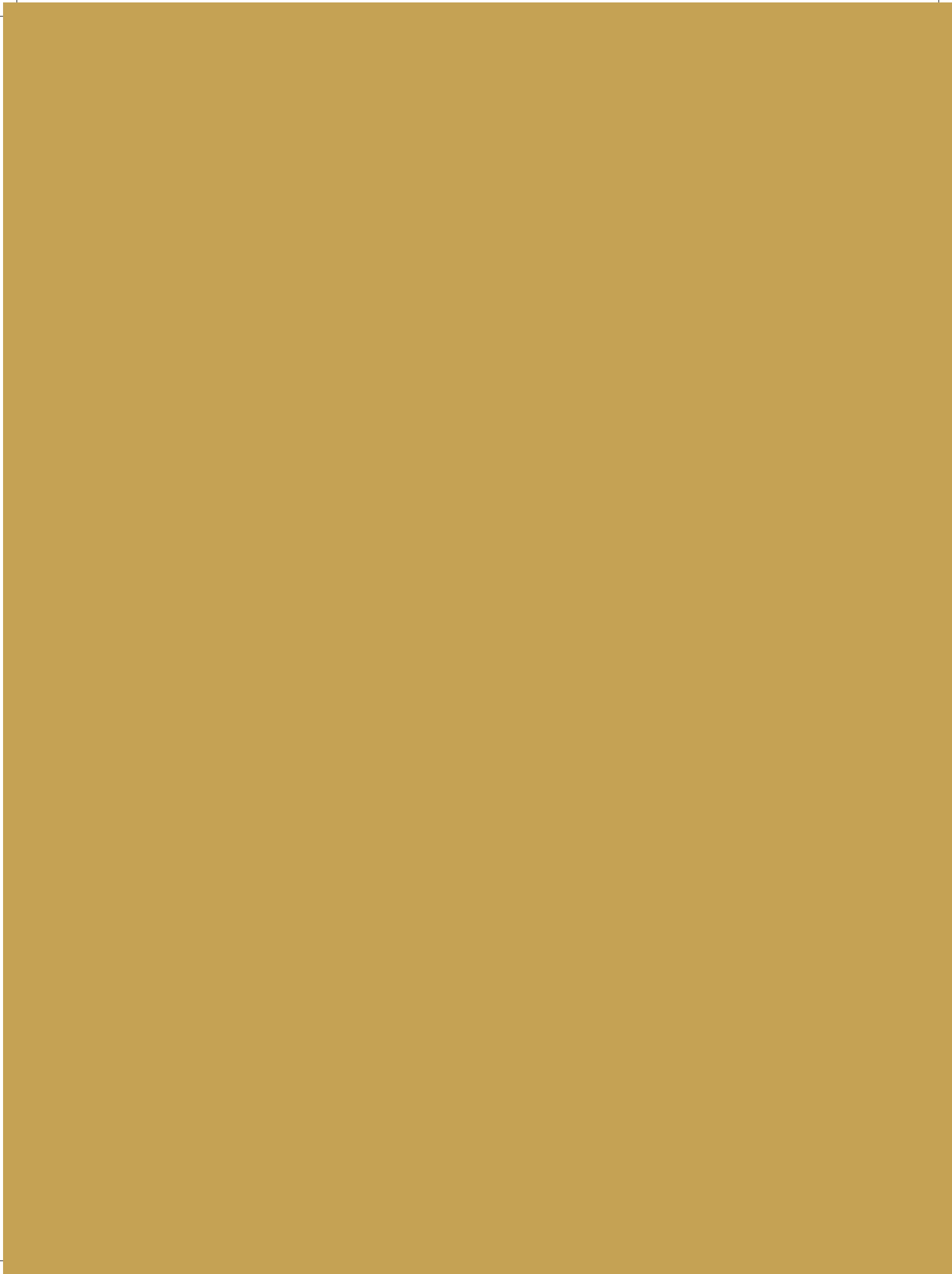
Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan  
and Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum





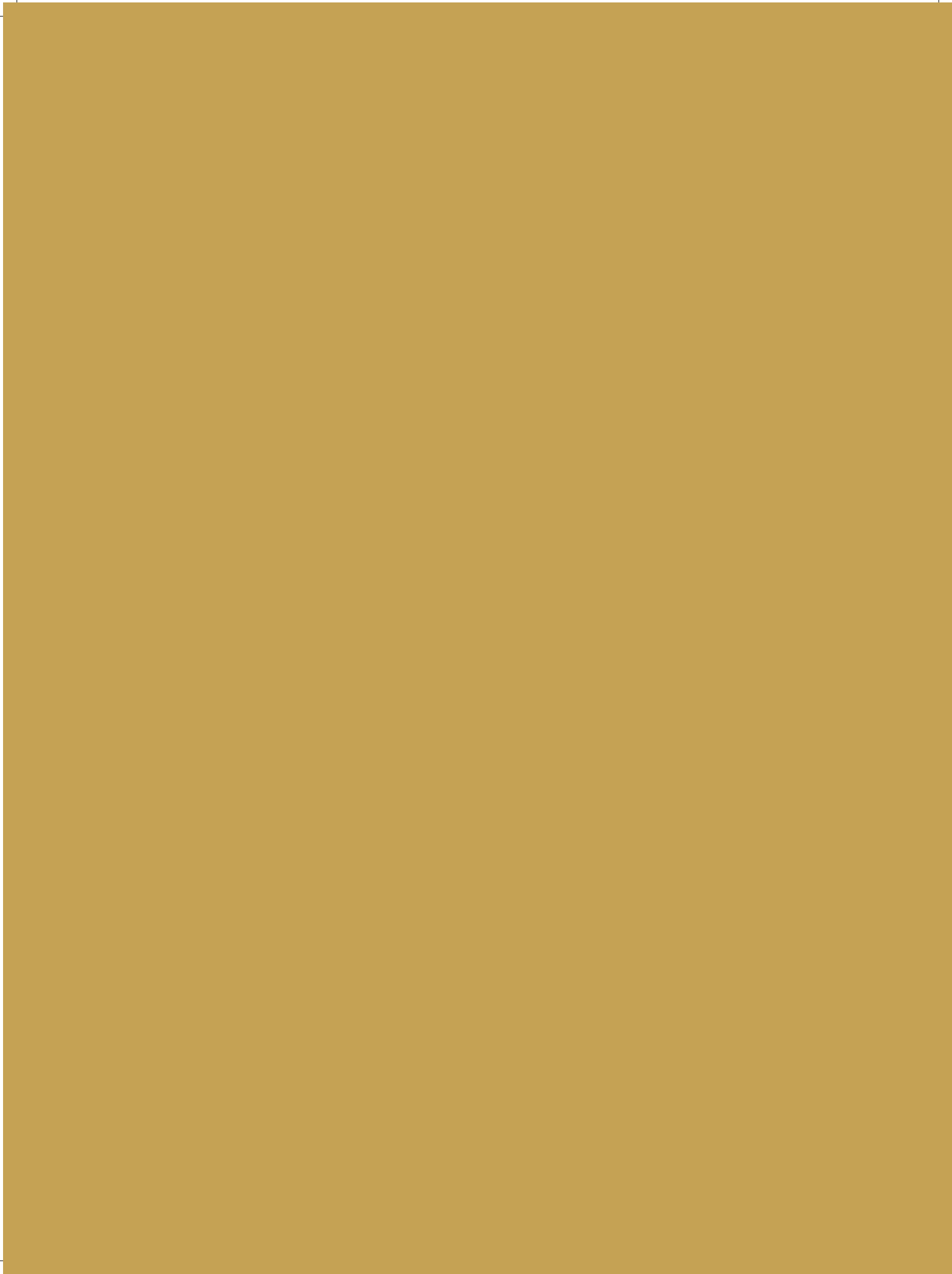
Supreme Federal Council meeting, February, 1972





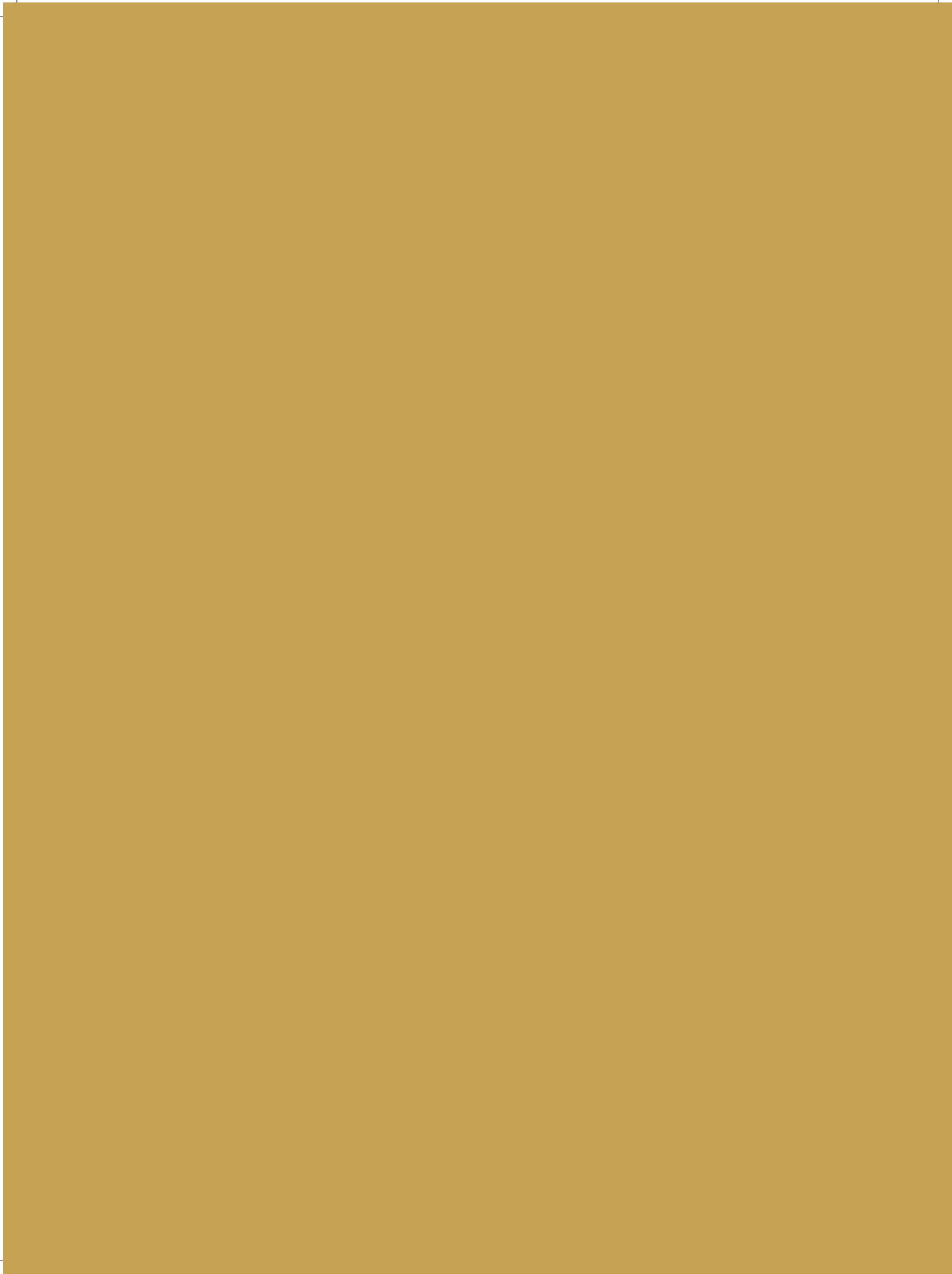


Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan delivering the inaugural speech  
at the Federal National Council opening session





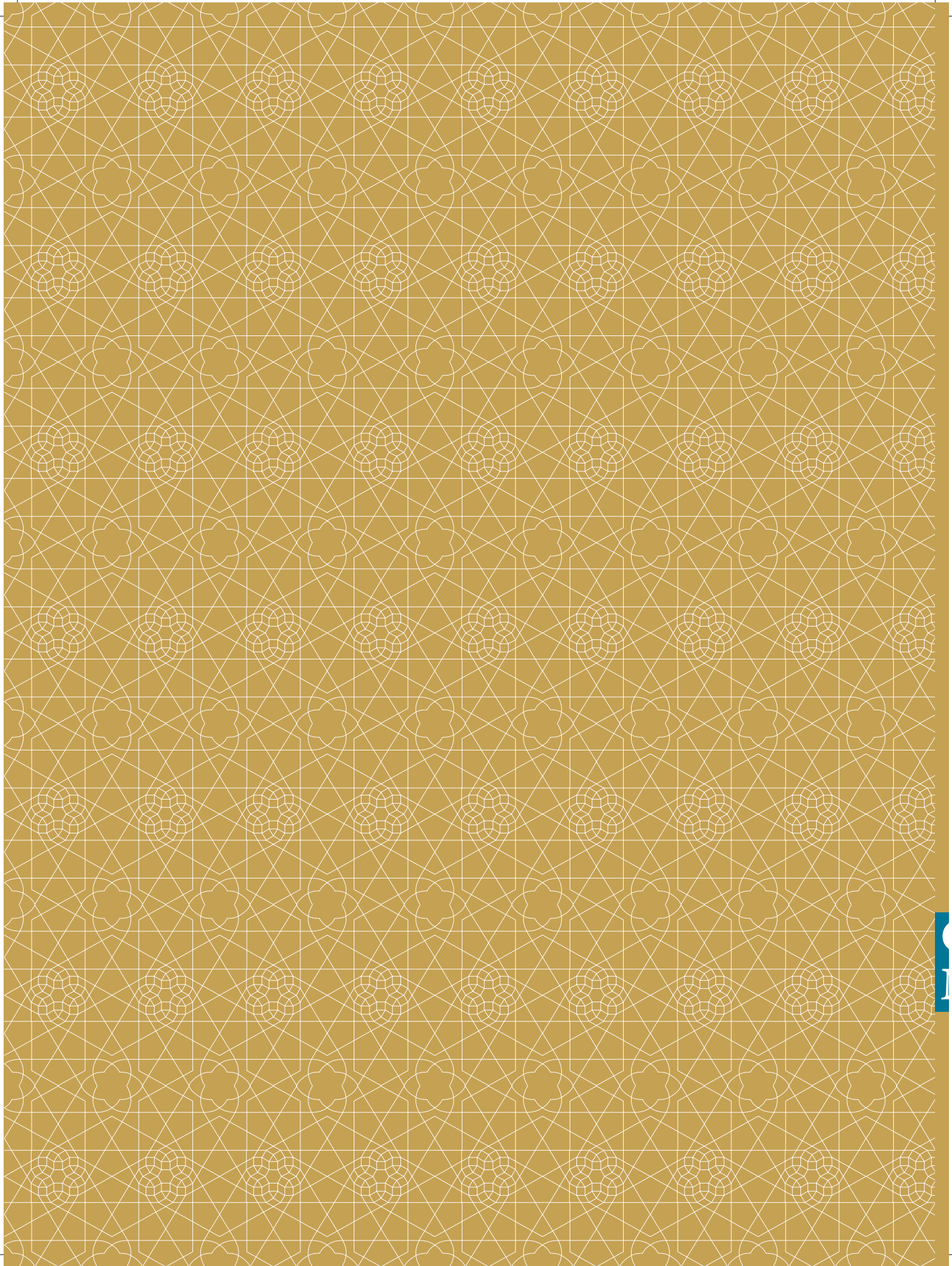
Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan with members of the Federal National Council  
at its inaugural session



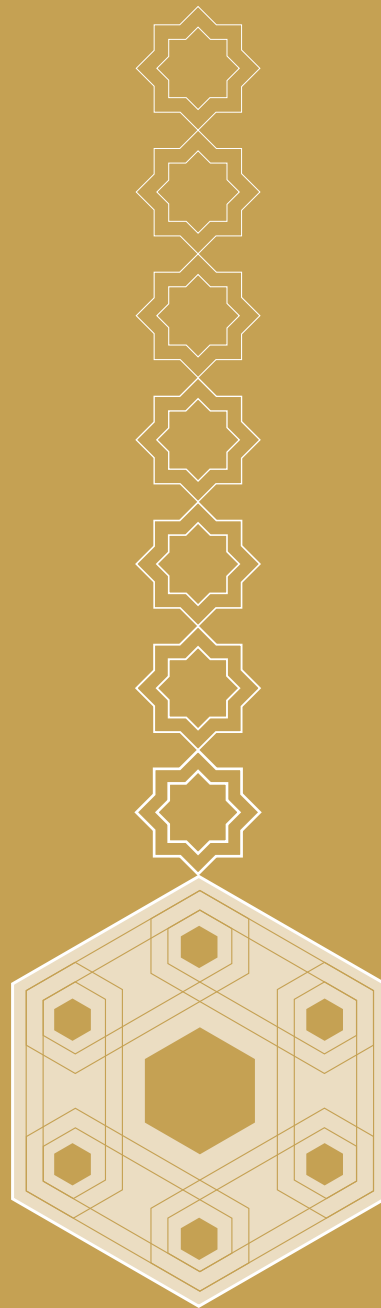


Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan with members  
of the National Consultative Council of Abu Dhabi at its inaugural session



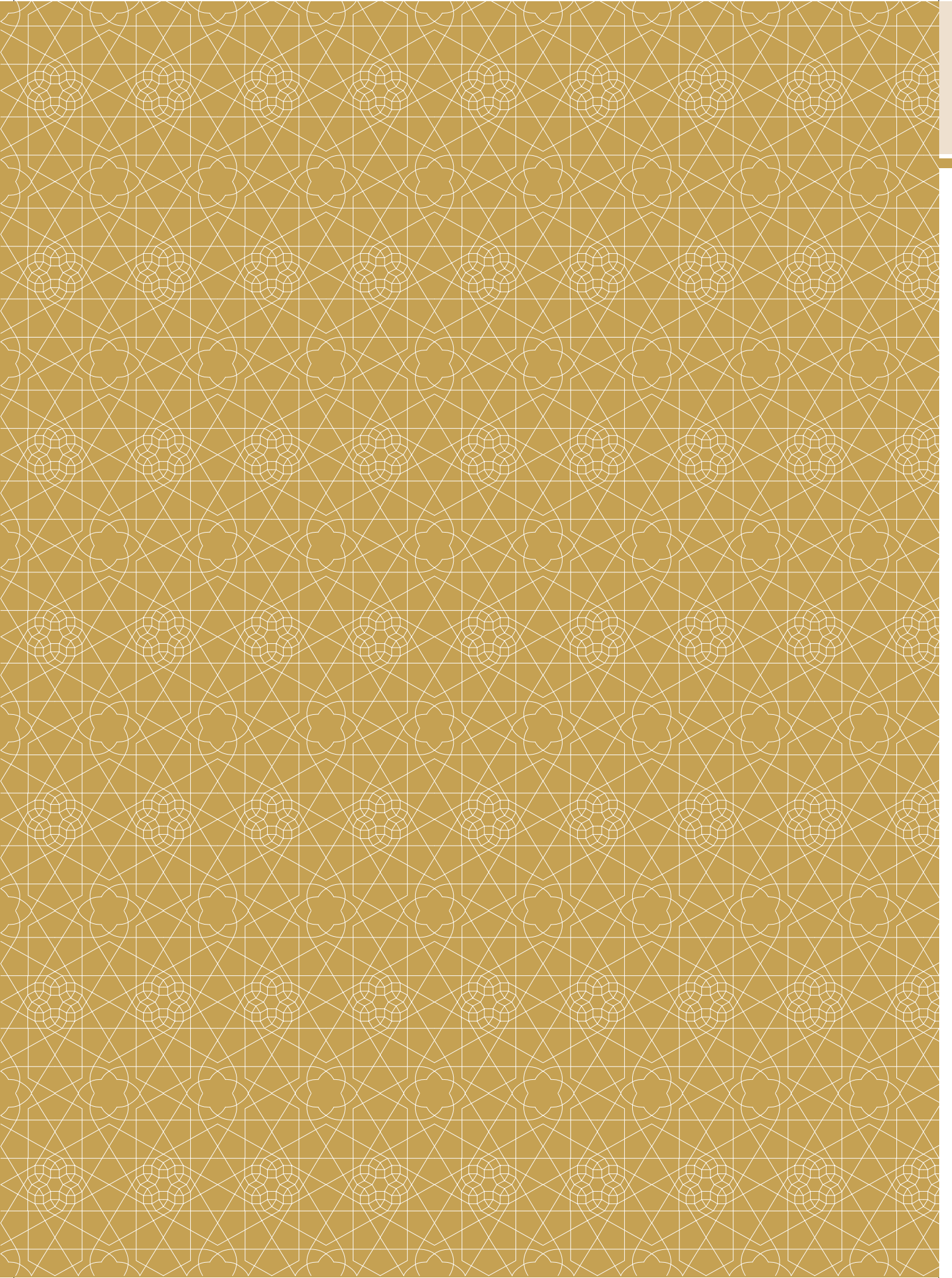






## Chapter II

# Good Governance: Modern-State Building





## Good Governance: Modern-State Building

All developed nations of the world derived the ingredients of their creation and progress from the vision of their leaders and builders, as well as their hopes and aspirations for a collective future. A quick look into the most successful experiences in the modern world reveals the particularly important role of leaders in the construction, advancement, and development of their nations. The progress of these nations is the result of bold ambitions, eyeing broader horizons and greater attainments.

Throughout history, key figures have achieved greatness thanks to their ground-breaking ideas, superb feats, and sound planning – whether it is immediate planning for their generational peers or for the future of the community’s youth. These figures knew that the efficient use of intellect and resources is the key to building a solid foundation for development in any society that seeks to have a strong foothold in human civilisation, bearing in mind the constant fluidity of data, knowledge, and opportunity that has come to characterise modernity.

The UAE’s journey of progress and sustainable development is one of the most successful experiences in today’s world, at a time when scientific developments have altered all assumptions

and walks of life, and raised developmental challenges that can only be overcome by keeping abreast of scientific advancement and having a strong will that recognises, amid constraints, opportunities for growth.

That is what His Highness Sheikh Zayed, may he rest in peace, had done. He was fully aware of the number, variety, and dimensions of the challenges that lie ahead, even before the establishment of the UAE on December 2, 1971, and he pondered the best ways to overcome them, using his vision, wisdom, and clairvoyance and holding on to a strong will and confidence in a bright future. Indeed, Sheikh Zayed led an exceptional march that culminated in the birth of a modern state while continuously engaging in rigorous planning to keep pace with the requirements of his time.

Sheikh Zayed was convinced that the creation of the federation must go hand in hand with construction, development, and ample spending, the pillars of a brighter future. The formation of the UAE and its institutions had to be done on solid foundations to help the nation – state and citizens – stand the test of whatever challenges that may lie ahead.

“Anyone with enough experience knows that erecting a building is pretty simple,” Sheikh Zayed used to say. “All you need is engineers and building materials. But dealing with people is an entirely different story. You can’t just bring them on your side overnight. Convincing them of anything takes time. Then, even



when you do, what one person might accept, another might reject. So you need adjustment, persistence, and time, for it is not easy to persuade people to change their convictions and habits.”

Sheikh Zayed’s perspicacity led him to realise that, though it would require tremendous efforts, getting his entire people behind the idea of change was perfectly possible. He knew it would take an untold amount of time and patience to fulfil every wish and please everyone. His strategy was to convince his people with actions, not with words; he believed that, when the time comes, people will see real-life accomplishments with their own eyes and would, if hitherto unconvinced, reconsider their positions.

Sheikh Zayed considered the building of state institutions and the reinforcement of federal authorities a top priority. “Federal authorities must issue the laws and regulations referred to in the constitution swiftly so we can achieve quick progress and provide a better life for all our people,” His Highness said in his keynote address at the opening of the second ordinary session of the first legislative chapter of the Federal Supreme Council in 1972. He regarded the UAE as a natural extension of the region’s history without losing sight of the specificities of each emirate.

Zayed wanted to build a modern state, so he set out to formulate policies that preserve the state as an entity, ensure

its continuity, and solidify its pillars while holding on to the highest principles and values. He focused on reinforcing the state's federal authorities by issuing the laws stipulated in the constitution and derived from the Islamic Sharia, in line with the country's needs and reality and in such a way as to keep up with modern developments.

“We aspire to fulfil many of our dreams by reinforcing the federal authorities and eliminating the obstacles that stand in the way of progress and development,” he said. “We must also strive to issue the most consequent laws and regulations in a rapid manner in order to strengthen the ties between the different emirates and protect their respective peoples' rights and liberties.”

Sheikh Zayed played a central role in injecting life into a land that was, until then, under civilisation's radar. He succeeded in utilising his country's economic resources efficiently, setting in motion a revolution in urbanisation, construction, irrigation, agriculture, trade, services, communications, and transportation.

In spite of all the difficulties and the lack of stability in the region, he was able to build a pacifist, vibrant, mature, and flourishing state, able to evolve in peace and stability. Sheikh Zayed's wisdom can be deduced from the values and principles he stood up for, advocating peace and rejecting war and conflict. He always called for prudence in decision-making, showing a humane and realistic model of leadership.



During his bountiful rule, Zayed focused also on building human capacity, prioritising the well-being of citizens in his approach to social development. In his view, “true wealth is not money; it is men. They are the real strength that makes us proud and the lush plantation that gives us shade.”

Indeed, Sheikh Zayed was known for his eagerness to meet with the sons and daughters of the UAE, whether inside or outside the country, particularly to encourage the students and scholars among them to attain academic excellence. He also used to visit Emirati citizens at their workplaces, in their towns or villages across the country, staying true to his open-door policy.

“Our door is open and will always be that way,” he used to say. “I ask Allah to help me aid the oppressed. Any person with a complaint can talk to me directly (...) I am always happy to meet you, and all I wish for is to please all of you, and all you have to do is meet me and you will find me ready to respond to any of your needs. As I always say: ‘This wealth is yours, and there are no boundaries between us’.”

Sheikh Zayed understood that building human capacity starts with a good education. He wanted education to be an incentive, a catalyst for innovation and initiative, a springboard that can help the underprivileged unlock their potential.

Also, Zayed wanted an education system that promotes a sense



of national belonging, defines national identity, and entrenches social and cultural values while enriching and developing them. He refused to passively or indiscriminately reproduce West-imported success stories, conscious as he was of his people's cultural specificities and their strong adherence to a distinctive set of traditions, values, and beliefs. Yet he did not see these cultural specificities as a hindrance to development projects; rather, he regarded them as a stimulator that strengthens the feeling of national pride and political belonging.

Consistent with his conviction that a successful development effort ought to be socially inclusive, Sheikh Zayed opened the country's schools, institutes, and universities to applicants from all sorts of socio-economic backgrounds.

To keep up with the giant advances made in science, class after class of Emirati students on government scholarships were flown to the world's most developed nations to learn from their experience and know-how, and to gain insight into the various ways in which technology can be harnessed to better serve growth and development.

"In the UAE, we started from scratch," Sheikh Zayed once said. "However, now I can say that we are catching up with our more developed brothers. We are focusing on developing our human forces and social services in the fields of education and health. We are also preparing our future generations to carry the torch, because we are mindful of the importance of making



preparations for the future and overcoming any obstacles.”

Zayed also knew that, in order to trigger a successful civilisational renaissance and galvanise growth, education funding must become a priority. “Science and culture are the cornerstones of any developed nation, and the foundations of every great civilisation,” he would say. “Civilisation, industry, or just sufficient farming would have never come to be without some form of scientific progress, and it is only with an excellent education system that we can bring up a generation capable of overseeing and managing the factories and projects that are being built all around the country. Only our own children can guarantee us a strong and sustainable industrial sector, and that is why we must provide education and culture to every individual in this country.”

In parallel with these human-development efforts, the country was diligently developing its infrastructure – airports, housing, hospitals, telecommunication networks, ports, police forces, and a strong army to protect the nation from aggression. All this requires the introduction of technology into people’s lives and into the country’s various economic sectors.

Also, agriculture in the desert using old irrigation techniques became ineffective, hence the more pressing need for new technologies that can save time, money, and sweat. The local communities accepted the changes that ensued as they saw the positive outcomes in their own lives. This also exemplified

Zayed's belief that the human being is both the means and the end of development, and that the objective of economic development is, essentially, to provide people with new options.

In Sheikh Zayed's view, human development must have two main dimensions. The first one should focus on human growth in various life stages; that is the nurturing of people's skills as well as their physical, mental, psychological, and spiritual strengths. He once said: "A graduate must never feel that his work is finished once he obtains a degree and finds a job. If he thinks like that, he will be the one who is actually finished, and I would consider him finished, and he would become of no use to his people and country. And if one day he says that he will stop doing his job because he has achieved his goals, he should be told that he has failed his nation and his people. The right thing for him to do is to keep working for as long as he is physically fit and being paid for it."

The second important dimension of human development, in Sheikh Zayed's view, consists in investing natural resources and economically-generated wealth in the development of human potential through upgrades to institutional structures that bring out – and make use of – different competencies within the community.

"Oil and the other resources that Allah bestowed upon us are a blessing that we must preserve and use in ways that best serve our people and nation," Sheikh Zayed said. "Without



this great wealth, we would not have been able to build these blessed economic and urban structures. But we must invest our oil resources in other economic areas, and not rely on oil as our only source of revenue. We must diversify our resources and build economic projects that provide our sons and daughters with a stable, prosperous life.”

Indeed, His Highness insisted on diversification away from oil and the creation of economic, agricultural, industrial, commercial, touristic, and cultural resources. In fact, he invested oil revenues to develop these sectors and avoid dependency on foreign actors.

The late Sheikh Zayed also tried his best to eradicate the great disparities between social classes and, also, between the city and the countryside. As a result, new cities have emerged in the desert, complete with schools and amenities, and all the makings of a prosperous life. Such achievements would have never been attained without Zayed’s determination to provide his people with equal opportunities for success.

These achievements brought a feeling of security both to the Emirati people and to the expatriate community in the UAE. Besides the public-welfare institutions it has created, the state also offers a wide range of quality public services – including education, healthcare, and transportation – in a land when, not too long ago, none of those services existed.

The economic environment also gained in stability owing to the passing of relevant laws and regulations, and to the new opportunities made available to individuals and groups. The state also built strong cooperation with a number of Gulf, Arab, Muslim, and other foreign countries. All this enabled Emirati citizens to develop a strong sense of belonging to the UAE, a nation that has become a paragon of progress around the world.

Sheikh Zayed's leadership model was result-oriented, driven by concrete decisions, not by sloganeering. Zayed's unconditional support for the work of the Federal National Council (FNC) was key to reinforcing the pillars of the federation which would, in turn, achieve substantial gains for the people of the UAE, elevating the status and prestige of their country in Arab and international venues.

Observers would agree that the relationship between Sheikh Zayed – who was known for adopting a political style based on the principle of *Shura* – and the FNC is based on mutual trust; trust in the top leadership's ability to lead the march of progress, and trust in the FNC's valuable role as a supportive partner in the journey towards a brighter future. The developmental projects led by Sheikh Zayed across the country, with the support and follow-up of the FNC, are a testament to this harmonious relationship.

As a constitutional institution, the FNC played a positive role



in carrying out Sheikh Zayed's vision for a strong federation where Emirati citizens lead prosperous lives, his vision for a nation that brings a message of peace to the world, a message of openness to cooperation, a message that champions justice and rejects extremism and terrorism, a message that shows the true character of the Arab-Muslim civilisation, to which the UAE belongs.

The FNC had been tasked by Sheikh Zayed to actively participate in development efforts, to represent the interests of the UAE people, and to help steer them to a life of pride, prosperity, and dignity.

Zayed's successful leadership is mainly due to his closeness with his people. He did not discriminate between notable figures of the community, tribal leaders, or regular folks. He met with people from all classes and listened to their concerns, hopes, and needs.

In his book *The Desert Falcon*, Claud Morris, who met with Sheikh Zayed in 1974, writes:

**“I sat to his left in his majlis (...) He received people for consultation, to listen to them, and to spend time with them. I soon realised the advantage of the majlis: It is a democratic institution that has surpassed, many times over, the stiff progress in much**

**of Western politics (...) Anyone can enter this council without previous appointment or formalities.”**

Indeed, Zayed’s close bond with his people provided him with a solid foundation for success, and he used his interpersonal skills to further promote this relationship. For instance, he closely monitored the work of the Federal National Council, interacting with its members over the issues brought to the floor.

This close relationship reflected the respect and appreciation that FNC members had for Zayed’s outstanding leadership and wisdom, and his uncanny ability to find a way out of crises and lead his people to safety and stability. Similarly, this relationship highlighted Zayed’s confidence in his people’s ability to carry their country forward and undertake the tasks of working together and consulting with one another, whether they are members of the FNC, of the executive authority, or just members of Emirati society.

The collaboration between Sheikh Zayed and the FNC would continue to develop, forming a unique experience in the management of internal and external affairs based on *Shura* (consultation), mutual understanding, and care for the country’s best interests. It also carried a message of openness, tolerance, peace, and cooperation to all the peoples of the world, and a message of unity and solidarity to Arabs.





Since the birth of the UAE federation on December 2, 1971, the state gradually encouraged public participation. Given the circumstances of the time, the adoption of a provisional constitution in 1971 was undeniably a wise decision; the union of the emirates was still a fledgling experience that carried the hopes of an entire nation. By the mid-1990s, when a definitive constitution was adopted, the experience had gained in maturity and stability.

In the following statement, Zayed paints a true and honest image of how life was before and after the union of the emirates: “Before the Union, some cities in the UAE did not have a single school, and now they have dozens of modern schools. Some cities did not have a pharmacy, but now they have numerous hospitals and clinics. Other cities did not have a paved road, and now they have many modern roads that facilitate the movement of people across the nation from the desert to the cities.”

Back in the early 1970s, at the opening ceremony of the FNC’s third ordinary session of the first legislative chapter, Sheikh Zayed said: “The last session of your honourable Council has seen numerous achievements, from the continuous strengthening of the country’s legislative structure to the examination of our people’s critical issues. And the Council’s genuine cooperation has allowed for the accomplishment of a large and crucial set of federal laws that had been presented by the government.”

Later on, during the FNC's third ordinary session of the second legislative chapter, held on November 18, 1975, Sheikh Zayed commended the FNC's role in debating and monitoring the implementation of legislative recommendations and, as such, its support for the government and its institutions. "Our people firmly believe in Shura, which explains the trust and respect they have for you, but also shows how much they expect from you," he noted.

Democratic practice at the FNC and the collaborative relationship between it and the government proved that the two sides had a clear and shared understanding of the country's historical context in the federation's early years. This, coupled with the feelings of brotherliness between FNC members and government officials, prevented any form of hegemony from either side, and added to the affability and constructiveness of their dialogues, eliminating any need for the government to use its constitutional power against the council.

The FNC's areas of interest and concern mainly stemmed from the needs and troubles of the community, as well as its hopes and aspirations. In this sense, the FNC mirrored the social and psychological evolution of society.

Generally, developed societies have just as many issues and problems as in developing nations. The nature of the issues, however, largely differs, and one can tell the level of development of a given society just by looking at its main concerns.



Sheikh Zayed had his own model of leadership. In a country that had never known such a structured form of rule, he brought in a set of federal institutions to reinforce state organisation and ensure efficient coordination between federal and local agencies. And, instead of replacing existing emirate-level structures with new institutions, Zayed introduced a number of well-funded ministries and departments capable of carrying out the desired change and development.

In practice, the federal system has instilled a natural complementarity between federal and local institutions in the management of state affairs, a model that speaks to Sheikh Zayed's extraordinary ability to create seamless ties between modern-state structures and the more traditional frameworks that have proven their relevance since the birth of the UAE. Zayed also created professional elites that have an unwavering loyalty for the country and dedicate their careers to its growth.

Sheikh Zayed also wanted federal institutions to become a unifying factor and a provider of job opportunities for young Emiratis who would, in time, acquire the necessary experience to perform the duties and missions required by the modern state. By doing so, Zayed established a solid structure for a fledgling society, a structure based on the rule of law and ready to benefit – and profit from – these young Emirati men and women who were in the vanguard of federal-government work.

This successful march towards building a flourishing modern

state, led by Sheikh Zayed for more than 30 years, has continued to gain momentum under His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE President, whose determination, strong will, and strategic vision is making the UAE shine even brighter.

In his speech on the occasion of the 34th UAE National Day in December 2005, Sheikh Khalifa indicated that “the next phase of the state’s march forwards – and the developments and reforms taking place in the region – require that the Federal National Council play a bigger role in assisting, guiding, and supporting the government.” He noted that promoting the role of the Federal National Council by electing half of its members through the emirates’ councils (and appointing the other half) will be followed by a number of reform measures to encourage citizen participation in public affairs. It will be the continuation of the developmental march undertaken by the UAE in the previous decades, he added.

Since his accession in 2005, Sheikh Khalifa has paid significant attention to political participation in his official speeches. During that December 2005 address, he laid the foundations of the country’s Political Programme, which was considered a national framework document, paving the way for the overhaul of federal institutions and the expansion of the FNC’s role, making it more effective in supporting and guiding the executive branch.



That speech was, indeed, a landmark in the UAE's evolution towards the entrenchment of political participation in national-level decision-making. "We will strive to make the FNC more efficient and committed to the nation's affairs and people's issues, so it becomes the embodiment of the values of participation and *Shura*. In this regard, we have decided to promote the FNC's role, in a gradual and organised manner, by having half of its members elected through emirate-level councils and the other half appointed. This is to start a new march where the people of this country get to participate and interact even more."

Sheikh Khalifa said the next stage of nation-building will witness "the reinforcement of the rule of law, accountability, transparency, and equal opportunity. To this end, this phase will require the overhaul, reorganisation, and rehabilitation of our government systems, their structures, and their functions."

A highlight in Sheikh Khalifa's project is his call for increasing attention to volunteer work and boosting the role played by community-focused organisations – as well as political, social, and cultural institutions – in instilling the values that help develop social cohesion and reinforce patriotic political participation.

"It is high time for our political, religious, cultural, and media institutions, as well as civil-society organisations, to take their responsibility in entrenching the value of work in society, eradicating the stigma surrounding manual labour, and stressing the idea that work is a human responsibility and a civilisational

and religious value,” Sheikh Khalifa said.

“These various institutions must also help in bringing diversity to the skill sets of our citizens, increase productivity, encourage investment in human development, and develop the volunteering sector (...) by inspiring people to engage in voluntary activities and introducing the values of volunteering in school curricula,” he added.

The election of half of the members of the Federal National Council in late 2006 was a major political milestone in the UAE’s evolution. These elections were held following Sheikh Khalifa’s decision No. 3 of 2006 stipulating the election of half of the FNC members by electoral colleges selected by the Rulers of the emirates. This was a clear manifestation of the UAE leadership’s desire to initiate political reform.

In response, a large number of candidates – a total of 439, including 63 women – ran for half of the FNC seats during the first elections that followed the decision. Time and again, the UAE leadership has stressed the importance of responding to this fledgling democratic experience, initiated by Sheikh Khalifa’s Political Programme, as it needs to be supported to succeed.

For his part, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, Ruler of Dubai, affirmed that this new electoral experience is



just one step forwards, and it will be followed by other, similarly important, steps. He noted that the UAE has its own way of introducing gradual participation.

“The FNC elections represent a defining step that came in the right time,” he said. “This step stems from our reality, from our life. Our belief in *Shura* is part of our composition and value system. Our ancestors practiced it before us and developed it so it can serve the Union. Now we are taking another step, one for which we have great hopes as it will open the door for other steps to follow.”

Indeed, these elections came as a continuation of the country’s development efforts across the economic, social, and political spectrum. The state succeeded in the last three decades in executing a range of socio-economic projects that organically led to this shift towards gradual political accomplishment.

The large participation of women in the elections also had a profound significance. Sixty-three women participated in those first elections, more than in comparable elections in Qatar, Bahrain, or Kuwait. The elections also witnessed the victory of the first Emirati woman, which was in itself a historic accomplishment.

The UAE’s political leadership has supported women first-hand, considering them “the soul of the place,” as Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum said during his tour of the



electoral process in Dubai. “A place without a woman is a place without soul,” he was quoted as saying. He also affirmed that the state will continue to support women and to provide them with opportunities to play important roles in development, political action, and every other area of endeavour – as befits their potential to access the highest positions in the country, which many of them did already.

Empowering Emirati women and promoting their participation in the various areas of social, economic, and political life is one of the top priorities of the UAE leadership’s development plans. This has been the country’s policy since its establishment, consisting an essential component in its march towards progress and growth.

His Highness President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan has stressed that the trust won by the elected members of the Federal National Council is a responsibility that must be upheld by showing great care for the issues of the nation and its citizens. In his speech following the announcement of the election results, His Highness said:

“The gradual progress in parliamentary practice reflects the particularity of the political experience in the UAE. The policy established by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan has contributed to bringing support, stability, and prosperity to our federal experience.



Today, we adopt the same policy as a means to further enhance the principle of participation, fully realising that such a gradual approach will contribute to building a mature parliamentary experience with all the constituents required to enable it to perform its constitutional functions, both legislative and supervisory (...)

Emirati women have affirmed their presence in this initial electoral experience. We are certain that their entrance to the Federal National Council is an accomplishment that will prove even more valuable through their participation in the next session discussions, especially on issues that concern women and the social building of the state.”

In his speech at the FNC inauguration, during the first session of the 14th legislative chapter on February 12, 2007, President Sheikh Khalifa said:

“Today, the FNC has gained greater representation and more capability, in the way of further safeguarding the gains we have made so far and supporting the federation’s blessed march forwards, as initiated by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the late Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, and the late Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, and Their Highnesses the members of the Federal Supreme Council, the Rulers of the emirates, who elevated this nation to greatness with their diligence, insight, care, and patience, selflessly contributing to building this country, to which we are all proud

to belong (...)

Today, we are well advanced in establishing our chosen political culture, while humbly bearing our national responsibility and the historic duty entrusted to us. We are preserving this experience, one that is open to the world, abreast of its progress, and accepting of any opinion or discretion so long as it emanates from a place of patriotism (...)

This day is a historic occasion that marks an important bend along our nation's journey. We have worked together, leadership and people, to reach this point. And, by doing so, we have solidified the foundations of this modern state and expressed our aspiration for a political regime that implements *Shura*, delivers justice, spreads security, and enables citizens, men and women, to participate positively and effectively in leading the state and its future planning, with the constitution's backing and under the rule of law (...)

Our hopes for our country have no limits. Our ambitions for our citizens have no restrictions. And our expectations for the future gain more surety as we welcome a new era – an era that reflects bold patriotic visions for a gradually emerging phase, an era devoted to the principles we have declared and that have been adopted by the Federal Supreme Council and the Cabinet as an action charter, a roadmap of a phase marked by *Shura*, the rule of law, responsibility assignment, authority delegation, and accountability. The goal of this phase is to instil justice and



enable all members of our society to effectively and positively contribute in shaping the future (...)

It is with the utmost pride that we are watching the constantly accelerating steps being made towards more empowerment, renewal, and reform. We are, indeed, fully satisfied as we observe the ongoing programmes for development, restructuring, and growth. This will serve as a foundation for a system of good governance, sound management, and competent government, which is the spearhead of the empowerment strategy.

The ambitious development project we have in mind for our nation today is a wide-spectrum plan for a veritable renaissance. It takes into account cultural, social, moral, and psychological aspects of life. In addition to bolstering productivity, driving growth, increasing income, and improving the standards of living, the actual success of development is measured by its ability to build human capacities and to ensure that members of society enjoy more security, respect, freedom, sharing, and generosity in an environment free from threat or danger.

This is the essence of the transformation we look forward to, and the very purpose of empowerment. Devoted to attain our goal, we have placed our educational, health, sports, and youth policies – in addition to previously announced programmes and regulations to promote culture, develop family and society, and instil justice and security – at the heart of the project that we aspire to carry out and aim to sustain.

Sheikh Khalifa also offers insight into another important aspect of his vision:

“The prosperity that we aspire to cannot be achieved or sustained without citizens who feel a strong sense of belonging, are competent, productive, cultured, committed to values and ethics, proud of their faith, nation, and specificity, capable of accepting the other and the culture of the other.

A country without citizens has no value or use no matter its wealth and resources. Citizenship in itself is not a privilege if belonging to the country is not coupled with genuine loyalty, devoted contribution, care to safeguard the nation’s gains, and pride in its history and symbols. That is true citizenship.”

All available data, whether collected during or after the elections, indicated the country’s leadership support for the Federal National Council and its role, primarily from His Highness the President, and also from His Highness the Vice-President and Prime Minister, and Their Highnesses the members of the Federal Supreme Council. Such support was reflected in the constitutional amendment No. 1 of 2009, which extended the FNC’s membership term from two to four years and its annual cycle of sessions from six to a minimum of seven months. The FNC was also granted more freedom to set its own internal bylaws and broaden its areas of competence with respect to the international treaties and conventions that the country signs.



President Sheikh Khalifa's political programme is on course to achieving its desired goals, empowering the FNC and promoting citizen participation in political life. The first phase of the programme has already been implemented through the election – versus the appointment – of half the members of the FNC, which consists of 40 seats, amending the constitution to empower and broaden the FNC's authority, and creating a ministry concerned with parliamentary-work development – the Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs.

In his UAE National Day speech on December 1, 2007, Sheikh Khalifa affirmed his determination to continue on the path of political empowerment and democratic-practice promotion: “As promised two years ago, we are still working to reach our democratic goals by broadening the area of participation and promoting the FNC's role as a legislative and supervisory authority.”

On November 27, 2008, during the inauguration of the third session of the 14th legislative chapter of the Federal National Council, His Highness the Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE, Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum called for more interaction between the FNC and other state institutions. His Highness also requested FNC committees to come closer to citizens to have a better appreciation of their needs and worries.

Sheikh Mohammed also stressed that the most successful agendas are drafted based on actual reality, adding that the Emirati people have “great expectations and trust in us,” and that the political leadership will spare no effort to provide the means of good living to its children and people.

The Vice-President noted that President Khalifa’s instructions to the government to prioritise serving the nation and its citizens are still, and shall remain, a guiding light at which we direct all our capabilities. Sheikh Mohammed also added that “we believe in, care for, and encourage change for the better” because change is a function of the universe, and those who forget the facts of reality cannot keep up with its fast pace.

History tells us that popular participation in the UAE is not an alien concept to the Emirati people; in fact, it has been deeply rooted in the local ruling system since long ago. Emirati leaders have constantly been in touch with citizens and aware of their worries, and they have always taken their say on state affairs into account.

Political participation in the UAE is part of the nation’s political and social reality, as reflected by the country’s harmony and tolerance, at both formal and popular levels. Throughout its history, the UAE has always sought to deepen the principles of true *Shura* and popular participation in its civilisational march and community-building efforts. As President Khalifa says, *Shura* and action are two sides of the same coin, and they





form the strongest guarantee for national unity.

The union between the different emirates in the country was established in 1971 as a direct outcome of the values of participation and *Shura* shared among these emirates' respective leaders; they took it upon themselves to attain a greater goal, one that all Arabs aspire to: unity among Arab nations.

The rules of federal governance have been established on sound bases, which are described in the constitution's preamble as "corresponding to the realities and the capacities of the Emirates at the present time, enabling the Union, so far as possible, freely to achieve its goals, sustaining the identity of its members providing that this is not inconsistent with those goals and preparing the people of the Union at the same time for a dignified and free constitutional life, and progressing by steps towards a comprehensive, representative, democratic regime in an Islamic and Arab society free from fear and anxiety (...)."

For the purposes of establishing fully-fledged parliamentary governance, and as an initial step, the idea had been floated to create an advisory board to operate alongside the executive body, assisting it with community-focused law-making; thus, the Federal National Council was established in 1972.

The wheel of progress did not stop at that point. Through its developmental experience, the UAE has laid more foundations for a political and social framework that promotes a culture of

participation and openness. The consecration of the rule of law and the state's consciousness of the importance of it are actual boosts to political participation, in addition to the openness of the media scene that the UAE is witnessing, which is an essential, enriching component of the whole Emirati experience.

The UAE boasts a positive record in the field of women's empowerment, which is a significant incentive to foster political participation and an essential factor in the existence of a general acceptance to modernise political participation and develop its channels.

Thus came the 2006 elections, in which emirate-level electoral colleges elected half the members of the Federal National Council. This event reflected in concrete terms how the principle of *Shura* is embedded in Emirati culture, in politics as in society. The elections marked the beginning of a period of real and positive political participation of citizens in the affairs that are of concern to them. Although the experience may be small in scope, considering the number of electoral-college members relative to the number of citizens who have the legal right to vote, we must consider that these elections are a first major step towards establishing and deepening the culture of political participation among the various groups of society.

In fact, the election of half the members of the FNC is merely the first step in the political programme launched by His Highness the President. The programme consists of



three phases to be implemented according to the principle of graduation and in harmony with the UAE's conditions. First is the inaugural phase, which was completed with the previous elections. Second is the empowerment phase, which was marked by the introduction of an array of changes, in line with the political leadership's philosophy of gradually shepherding the political experience in accordance with the specificity of the UAE society's socio-political fabric. The third and last phase of the programme aims to further broaden and deepen political participation, by electing the members of the FNC and promoting its role as a supporting and guiding authority to the executive body.

As for the elections of 2011, they have earned a special significance, surpassing the previous round, in terms of broadening the area of citizen political participation, with the amendment of Federal Supreme Council resolution No. 4 of 2006. Also, President Khalifa's resolution No. 3 of 2006 was amended to set the minimum number of electoral-college members to 300 times the number of each emirate's representatives at the FNC, without putting a cap on the number of these electoral-college members in each emirate. In these elections, their overall number reached 135,308, meaning that a large group of citizens were able to choose their own representatives at the FNC. Reflecting the weight of the event,

all the guarantees to ensure that the elections progressed in a proper manner were secured.

On November 15, 2011, Sheikh Khalifa, the UAE President, addressed the members of the Federal National Council in his speech inaugurating the first session of the 15th legislative chapter:

“Today, the Federal National Council has a larger representation and more ability to carry out its duties. Council membership is not a privilege, nor is it a social distinction. It is a responsibility, a great burden, and a national trust. Those who believed in you and elected you are looking up to you and expecting great results. So you must honour their trust, be loyal, and devote yourselves to the interest of the nation and its citizens.

We will support you and walk by your side on the path of fairness. Today’s meeting is a celebration of the second phase in our gradual progression towards fostering and developing participation. This is a national choice that we have willingly made, and we will firmly follow through with it, to fulfil the aspirations of the sons and daughters of this nation, who are building their country hand in hand, safeguarding its gains, and are proud to belong to. Empowerment is the essence of the Union and its ultimate goal (...)”

Today, on the occasion of the 15th chapter of the FNC, we expect the Council to have a more effective presence that can be



felt by the people. We anticipate its contribution to have a greater impact on the gradual process of instating an original, national representative system that comprises our values, customs, and traditions, as well as the components of our social and cultural fabric. We expect the Council to promote *Shura* and shared values, and to support the particularity of the UAE experience in its remarkableness, uniqueness, and its reflectiveness of our society's determined march towards a brighter future (...)

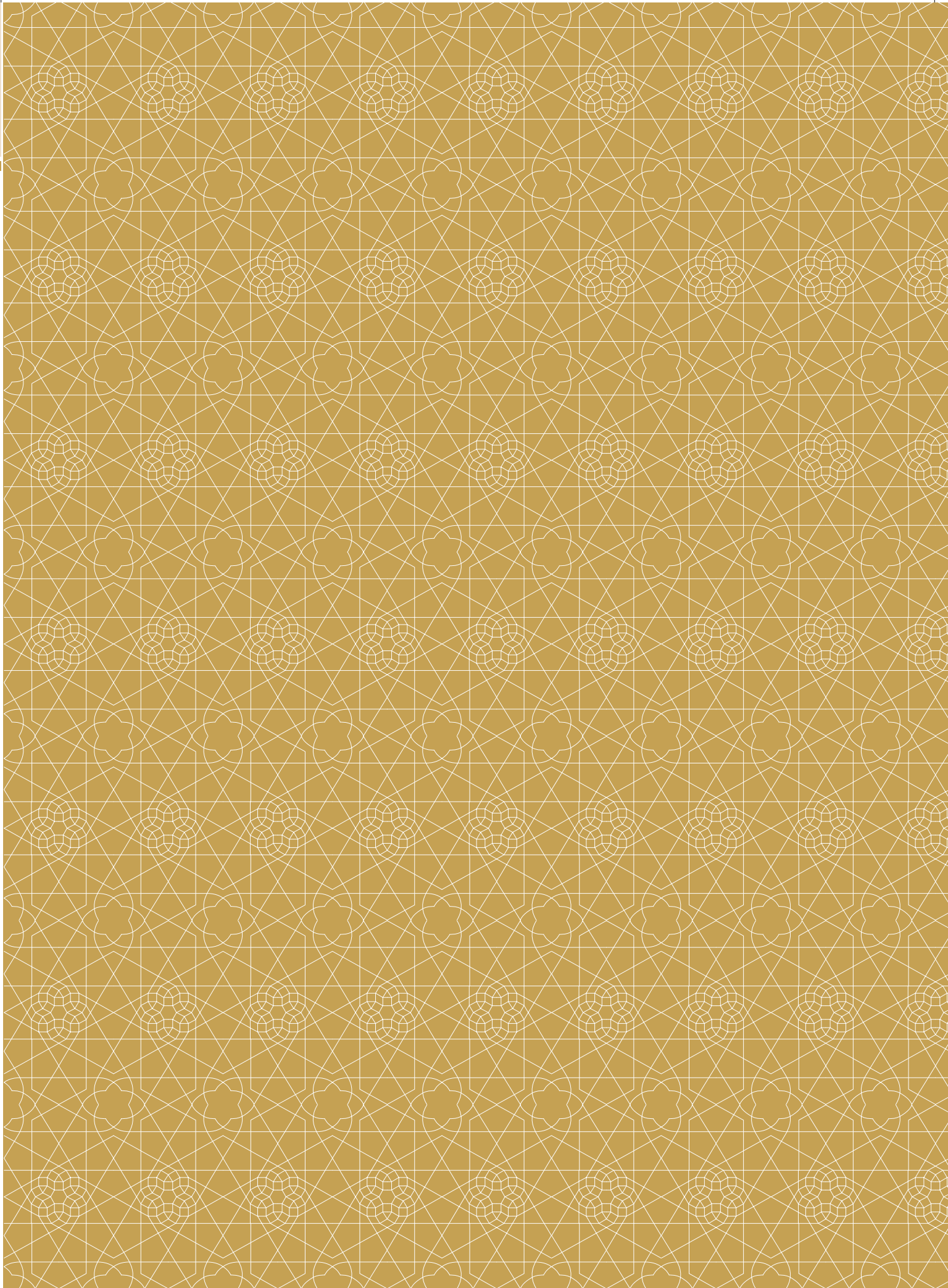
Our nation has made major strides in every field. It has become an exemplar of goal achievement and challenge management, thanks to the loyalty and earnest efforts of its sons and daughters, the efficiency of its institutions, systems, and laws, and the sound judgement of its domestic and foreign policies. This has elevated the prestige of our country and asserted our strong standing among nations.”

Now, the UAE has all the requirements of progress. The federation has transformed this place into a fully-fledged state that astonishes the world with its fast-paced progress. This is now a nation that boasts geographical and human unity, in addition to a common cultural background and historical experience. This is now a country that has a strong economic base, founded on a balanced vision that accounts for both present and future, and plans for generations way down the line.

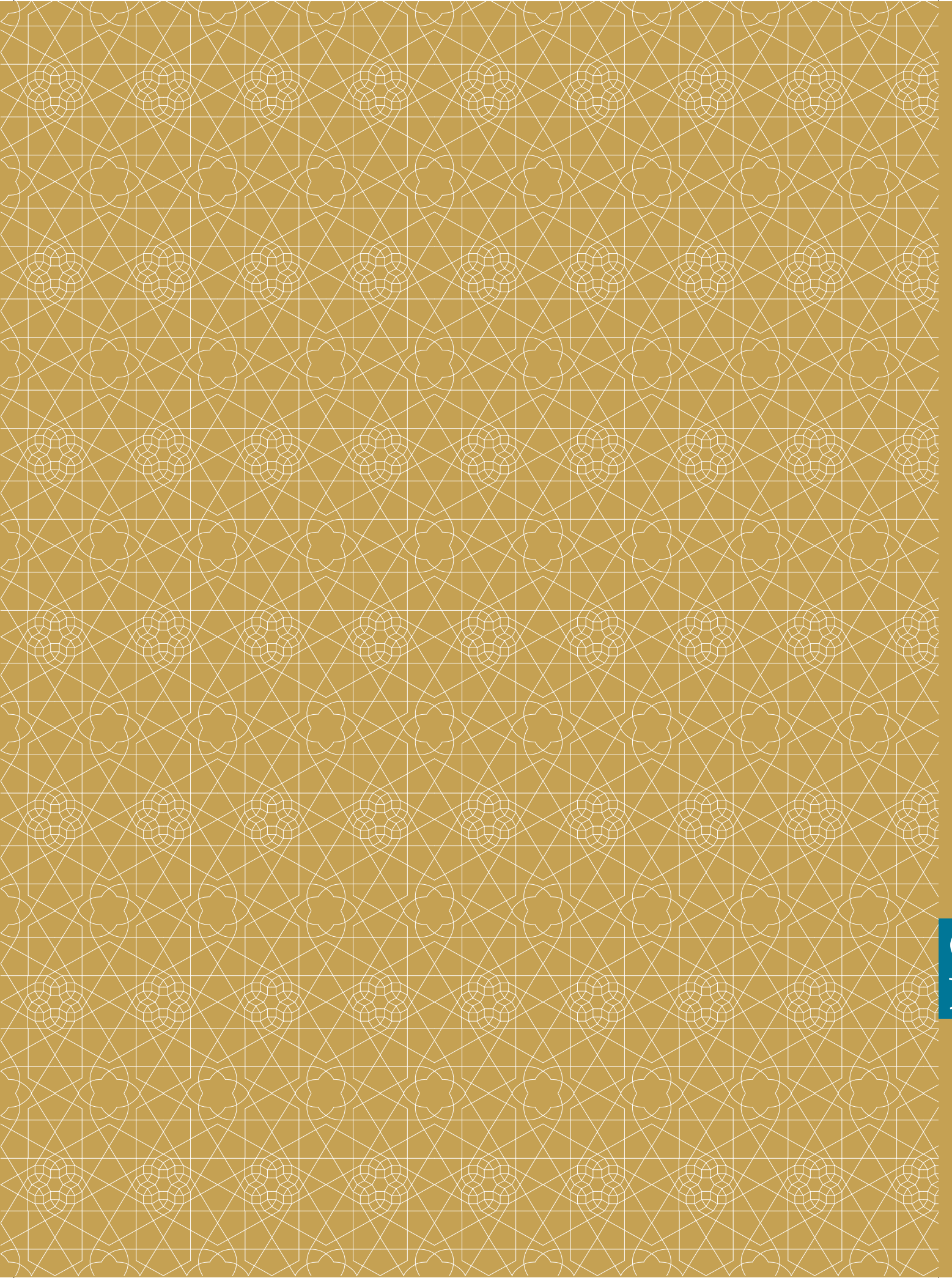
The hard work that distinguishes the UAE's triumphant march has made the impossible possible. It has generated a prosperous

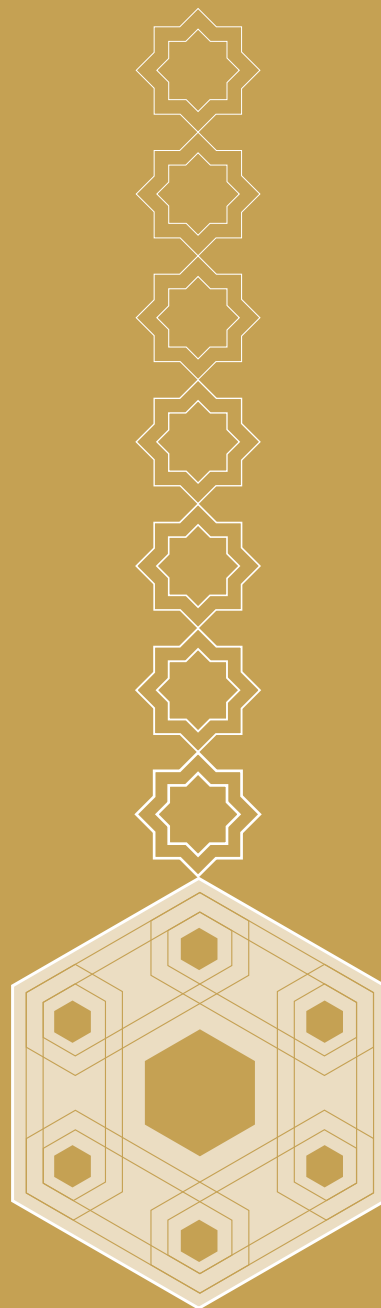
present and, surely, will bring a bright future – for which a mix of true tenacity, bold ambition, and creativity will be the guarantee.

Peter Hellyer, in his book *Early Days in Abu Dhabi*, states that contemporary history has witnessed the dawn of one of the most advanced countries in the world.



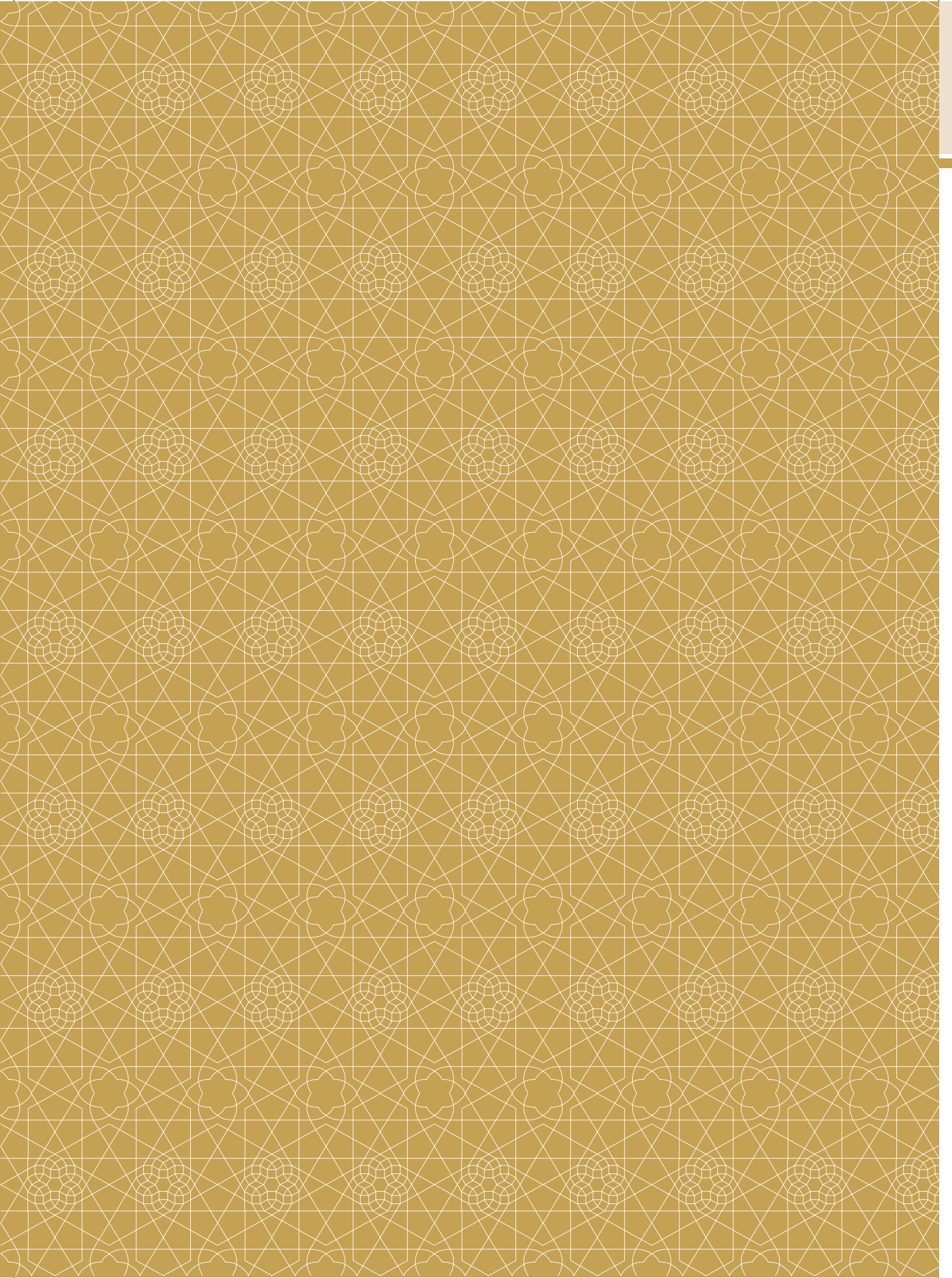






## Chapter III

# Good Governance: Practices & Achievements





## Chapter III | Good Governance: Practices & Achievements

**D**ecember 2nd marks a true historic turn that remains impressed in memory through the generations. The prosperity we are currently enjoying lays the foundation for a brighter future. Ahead of us is a steady march, initiated by the resolve and vision of the late Sheikh Zayed. It has brought us great successes and became a prominent example of modern-state building in a world racing towards progress in all areas of life. The UAE has proven itself worthy of its strong regional and international standing owing to its giant leaps and strategic-development planning.

Today's achievements are reflections of the most efficient use of our abilities and resources; that is the reason behind their uniqueness and complementarity on all levels. A prosperous country is the result of a piercing vision that maintains a balance between the essential components of that country; such a vision has elevated our nation to well-deserved greatness, and it is now carefully carried on by His Highness President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan.

The UAE has made such outstanding achievements that many specialised regional and international organisations are baffled by its performance on development indicators. The country has



maintained its position among the most advanced nations in human, economic, and social development, and has successfully reached a set of essential Millennium Development Goals, as set by the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000.

The country's advanced and internationally competitive development position was reflected in the Global Human Development Report of 2011. The UAE advanced to the 30th rank on the Global Human Development Index, two rungs up from the previous year, ranking among the group of countries with "very high" human development. For the second consecutive year, the UAE had outclassed all other Arab nations.

Human development has contributed to achieving spectrum-wide economic growth. GDP has increased from AED6.5 billion in 1971 to over one trillion dirhams in 2010, and GDP per capita has increased from AED100,000 in 1975 to AED132,000 in 2010. The industrial sector has also grown significantly, with its contribution to GDP going from one percent in 1971 to 16.4 percent in 2009, and the number of industrial facilities in operation reaching 4,960, bringing more than AED100bn in investments.

The UAE has recorded high levels of economic growth after successfully diversifying its economic-resource base, which allowed the country to weather the global financial crisis. The Financial Development Report of 2008, issued by the World



Economic Forum, ranked the UAE first among Arab and Gulf nations, and 26th on the global ranking.

For seven consecutive years, the UAE has been the only Arab country to feature in the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report as "an innovation-driven economy" – ranking 23rd globally. It is the most advanced stage of economic progress according to the method applied by the Swiss-based organisation for this report, which evaluates 144 countries according to five categories.

First joining the ranks of "innovation-driven economies" in 2006, the UAE has since outperformed countries like New Zealand, Australia, Italy, and Spain.

The Global Competitive Report, an annual publication, measures competitiveness based on three main themes and 12 pillars. Countries are classified into different stages of economic development, from the basic-requirements stage, to the first transitional phase, the effectiveness-enhancement phase, the second transitional phase, and, finally, the innovation phase, which is the most advanced.

Innovation-driven economies are known for their high-income rates and ability to plan strategically to improve living standards. These economies also endeavour to build capacity and improve products and services within their national corporations to make them competitive regionally and internationally.

Public and private institutions in the innovation-driven economy endorse the best business-management practices in the world, and apply cutting-edge processes in design, production, management, finance, marketing, and so on.

This year, in the Global Competitiveness Report of 2012-2013, the UAE has made an additional achievement by leaping three ranks upwards to 24th place in the main ranking, keeping its position as the only innovation-driven economy in the Arab world. Indeed, this report represents the international community's recognition of the UAE as an active player among the most advanced and creative nations.

Such a success is an inevitable result of the nation's wise leadership, which aspires to realise the UAE Vision 2021, a vision for the UAE to become one of the best countries in the world by 2021.

Competitiveness cannot be achieved if the principle of sustainability is not respected, a principle founded on fairness, enablement, and concerted efforts to build a prosperous future for generations to come. Such an ambition can be fulfilled with well-articulated planning that takes into account, on one side, the changes and developments surrounding the nation regionally and internationally, and, on the other, the Emirati community's specificities and priorities.





Thanks to coordinated government efforts, the UAE's competitiveness indicators have seen a considerable improvement. On the "quality of state institutions" indicator, the country has risen to the 12th rank worldwide, 10 points up on the previous year. The "labour-market competence" indicator has gone 21 points up, promoting the country to the 7th rank in the world.

The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report measures competitiveness based on two main tools: a survey of the opinions of thousands of executives and businesspeople from around the world; and an analysis of data published by the countries covered in the report. This information sheds light on vital sectors such as health and education, the size of markets, the number of patents, the volume of research performed, and the level of innovation-driven corporate advancement.

In the Global Competitiveness Report 2012-2013, the UAE has advanced three ranks to 24th position in the global ranking. The report cited the constant progress of institutional frameworks, systems and regulations, in addition to the economy's general stability, as the main factors of such an improvement. The report also commended the country's excellent infrastructures and market performance, as well as the UAE people's trust in their political leadership and in the government's competence, all of which are also boosts for competitiveness.

The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report is one of the most important reports worldwide. It aims to help countries identify challenges that hamper sustainable economic growth. Besides evaluating their abilities to secure high levels of prosperity for their citizens, the report supplies the countries covered with tools to devise strategies to reduce poverty and promote prosperity. It provides a comprehensive evaluation of the strengths and challenges facing the economies studied.

The Global Competitiveness Report is published annually, every September. The first report was published in 1979, and the number of countries covered varies each year. The 2012-2013 report covered 144 countries.

Recently, the Emirates Competitiveness Council published several studies on innovation, creativity, and corporate advancement. It has also issued a range of articles and booklets highlighting the work of national UAE companies and institutions on the regional and international levels. These organisations include: Masdar; the Advanced Technology Investment Company (ATIC); Mubadala's Aerospace unit, Strata Manufacturing PJSC; RAK Ceramics; Dubai Aluminium (Dubal); Imperial College London Diabetes Centre in Abu Dhabi; Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC); Borouge; Dubai Internet City; DUCAB Cable Manufacturing Company; and Dubai Duty Free.

The work of the Emirati government and its various arms



has contributed to the nation's excellent rankings in other competitiveness reports. For instance, the UAE ranked first in the Arab region and the world in terms of financial-policy efficiency, according to the International Competitiveness Yearbook 2012, published by the International Institute for Management Development in Switzerland.

According to the report's findings, the UAE has made significant progress and bested many competitive countries such as the United Kingdom, Japan, France, or China. Many factors contributed to this achievement, including the government's no-taxation policy, the efficiency of its social-security system and pension policy for Emiratis, and the sound management of the state budget and surpluses.

Financial-policy efficiency and robust public-finance management are, as the report has shown, fundamental determinants of the level of a country's competitiveness. A series of financial initiatives and regulations introduced by the UAE government, namely during the global financial crisis, had reflected positively on the country's fiscal performance.

The World Bank's Doing Business index of 2012 has ranked the UAE first in the Arab world and fifth worldwide in terms of "trading across borders" capability. (The UAE has placed first in the Arab world and 17th globally in the United Nations' first World Happiness Report.)

In economic freedom, the UAE came in second in the Middle East and Africa, and 11th globally, according to the Fraser Institute's Economic Freedom of the World Report for 2012, which covered 144 countries. The UAE ranked higher than some of the world's most established economies, including Britain (12th), Denmark (16th), the United States (18th), and Japan (20th).

The Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhaman) expected the UAE to attract \$574 billion in investment flows between 2012 and 2017. Based on Dhaman's estimates, which rely on figures from the International Monetary Fund, the UAE should receive 14.5 percent of the \$3.97 trillion of overall investments to be injected in the Arab world – including local and foreign investments – by the end of 2017. The UAE will maintain its second position, behind Saudi Arabia, in terms of investment volumes.

Dhaman's figures indicate that total investments in the UAE economy will reach \$95bn in 2012, \$92bn in 2013, and down to \$90bn in 2014, before starting to pick up from there to \$93bn in 2015, \$98bn in 2016, and peaking at \$105bn in 2017.

In the October 22, 2012 edition of the Doing Business index, co-published by the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank, the UAE rose from the 33rd rank globally to the 26th thanks to diligent government efforts to streamline and simplify the paperwork required for starting a business and, in



turn, improve the investment environment in the country.

A reform package adopted by the federal government and local departments had improved the country's standing in several of the 10 indicators covered in the index.

The UAE ranked in first place globally on the “paying taxes” indicator, fifth on “trading across borders,” seventh on “getting electricity,” 12th on “registering property,” 13th on “dealing with construction permits,” and 22nd globally – and first in the Arab world – on “starting a business.”

In its comments, the World Bank commended the UAE government's efforts to ease procedures for new businesses, namely by introducing an electronic system for fee payments and reducing the time needed to provide applicants with electricity supply. These efforts have propelled the country seven ranks upwards in the 2012 rating.

The Doing Business index ranks 183 economies based on their performance in 10 “topics,” or indicators, linked to procedures adopted by governments to regulate business activities. The index appraises the time and costs needed to fulfil government requirements to be able to (1) start a business, (2) conduct trade across borders, (3) pay taxes, (4) resolve insolvency, (5) obtain a construction permit, (6) register property, (7) enforce contracts, (8) receive credit, (9) protect investors, and, finally, (10) get access to electricity, an indicator that has just been introduced

this year (2012).

Now with its ranking at the 26th place globally, the UAE has climbed 51 ranks in six years, moving up from the 77th rank in 2006 to 68th in 2007, to 54th in both 2008 and 2009, to 44th and 40th in 2010 and 2011, respectively.

According to the same index, the UAE has ranked 83rd globally on the “getting credit” indicator, 128th on “protecting investors,” 104th on “enforcing contracts,” and 101st on “resolving insolvency.”

Despite the challenges faced by governments in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, 47 percent of countries in this region have introduced regulatory reforms that have contributed to easing the process of starting a business during the period from June 2011 to June 2012, according to the index.

In the UAE, the social-welfare sector benefitted from particular government attention, with many nurseries and kindergartens opening up in cities and villages across the country in order to encourage early learning and offer the community options for a world-class level of educational and psychological care.

The UAE cabinet had published decision No. 19 of 2006, which guarantees the creation of nurseries within ministerial headquarters, government departments, and public institutions and agencies. The aim of the decision is to consolidate family-level stability by offering mothers working in these



establishments childcare assistance with their children aged two months to four years.

The UAE also endeavours to support children with disabilities by responding to their educational and training needs and working to integrate them into the community. The state has created several special-care centres and sports clubs across the nation, offering educational and healthcare services, as well as vocational and sports training, for persons with disabilities.

For his part, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the UAE President, launched numerous community-focused initiatives with the aim of enhancing the quality of life for Emiratis and strengthening social and family-level cohesion. Such initiatives have targeted two main sectors: (1) infrastructure, with Sheikh Khalifa's initiatives ranging from programmes granting UAE citizens free plots of land and finished villas to projects to upgrade roads and bridges and develop and maintain dams and fishing harbours; (2) economic, social, and health development, another priority area for Sheikh Khalifa who launched, most notably on the occasion of the UAE 40th National Day, a AED16-billion package of initiatives (\$4.3bn) aimed at improving the standards of living for Emiratis.

A follow-up committee was set up to oversee the implementation of Sheikh Khalifa's initiatives – such initiatives that embody His Highness's eagerness to guarantee the well-being of the people of the UAE and the sustainable development of the federation.



As part of the package, Sheikh Khalifa ordered infrastructural projects in under-developed areas across the country through the construction of roads, schools, housing, hospitals, healthcare centres, and water-supply and power stations.

According to forecasts by the Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhahran), the UAE is set to preserve during the course of this year (2012) its position as the second wealthiest country in the Arab world based on per-capita income, which is expected to reach \$67,899 by the year's end, up from \$66,625 in 2011, the highest income increase among Arab nations.

Earlier in 2012, during a United Nations conference in New York under the theme of "Happiness and Well-Being," the UN unveiled the findings of its first global survey on happiness, formally known since as the World Happiness Report. The report found that the UAE people are the happiest in the Arab world and rank 17th among the 20 happiest peoples on the planet.

As reported by the British newspaper The Daily Mail, the UAE ranked higher than countries like Britain (18th) or Iceland (20th), while no Arab or African nation made it to the top 20 happiest countries in the world.

The report, prepared on behalf of the United Nations by the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, found that, overall,



the wealthiest nations were the happiest and, in turn, the poorest were the least happy. The survey questions were straightforward, asking the local populations, for instance, about their current degree of happiness compared to the past.

Denmark topped the list of the happiest nations in the world, followed by Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, Canada, Switzerland, Sweden, New Zealand, Australia, and Ireland. The United States ranked 11th while Togo closed the bottom of the list as the least happy nation in the world. (Several other countries from Sub-Saharan Africa ranked close to the bottom.)

For its part, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) revealed that the UAE leads the Arab world in three key objectives in the field of education: first, in achieving universal primary education and improving its quality; second, in promoting equal opportunity between genders; and third, in reducing illiteracy significantly.

The UAE provides its citizens with free education, starting in primary school until post-graduate levels, and there are government plans to further develop and reform the education sector, tighten the school rating and accreditation processes, and revisit syllabi.

The government also pays particular attention to special-needs education. In 2009, the government focused on integrating Emirati students enrolled in various special-needs centres

into the conventional school system, and new standards were introduced within public and private schools to ensure their compliance with this policy.

According to the UAE National Statistics Centre (NSC), the illiteracy rate among UAE nationals in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi has dropped to 6 percent in 2011, marking a notable decrease over the previous years and one of the lowest illiteracy rates in the Middle East.

In its 2012 report, the NSC noted that illiteracy among UAE nationals has dropped from 75.12 percent in 1970 to 40.08 percent in 1980, and down to 22.56 percent in 1990 and 12.08 percent in 2000, before reaching 6 percent in 2011. (Data from Unesco's Institute for Statistics show that the aggregate illiteracy rate in Arab countries stood at 27.3 percent in 2009.)

In 2011, the NSC appraised a set of education-sector indicators in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, which reflected the notable positive developments seen in various areas of social development in general, but more particularly in education. Indeed, the Abu Dhabi government has made every effort to build a high-quality education infrastructure, which allowed larger volumes of students to enrol in the Emirate's schools and universities.

The government has committed to the task of developing the education sector and providing its services free of charge to the



community; the private-education model would start to emerge afterwards, first complementing government efforts and, by last year, absorbing even higher rates of the Emirate's students – 58.9 percent.

During the 2011/2012 academic year, the number of schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi reached 480, of which 299 were public schools while the remaining 181 were private. These schools housed 13,528 classrooms, 306,497 students, 22,218 teachers, and 8,055 administrators – with a 13.8 student-to-teacher ratio and an average of 22.7 students per classroom.

According to the preliminary results of the Abu Dhabi census of 2011, people aged 10 years and above who qualify as illiterate had reached 138,478, most of whom – 101,220 – are male, with an illiteracy ratio distribution of 7.4 for males, 7.6 for females, and 7.5 combined. As to the illiteracy rate among local males, it has reached 3.5 percent, against 8.7 among females, and 6 percent combined.

A total of nine universities operate in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, two of which are public and the remaining seven are private. Colleges and other higher-education institutions number 16 establishments, three of which belong to the government and the other 13 to the private sector.

During the 2010/2011 academic year, the total number of students enrolled in the emirate's local institutions of higher education reached 44,397, of whom 75 percent are UAE

nationals and 25 percent foreign residents. Emirati students have a dominant presence in government-owned higher-education schools, forming 86.7 percent of the student body, while foreign students dominate private higher-education schools, at 70.2 percent. (In 2010/2011, a total of 6,750 students – male and female – graduated from various higher-education establishments in the emirate.)

Throughout the history of Abu Dhabi, local women have played a vital and influential role in the life of the community; as the education sector developed in the emirate, this role has been reinforced over the last quarter of the 20th century, acquiring entirely new dimensions.

Indeed, Emirati women's successive achievements in school and at work are also a reflection of the care, support, and understanding they have found within their communities and families – an understanding of the great importance of women's education, employment, and participation in the process of development.

Besides, the UAE constitution guarantees these rights for Emirati women. In several articles, the constitution underlines women's right to social freedom and their equality to men in terms of rights, including the legal right to education, employment, and high office.

According to the NSC's 2012 report, Emirati women have been able to capitalise on the high-level support of the country's



leadership to achieve tremendous successes in various areas; most remarkably, in school performance.

Female schooling began in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in the 1963/1964 academic year. At the time, the total number of female students was 131, a modest number that would grow exponentially ever since to top 150,000 in 2011 in public schools alone. In fact, the number of female students in public schools currently exceeds, by large margins, that of their male counterparts.

The UAE government has been consistent in placing women at the centre of its holistic approach to human development, turning women into key partners in social development, in line with the vision of the country's leadership.

In terms of plans for political empowerment, which are spearheaded by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Emirati women have gone a long way. They now occupy the most senior positions in various fields and decision-making circles, as well as in all three branches of sovereign power – executive, legislative, and judicial – thus contributing effectively to the country's march for progress and modernisation.

Emirati women are also effective in the promotion of women's joint action at the Arab, regional, and international levels. Notably, they have brought the second summit of the Arab Women Organisation to the UAE, which was sponsored and

chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Mother of the UAE.

Such government desire to involve women in political action is requited by women's vibrant presence within Emirati society; for instance, towards the end of 2005, Emirati women showed remarkable dynamism during board elections at Abu Dhabi's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, securing two seats. In education, during the same year, 95 percent of female high-school graduates enrolled in higher-education establishments, one of the highest access rates in the world. In entrepreneurship, Emirati women also left their mark, with official reports showing that 6 percent of millionaires in the UAE are female.

Since the establishment of the federation, the notion of gender equality has been a constant in the UAE government's agenda; in fact, for a very long time, women have always been seen as equal partners to men in the national development process. Today, as the government continues to implement its strategy to empower women culturally, socially, economically, and comprehensively, the UAE has been able to rank 32nd on gender equality in the Human Development Report issued by the United Nations, bringing the country up to level with some of the most advanced nations in this regard.

Today, Emirati women are active in all government institutions, including executive, legislative, and judicial bodies, engaging in a wide spectrum of activities and accounting for 66 percent of





the workforce in the public sector – and occupying 30 percent of its top positions and 20 percent of its technical roles, as in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and teaching.

In business, the volume of commercial licences issued to women has risen to 6.7 percent of the total number of licences granted to Emirati nationals in 2004. Women's investments revolved particularly around commerce, banking, maintenance services, real estate, tourism and hospitality, and small handicrafts projects.

In May 2003, an Emirati businesswomen's council was created under the umbrella of the country's chambers of commerce and industry, with the aim of enhancing the personal skills of businesswomen and boosting their self-confidence as able managers of their own enterprises and first-hand contributors to the country's economic growth.

The council is also intended as a platform for Emirati women to improve their professional skills; find incentives to pursue science-track educational programmes to gain an edge in the local market; learn about best ways to rationalise consumption and organise budgets; and educate children about these values in order to turn the notion of rational consumption into a social habit. (The Emirati Business Women's Council includes about 12,000 women who are at the helm of 11,000 investment projects valued at AED12.5bn.)

In 2002, the size of business investments managed entirely by

Emirati women stood at nearly \$3.5 billion, up from only half that figure a decade earlier, which is a remarkable achievement for women in a Gulf society.

Official figures show that, in 2005, the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange issued close to 267,000 investor numbers, 43 percent of which belonged to women, while the value of women-initiated transactions amounted to AED13.8 billion, trading 9.6 million shares across 104,000 deals.

It could be argued that, in those years, women's dynamism in the UAE resembled a form of political participation, taking into account the solid front they have formed in defence of Emirati women's rights. In fact, the resurgence of Emirati women, as it is manifested in all areas of public life today, can be considered a landmark experience that is quite distinct from the experiences of women's movements elsewhere, given the short time it has taken to materialise and the far-reaching nature of its attainments.

In recent years, Emirati women have made their entry into sectors that have long been considered the preserve of men. In 2004, for instance, 23 female diplomats – including ministers-delegate – were working at the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A few years later, in 2008, the UAE appointed its first two female ambassadors, and, during the same year, the first female judge (of first instance).

His Highness Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Deputy



Prime Minister, Minister of Presidential Affairs, and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department (ADJD), said about the latter appointment that, while it was part of a wide-ranging development plan for ADJD, it also underlined the continuation of a female-inclusion policy to encourage Emirati women to work in all fields, on par with men. The UAE's first two female prosecutors were appointed on the same occasion, while the country's first female marriage clerk was named later in 2008.

Going back a few years, in 2001, UAE women had made a quantum leap: For the first time, they gained representation in the National Consultative Council of Sharjah, with five women marking the debut of female parliamentary participation in the UAE. By virtue of their role, these women would attend the sessions of the Federal National Council and take part in debates over a whole range of national issues.

Since the formation of the first UAE government in 1971, the UAE cabinet remained restricted to men until November 2004, when Sheikha Lubna Al-Qasimi was named Minister of Economics and Planning. In February 2006, another woman was appointed Minister of Social Affairs, and, in December that year, another woman became the first female member to be elected to the Federal National Council (FNC), representing the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. (She was joined by eight other women who were appointed to the council by the Rulers of the UAE, according the country's constitution which stipulates that half of the FNC members – that is 20 – are appointed.)

In February 2008, female representation in the UAE cabinet increased from two to four ministers, one of the highest representation rates in the Arab world.

In its 2007/2008 Global Human Development Report, the United Nations Development Programme indicated that the UAE, with its 22.5 percent of female representation in parliament, was actually ahead of nations where the parliamentary tradition is deeply rooted, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Canada, Greece, Ireland, Japan, and Poland, among others.

According to the report, the UAE ranks in first place in the Arab world and 24th among the group of 70 states with a “high” human development index.

Besides joining the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the UAE introduced six national mechanisms, namely the General Women’s Union, to serve the objectives of women’s empowerment in the country.

Looking back, one would quickly realise that women in the UAE have started from scratch, in various fields. One should keep that past in perspective to be able to appreciate just how far Emirati women have come, and to fathom the challenges they have managed to surmount.

Aware of the strategic importance of education in building qualified human resources to serve sustainable development,



the UAE has invested vigorously in developing and modernising its education system, from kindergarten to university. Besides offering its citizens the conditions to live decently, the state has focused on preparing new generations that are capable of responding confidently and competently to the challenges of modernity and to local and regional transformations.

In 2009, public spending on education rose to over AED9.7bn – that is 23 percent of the government’s budget for that year – as part of the strategic-policy package adopted by the state to improve the quality and global competitiveness of education in the country. The state has also prioritised the provision of an outstanding level of social services for its citizens, particularly housing, healthcare, and social welfare, out of a conviction that a happy, healthy, stable community is a cornerstone of human development.

The UAE has guaranteed all basic rights to its different social groups. Through community-focused strategies, the state has upgraded its social security system to better ensure the rights of people with special needs, as well as senior citizens, neglected children, and juvenile offenders.

Besides issuing a law in favour of people with disabilities, detailing their rights and privileges, the state has established 33 medical centres – within the federal government, local departments, and even private-sector institutions – dedicated to providing them with medical care and psychological, social, and

educational support. The goal is to help persons with special needs integrate into society and find suitable employment.

The family unit is also essential in UAE society, being the core of the community. And, while social and economic issues do represent some of the main challenges before family members in the country today – each in their own role – the government has been diligent in offering welfare support to the needy, especially the elderly, divorced women, and persons with disabilities.

State-affiliated as well as non-governmental organisations are actively involved in the roll-out of welfare programmes. The UAE Red Crescent Authority, the largest charity in the country, implements a whole range of medical, educational, economic, and social programmes, while the General Women's Union offers various forms of practical assistance through its community centres.

Providing Emirati citizens with decent housing and essential amenities is another top priority for the UAE government. More than 17,000 villas will be built for Abu Dhabi citizens over the next five years, in addition to more than 50,000 villas over the next 20 years. In most cases, plots of land and finished homes are offered to Emiratis free of charge, while the Sheikh Zayed Housing Programme also gives out grants and home loans to Emiratis. (The programme is currently working to extend to wider regions within the UAE.)



Healthcare is yet another area of focus for the UAE government. The sector is capable of offering world-class services on an annual federal budget allocation that, in 2009 for instance, exceeded AED644 million. This is in addition to the billions of dirhams spent by local health authorities at the emirate-level, and to the large investments brought in by the private sector. The UAE has passed a health-insurance law that guarantees comprehensive healthcare for locals and residents.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and its regional agencies have praised the UAE for its outstanding performance in primary-healthcare provision, especially in disease prevention and eradication, lauding its success in defeating malaria and polio and its plans to eradicate rubella in 2012.

In fact, the WHO has asked its Secretariat-General to share the UAE experience in eradicating malaria with the organisation's member states.

In the area of blood transfusion, the UAE is the first country in the Middle East to apply digital fingerprinting to register blood donors. The country ranks among the world's top 22 nations that perform the widest array of lab diagnoses, including AIDS and hepatitis, and it is one of the first countries to conduct DNA testing to detect infectious diseases.

In October 2008, the United Nations elected the UAE to the Joint Coordinating Board of the organisation's Tropical Disease



Research programme.

The UAE boasts a comprehensive assortment of healthcare amenities, with a quality of pre-natal and post-natal services that competes with the most advanced nations. As a result, life expectancy at birth in the UAE stands at 78.5 years, on par with that of countries in Europe and North America.

The UAE also leads the Arab world in information technology, telecoms, and modern-media penetration. In its 2007/2008 Human Development Report, the United Nations Development Programme indicated that the UAE topped the Arab world in internet penetration, and came in second in terms of mobile and landline usage.

Etisalat, the Emirates Telecommunications Corporation, helped the UAE become one of the world's most connected countries, providing phone services to more than 600 regions in the world, and a direct-call connection to 118 countries.

Infrastructure development is yet another high priority on the UAE government's urbanisation agenda. Huge amounts of money and effort have been spent on roads, airports, ports, housing, telecoms, and energy-exploitation capability, among other areas that are vital to urban living.

Strategic plans laid out by Dubai and Abu Dhabi for 2015 and 2020, respectively, as well as Sharjah's 2020 vision, are clear examples of the UAE's style of deliberate, plan-based



development.

Abu Dhabi's plan strikes a balance between the emirate's need for growth, tourism, and trade, on the one hand, and the need for preserving heritage, the environment, and nature, on the other. Dubai, for its part, focuses on urbanisation, energy, water and electricity, roads, transportation, and the environment, while Sharjah targets the improvement of urban clusters and works towards boosting its tourism industry, making its academic institutions more attractive, and galvanising trade and investments.

Once tribal, UAE society has witnessed momentous changes in such a short period of time. Remarkably, however, the people of the UAE have shown admirable adaptability, succeeding at preserving their social cohesion and stability, and adhering to the values of progress, openness, tolerance, empathy, and compassion.

The UAE government's strategy, launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE, Ruler of Dubai, revolves around a central theme: achieving sustainable development while ensuring high living standards for UAE citizens.

This strategy hinges on several points, including strengthening cooperation between local and federal authorities, advancing civil-service regulations, developing qualified staff in leading

roles, enhancing the independence of ministries, and updating laws and regulations.

The UAE state's priorities and goals, as spelled out in this strategy, revolve around education, health, housing, the workforce, economic development, government performance, justice, safety, the environment, infrastructure, remote areas, and so on. The strategy also detailed specific initiatives and workplans that would help reach those goals, and assigned ministries and federal authorities to their relevant missions.

In the area of human rights, the UAE has made notable strides as well. Out of 187 countries, the Global Human Development Report for 2011 ranked the UAE in the 30th place, topping the Arab world for the second consecutive year. The country has also moved up two ranks on the World Economic Forum's gender-equality indicator in 2011, again ahead of fellow Arab countries.

During the same year, the International Justice Project ranked the UAE first in the Arab world and the Middle East – and 13th worldwide – in terms of judicial and court-system transparency.

Out of its firm belief in the importance of preserving human rights and, thus, the importance of contributing to international efforts to protect and bolster them, the UAE has applied for membership at the United Nations Human Rights Council for the 2013-2015 term, stressing once again the country's



adherence to a balanced, moderate outlook on regional and international issues. (This is the first time the UAE applies for the body's membership since its creation in 2006, and, by virtue of this application, the UAE has cast a vote of confidence in the council's role.)

The UAE is also an exemplar of religious freedom and tolerance, with hundreds of thousands of people from different faiths coexisting peacefully across its emirates. This interdenominational harmony emanates from the state's conviction that moderation is a higher value that must be entrenched in the community.

The UAE champions the principle of dialogue as a way of reaching a middle ground between friendly and brotherly nations. The country is committed to the UN Charter, honours international covenants, advocates peaceful conflict resolution, and respects the rules of neighbourliness, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, and the principle of non-interference in other countries' domestic affairs.

Just as earnestly, the UAE believes in the importance of opening up to the world and forging strategic partnerships in various areas, from politics and economics, to trade, culture, science, education, and healthcare.

With regard to human rights, relevant agencies in the UAE, each within its area of competence, have started to elaborate

strategies to protect and boost these rights based on best practice and international standards. For instance, the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking has implemented an integrated national strategy, in line with the highest international standards in the field.

Illustrating the value of these efforts, the UAE is the only country in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to not have been blacklisted in the US State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report for 2007.

In April of that year, the country created the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, chaired by the Minister of State for FNC Affairs and composed of members from several ministries and state bodies. The committee was tasked with, among other duties, examining and updating legislation related to human trafficking and ensuring coordination between relevant state agencies in this regard.

Early that April, naturalisation-and-residency departments across the UAE introduced a standardised work contract for domestic helpers, a document that clearly defines the legal frameworks surrounding the rights and duties of a large proportion of workers in the UAE.

On November 4, 2007, the UAE cabinet issued instruction to urgently work out a pay model for construction workers, in coordination with the concerned companies, with the aim of



reaching a formula that guarantees the rights of both workers and employers. The cabinet also instructed that a clear and standardised set of specifications be defined for workers' housing. To be elaborated in coordination with emirate-level authorities, these specifications would be applied nationwide, and in all sectors.

In 2007, UAE authorities took a big and important step towards definitively solving the issue of stateless, undocumented people living on its territories. The committee in charge of processing the files of stateless persons established the number of those who are eligible for the UAE citizenship, as per the criteria detailed in a previous decision by His Highness the UAE President.

In October 2007, the committee issued 1,294 new passports for 296 families, representing the first batch of successful applicants. More applicants will be accepted as part of an effort to end this issue.

On the human-rights front, the UAE has made notable progress at a time when, in other parts of the Arab world, more and more journalists were being incarcerated over published content. Indeed, the UAE has improved its media-freedom frameworks, ranking at 65th place – up from 77th in 2006 – out of 169 countries included in the 2007 World Press Freedom Index, compiled by Reporters Without Borders.

In September 2007, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE, Ruler of Dubai, issued instructions to competent authorities to refrain from incarcerating journalists for reasons related to their profession.

The UAE holds in high respect the dignity of all individuals who live on its territory; the country's constitution guarantees equality and social justice for all, as well as the freedoms and special rights of UAE nationals. The constitution, which bans torture and arbitrary incarceration, protects civil freedoms, including freedom of expression, freedom of the press, religious freedom, and freedom to hold peaceful gatherings.

The UAE government also shows a strong commitment to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and treats it as a matter of priority, marshalling all of its efforts to modernise the country's laws and practices to that end. Such efforts, in fact, fundamentally originate from the Emirati society's cultural heritage and religious values, which promote justice, equality, and tolerance.

Internationally, the UAE has signed a series of agreements in this direction, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Labour Organisation's Minimum Age Convention, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities.





Locally, the UAE government's strategy has been focused on sustainable development across the country's territories, which entails initiatives to empower women, provide high-quality education and healthcare, and integrate persons with special needs into the development process.

The UAE has invested its oil and alternative-energy resources to increase human-development performance and all-around growth, achieving key state-building objectives along the way.

As to the rights of foreign workers, the UAE endeavours to keep work environments in check to ensure their compliance with international laws and best practices. Equally serious efforts to enforce existing laws are deployed to increase workers' safety, to guarantee their timely pay, and to improve their living and working conditions.

In early February 2010, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE, Ruler of Dubai, unveiled the UAE National Charter 2021, under the theme of "We Want to Be Among the Best Countries in the World by 2021."

The charter, which pays tribute to the founding fathers of the UAE, draws a roadmap for the country's next leg of the journey – year 2021, the golden jubilee of the UAE's foundation. While admitting the existence of many difficulties and challenges ahead, the charter has underlined the possibility of reaching all the objectives stated in it:

“An ambitious nation like ours cannot achieve its goals by relying on its past achievements. We must work harder, be more innovative, more organised, and more vigilant in examining the trends and challenges that will face us. We will start with a deep and honest analysis of our current situation, taking into consideration emerging regional and international changes.

We are determined to respond proactively to all challenges in a way that will bequeath to the future generations a legacy worthy of the pioneers who founded our great nation, a legacy defined by prosperity, security, stability and a life filled with dignity and respect.”

The 2021 charter covers four main themes:

1. United in Responsibility: Ambitious and responsible Emiratis will successfully carve out their future, actively engaging in an evolving socio-economic environment, and drawing on their strong families and communities, moderate Islamic values, and deep-rooted heritage to build a vibrant and well-knit society.

2. United in Destiny: The UAE takes its strength from its established traditions of openness, mutual understanding, and peaceful coexistence.

3. United in Knowledge: A diversified and flexible knowledge-based economy will be powered by skilled Emiratis and strengthened by world-class talent to ensure long-term prosperity for the UAE.



4. United in Prosperity: Emiratis will enjoy the highest living standards, long and healthy lives, first-rate education and well-rounded lifestyles guaranteed by excellent public services and recreational activities, within a safe and rich natural and social environment.

On May 28, 2012, Lord Clive Soley, of Hammersmith in the United Kingdom, gave a lecture titled “Rule of Law and the Stable Society” at the Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research in Abu Dhabi. In it, he commended the legal structure in the UAE and the evolution of the rule of law in the country, as initiated by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, may he rest in peace.

Indeed, the rule of law has helped the UAE become an advanced nation in terms of economic prosperity, security, and rights and freedoms, despite the mosaic of cultures and nationalities that call the UAE home.

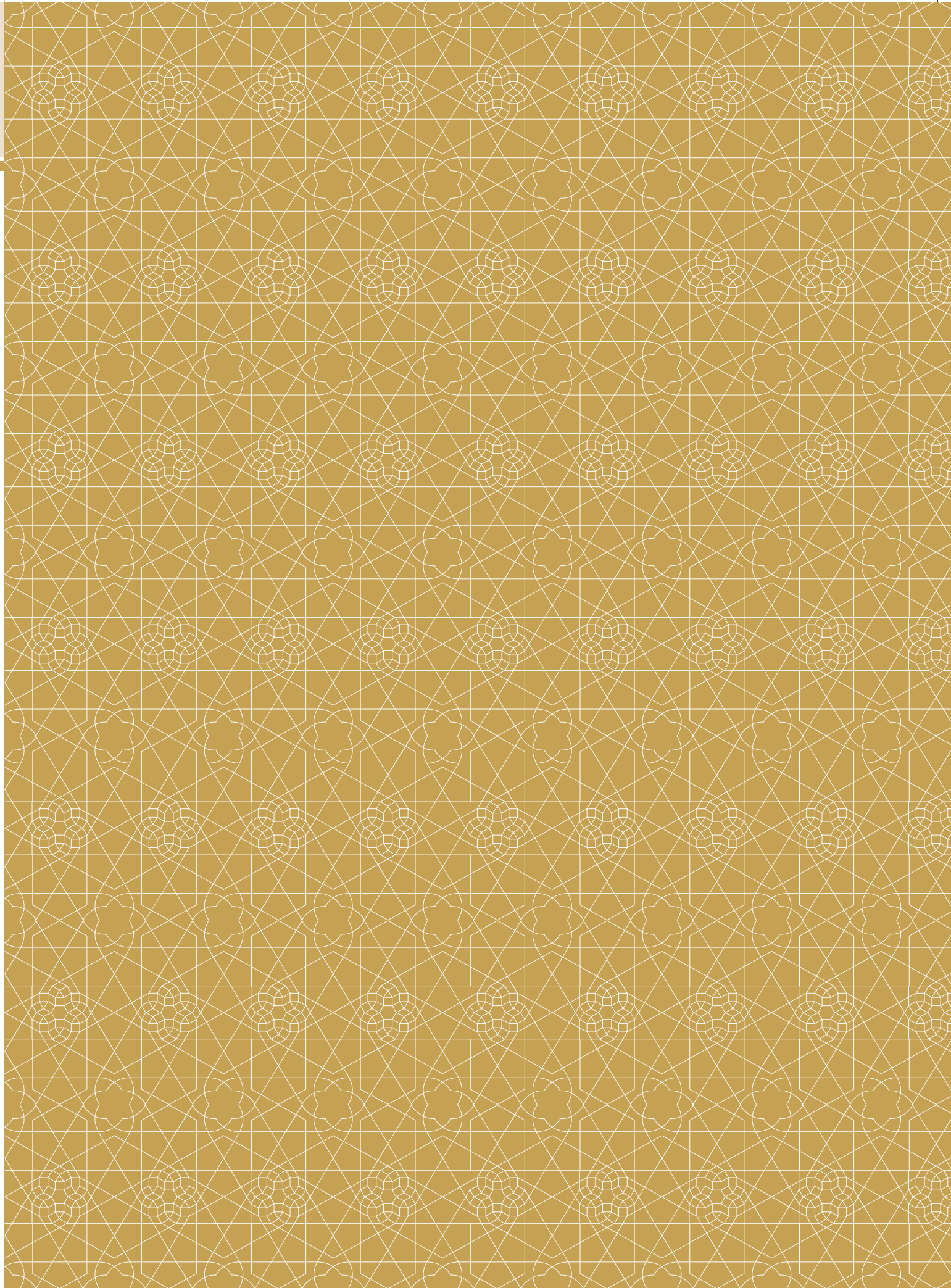
Lord Soley said the UAE should be proud of its application of the rule of law, arguing that it would not have been possible for the country to attain the socio-economic prosperity it currently enjoys if it had not disseminated the rule of law across the board.

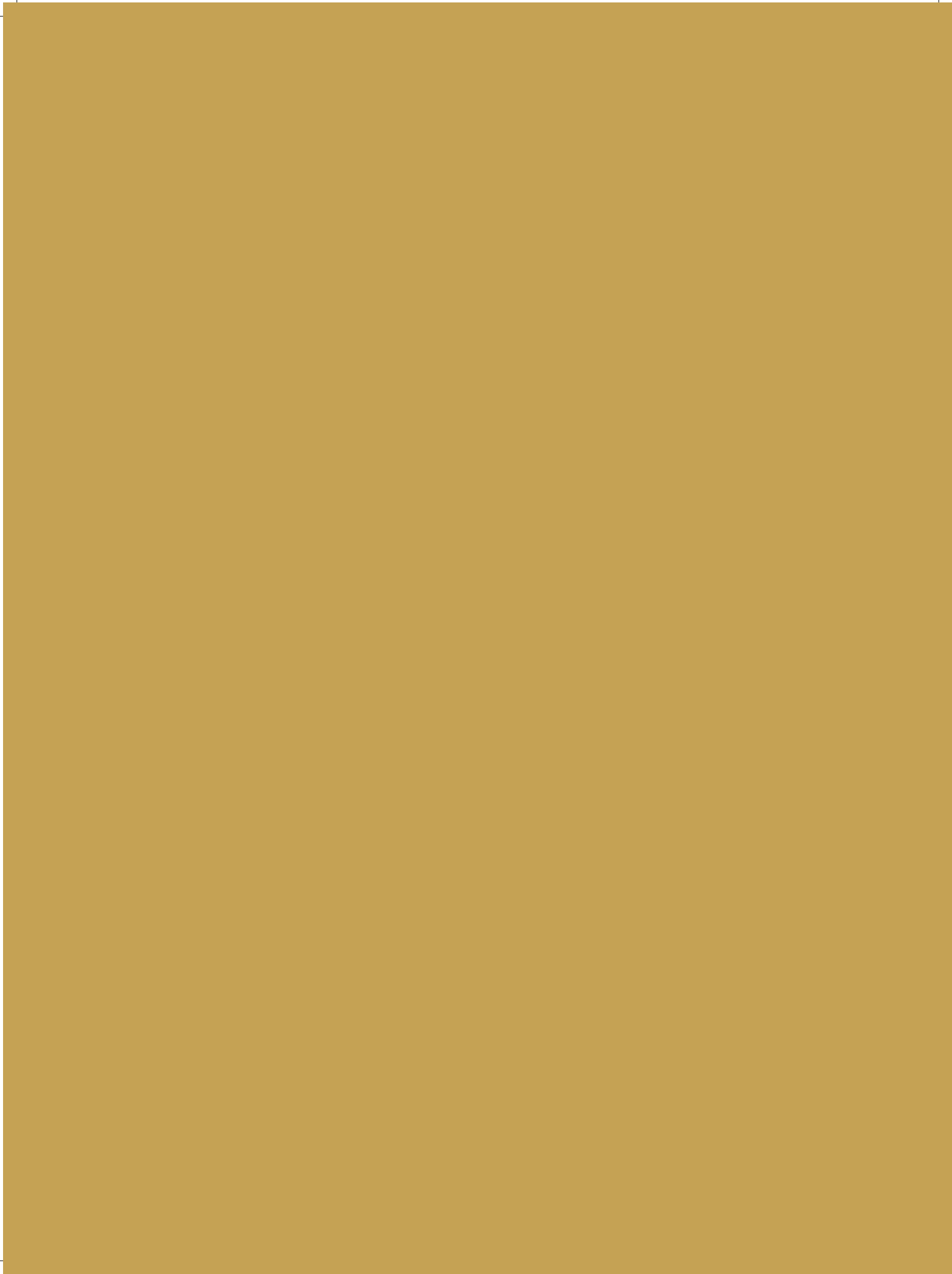
Similarly, Lord Soley continued, without a robust and safe legal environment, the country would never have become one of the most attractive destinations of foreign investments. In fact,

Lord Soley said, the rule of law has been – among certain other factors – the direct catalyst behind the country’s remarkable human-development rates.

Lord Soley also spoke about how the rule of law bolsters political stability and helps prudent leaders instil safety and stability within society.

Now, going back to the underlying theme that has motivated this book from title to finish: The UAE is an incredible success story; a story of how, under prudent rule, security, stability, prosperity, and happiness can be achieved; a story of remarkable, world-class infrastructural accomplishment; a story of a wonderful, edifying journey, full of extraordinary milestones and landmarks.



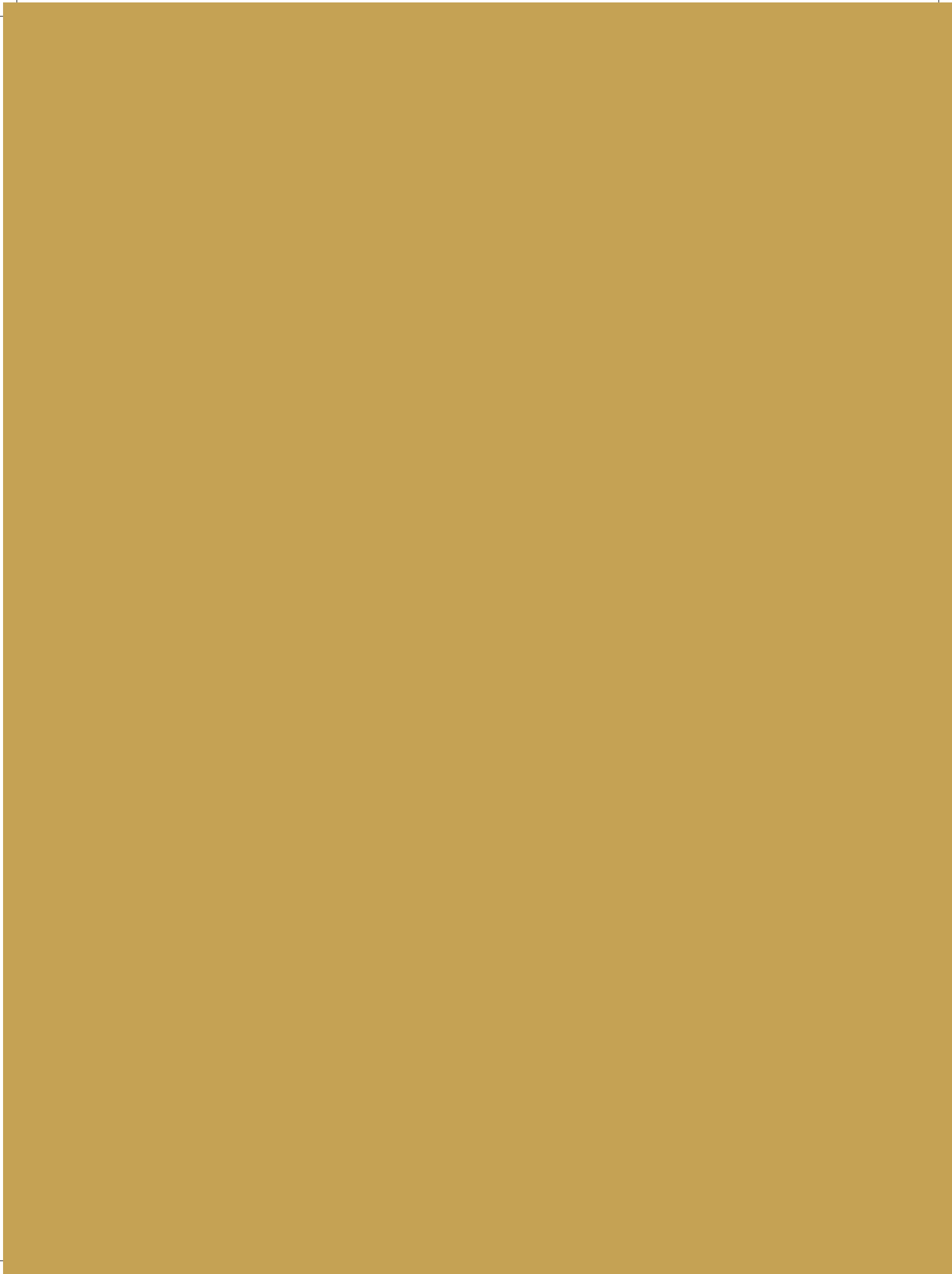






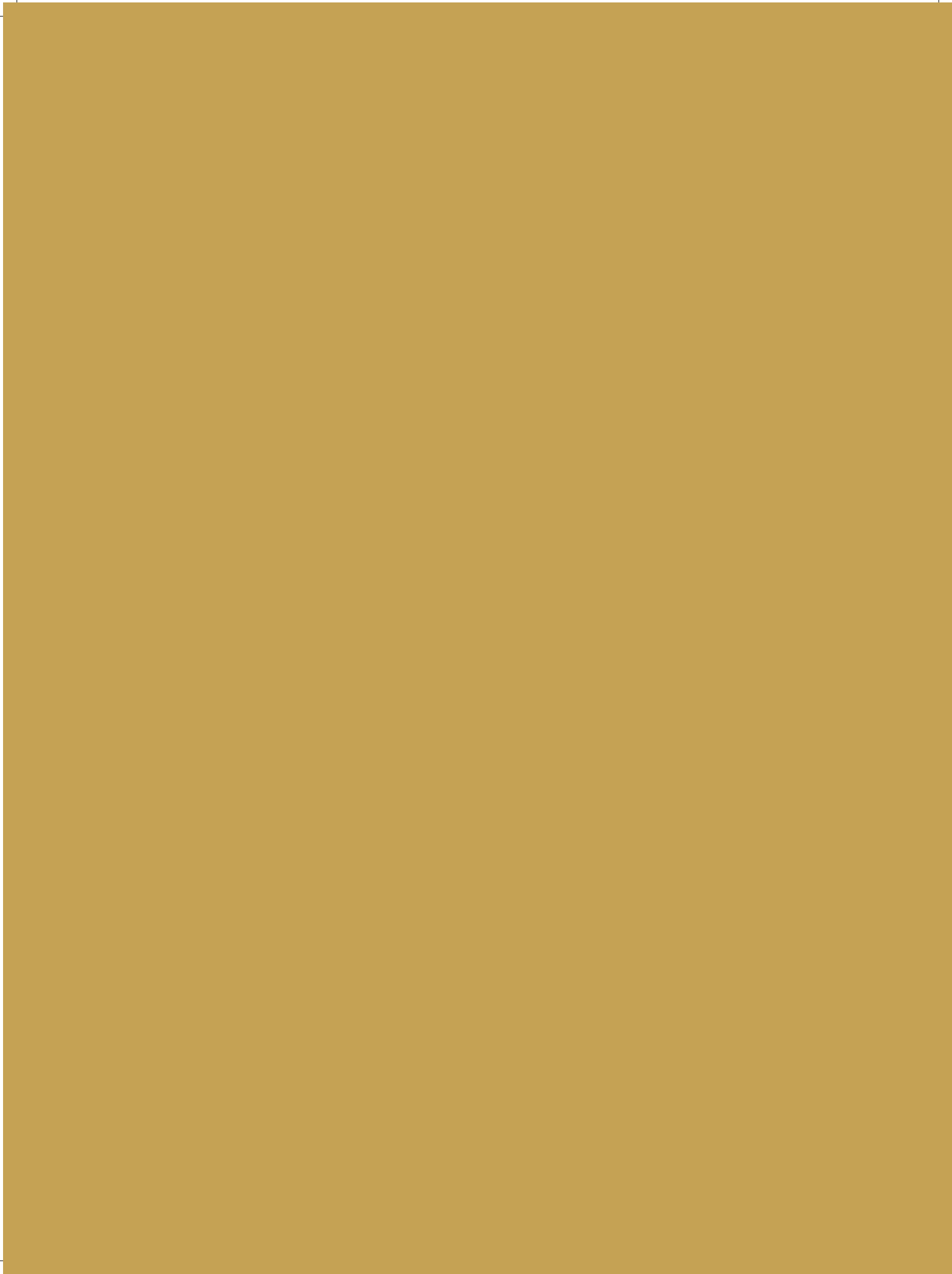
Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan  
and Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed





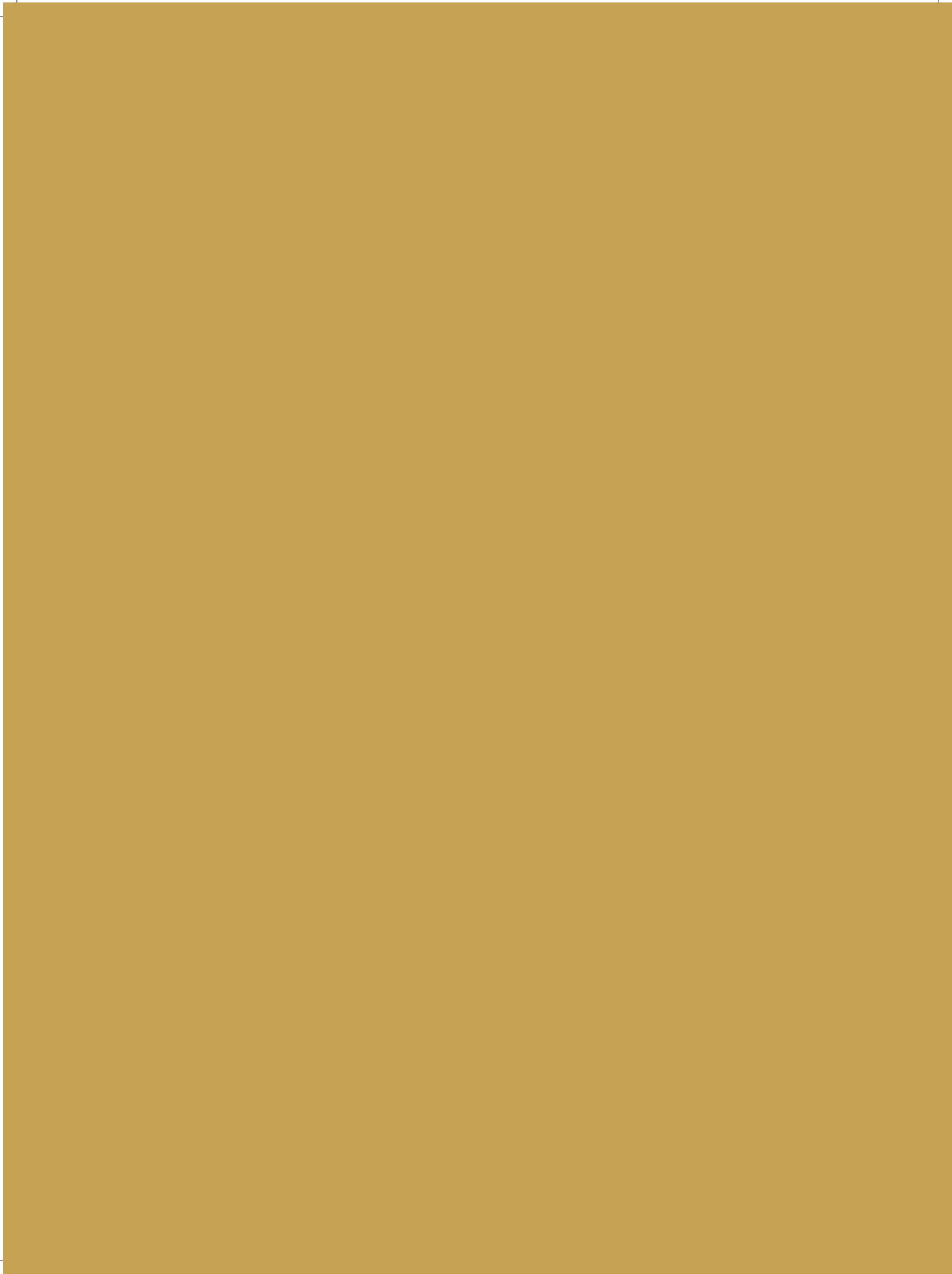


Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan  
and Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed



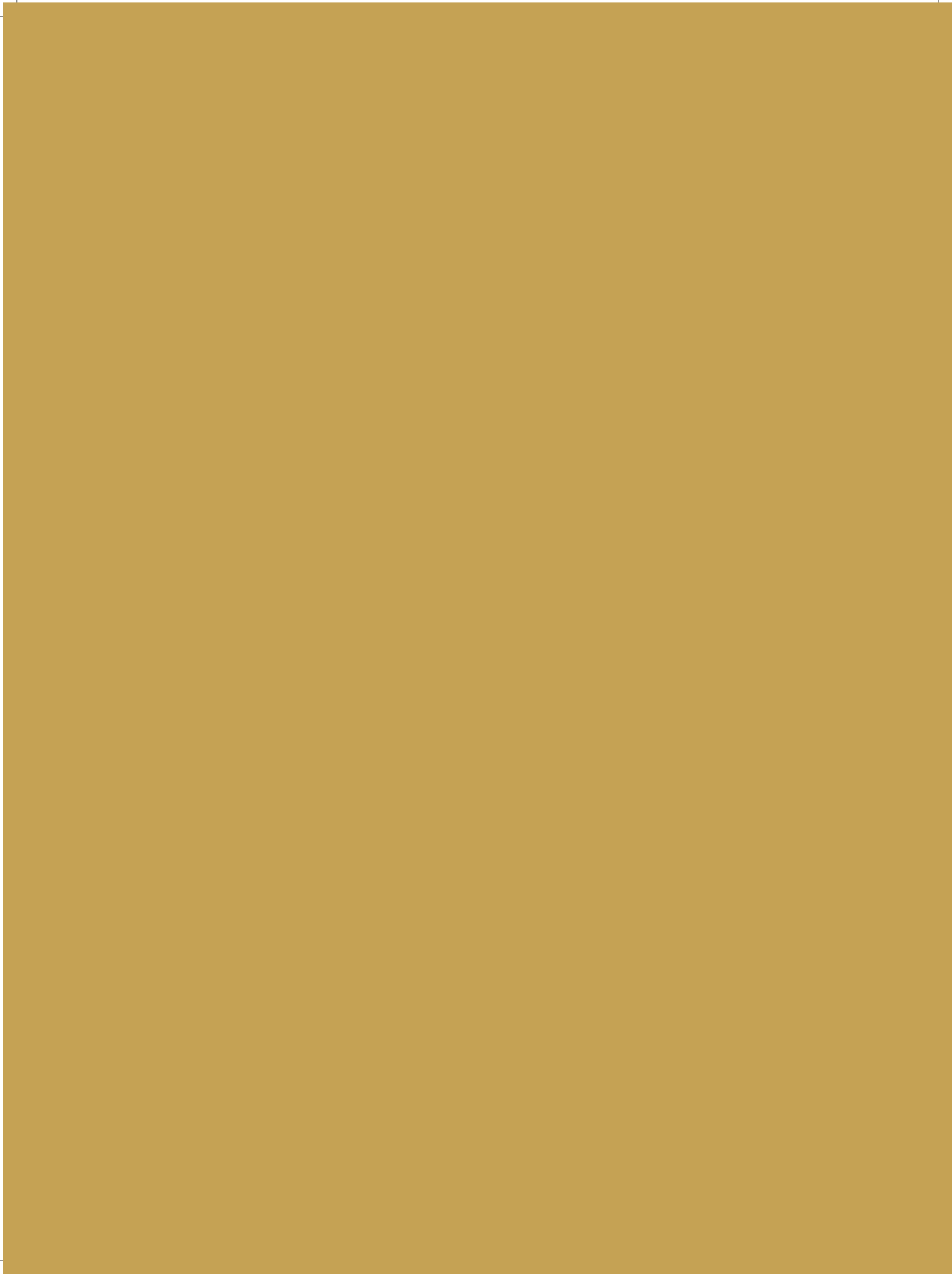


Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan  
provided free land and housing to citizens





Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan  
the man who turned desert into a garden







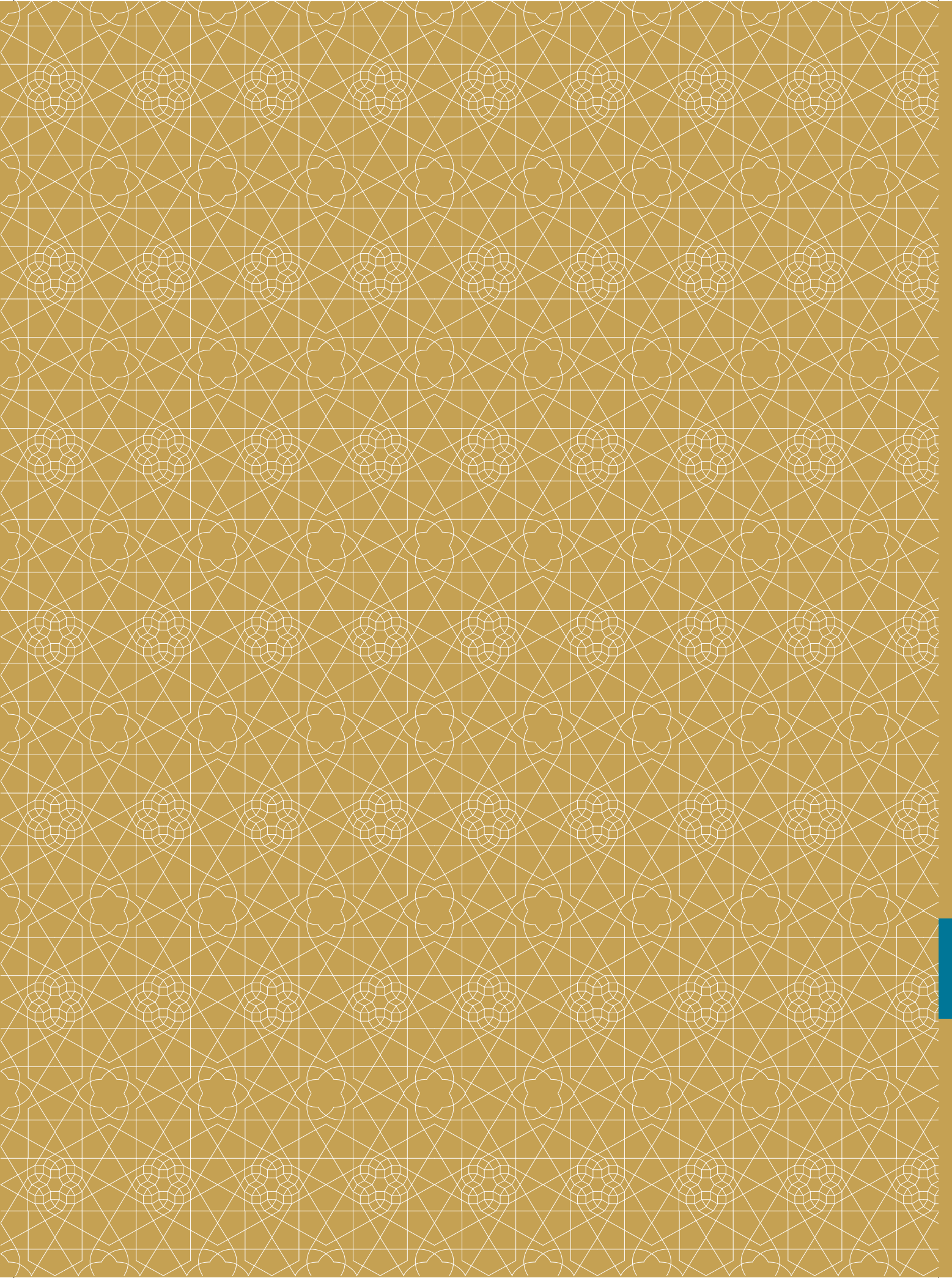
Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan  
and Sheikh Salem bin Ham

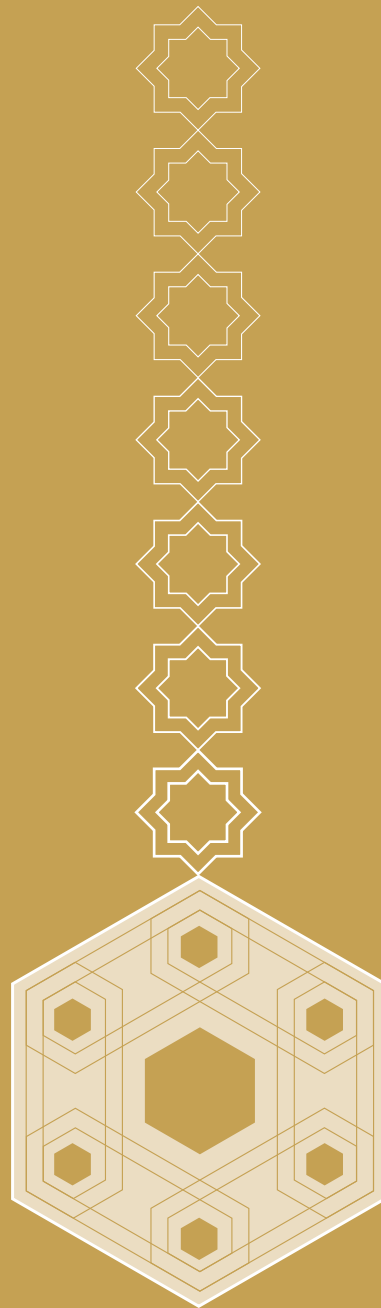


The President, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan with members of the Supreme Federal Council and members of the Federal National Council at the opening of the 15th legislative chapter in 2011.

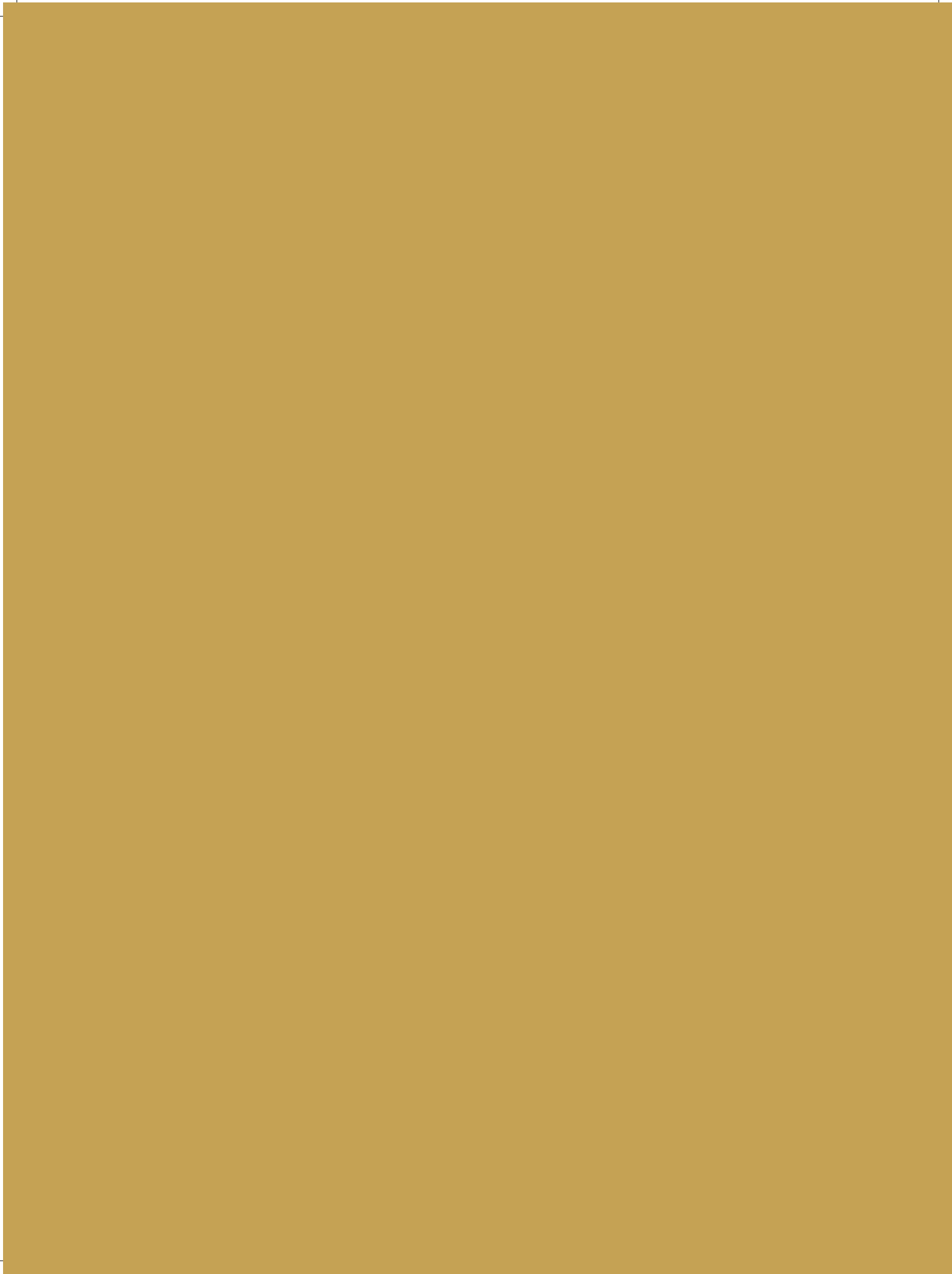








# The Resplendent United Arab Emirates

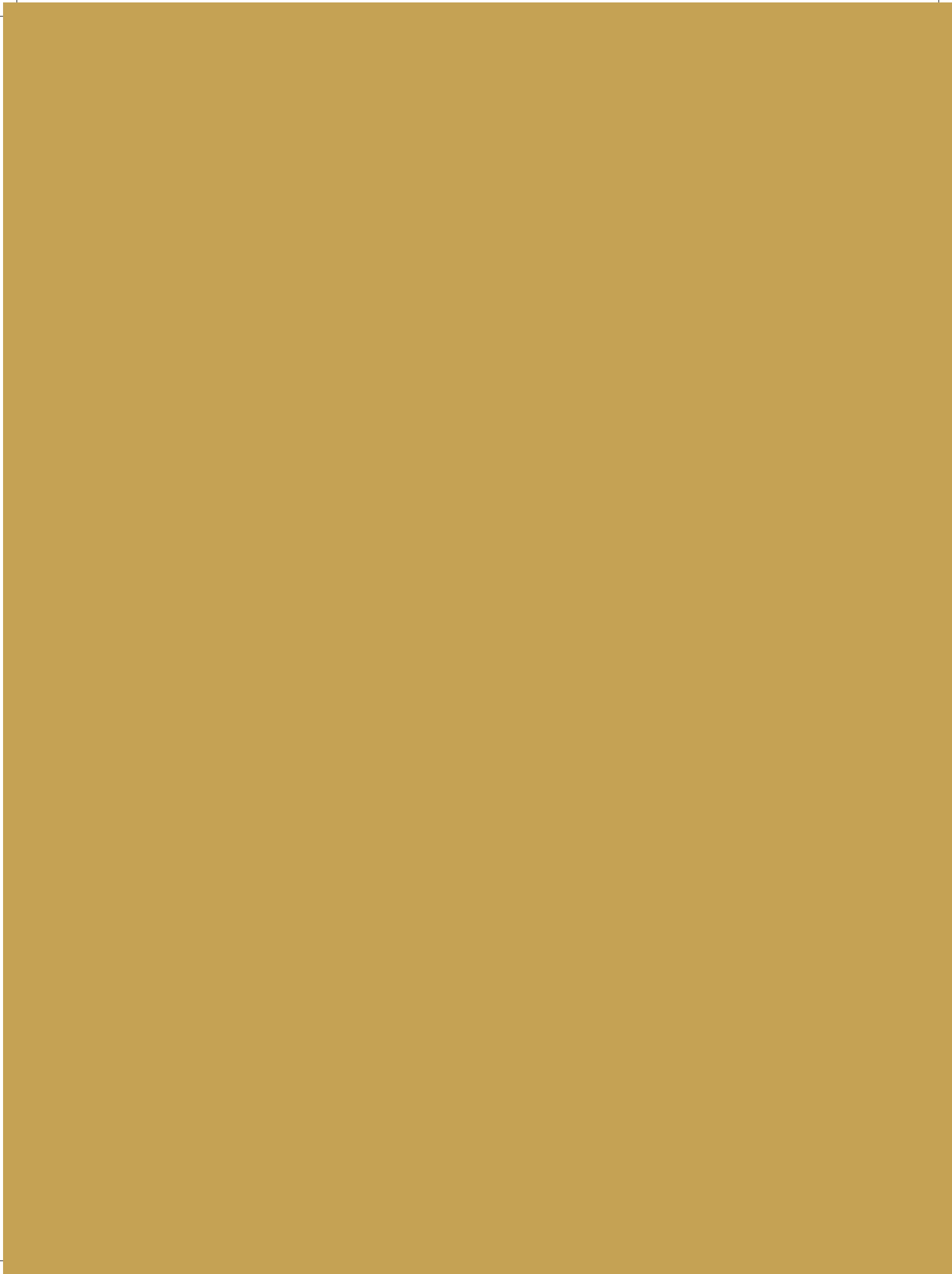






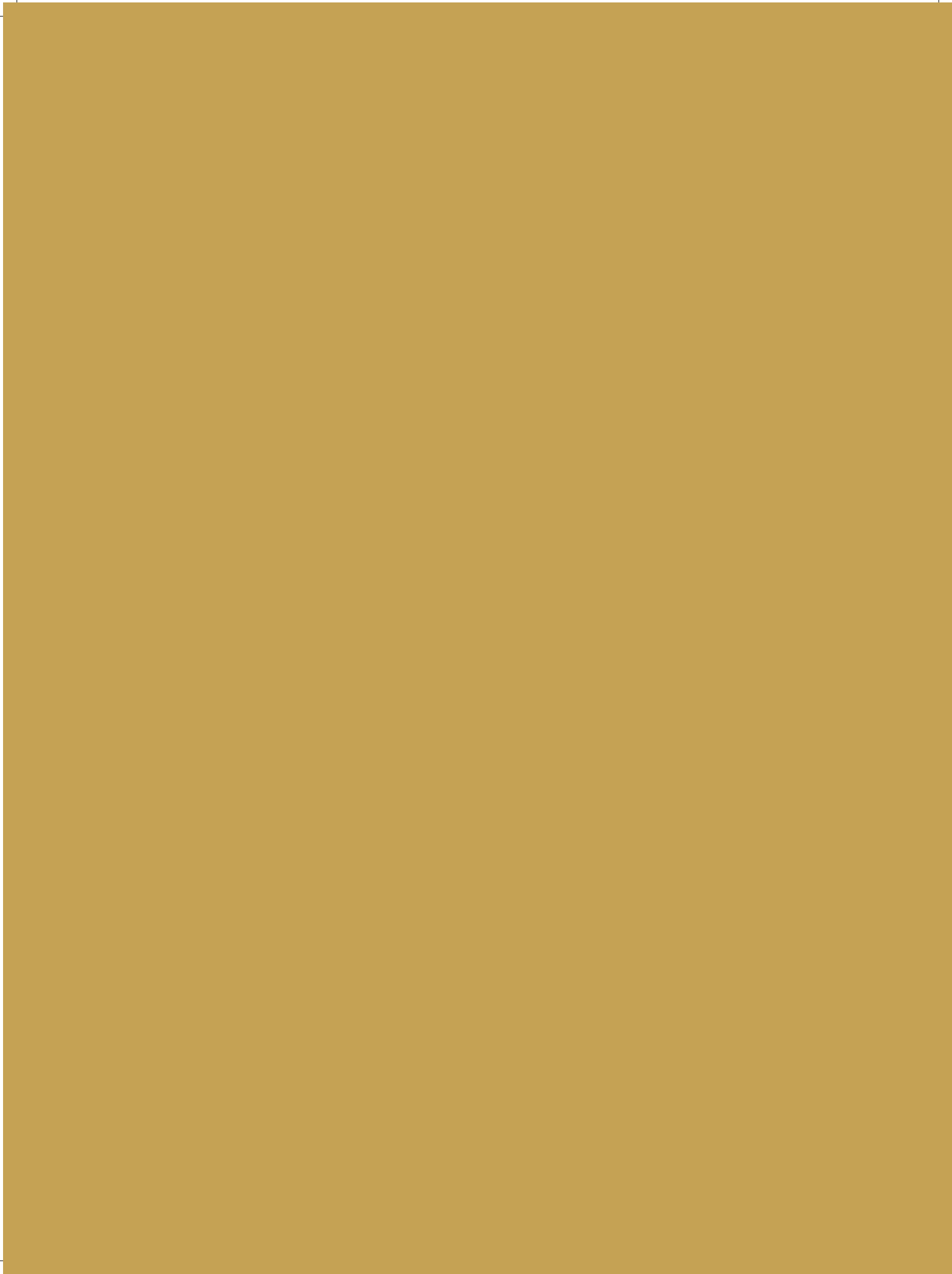
Abu Dhabi





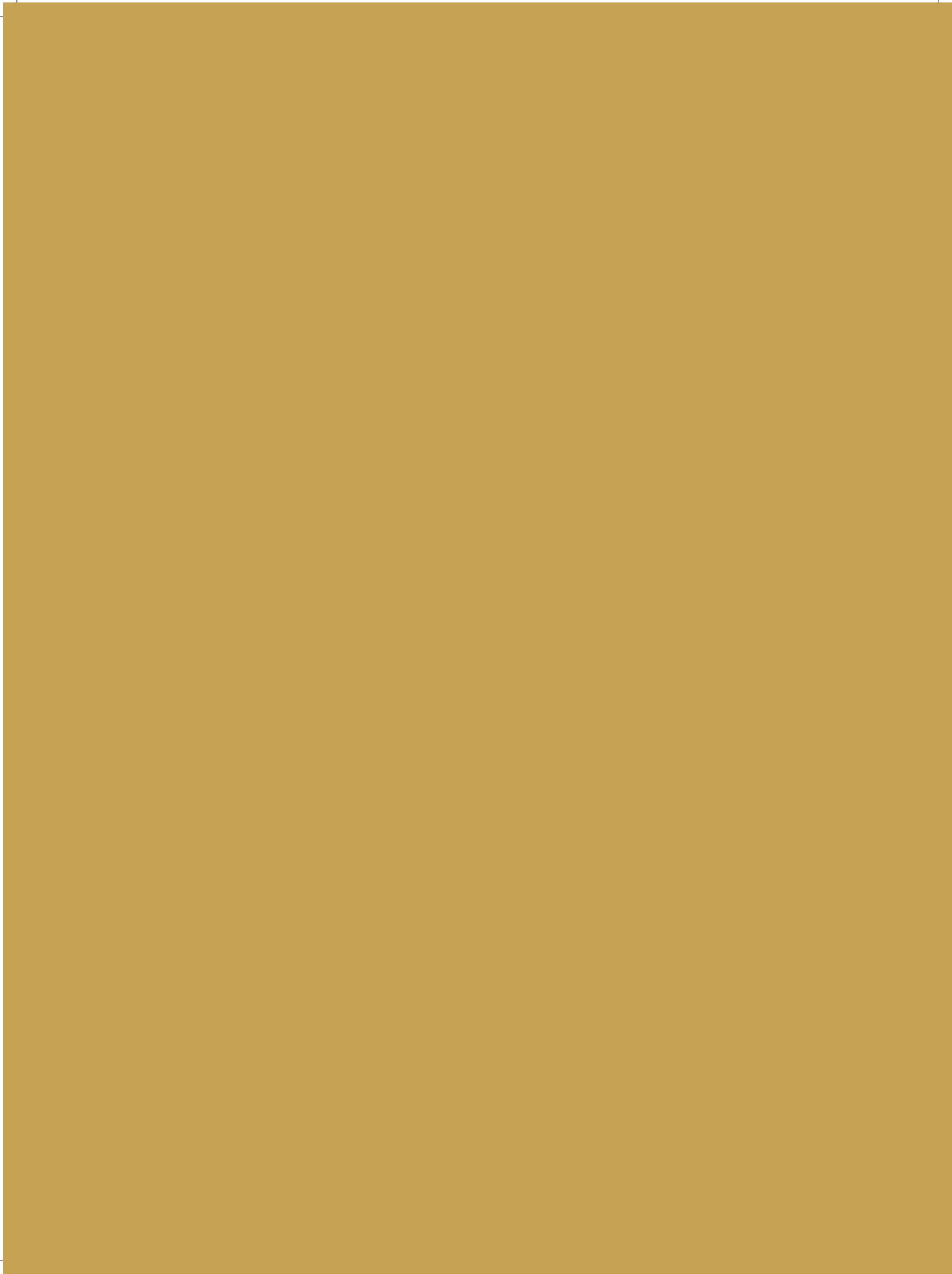


Dubai





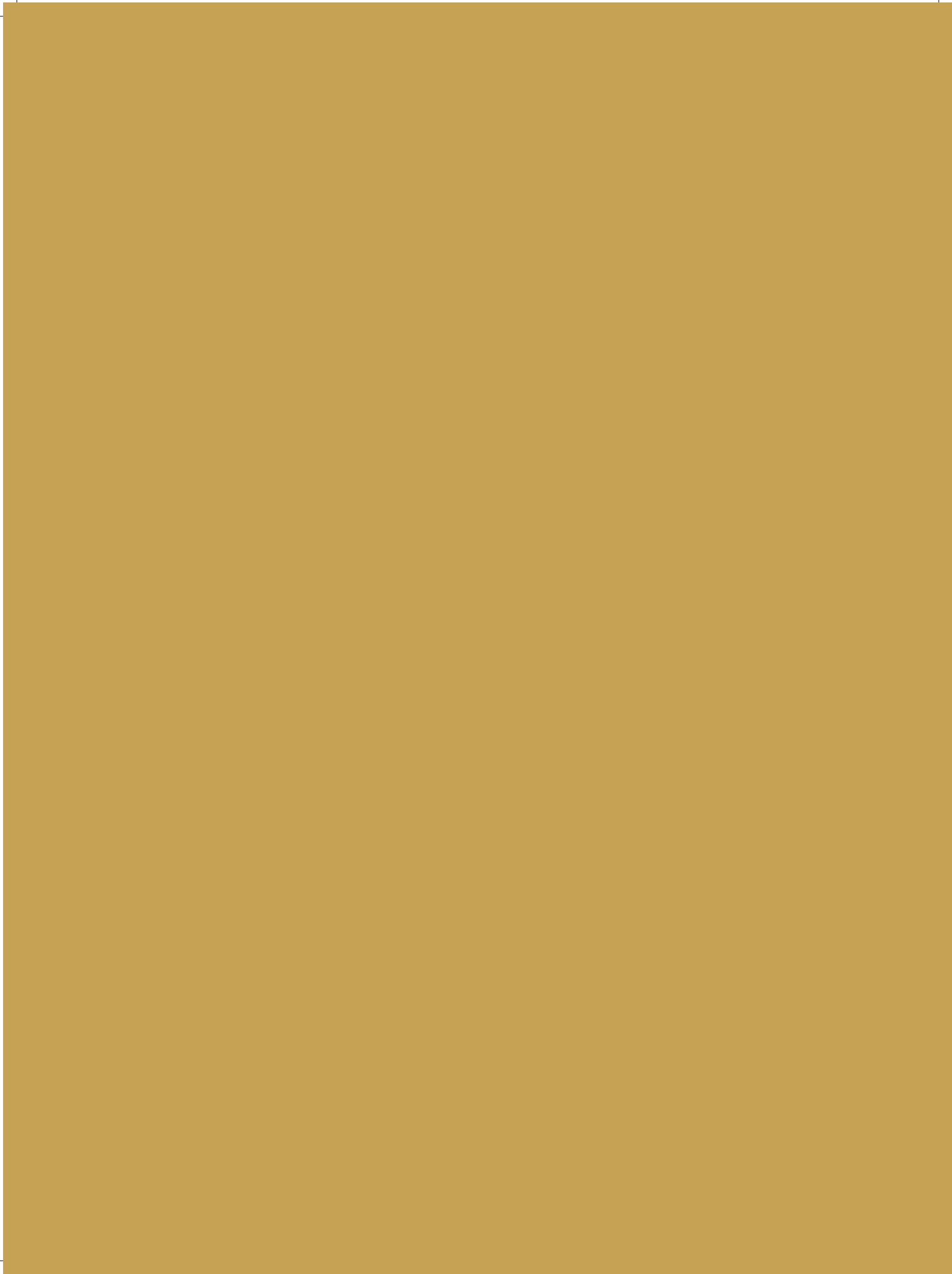
Sharjah







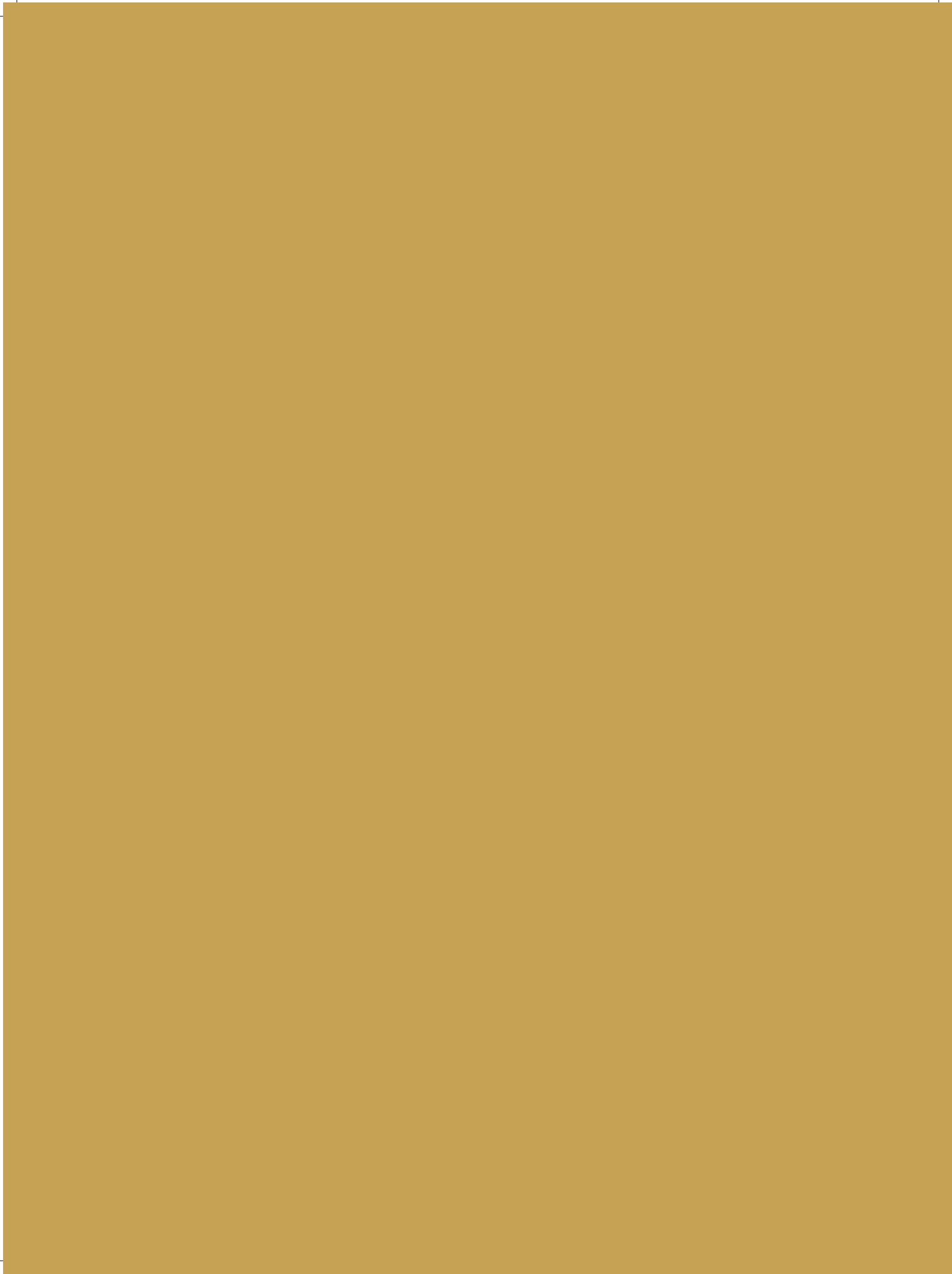
Ras Al Khaimah





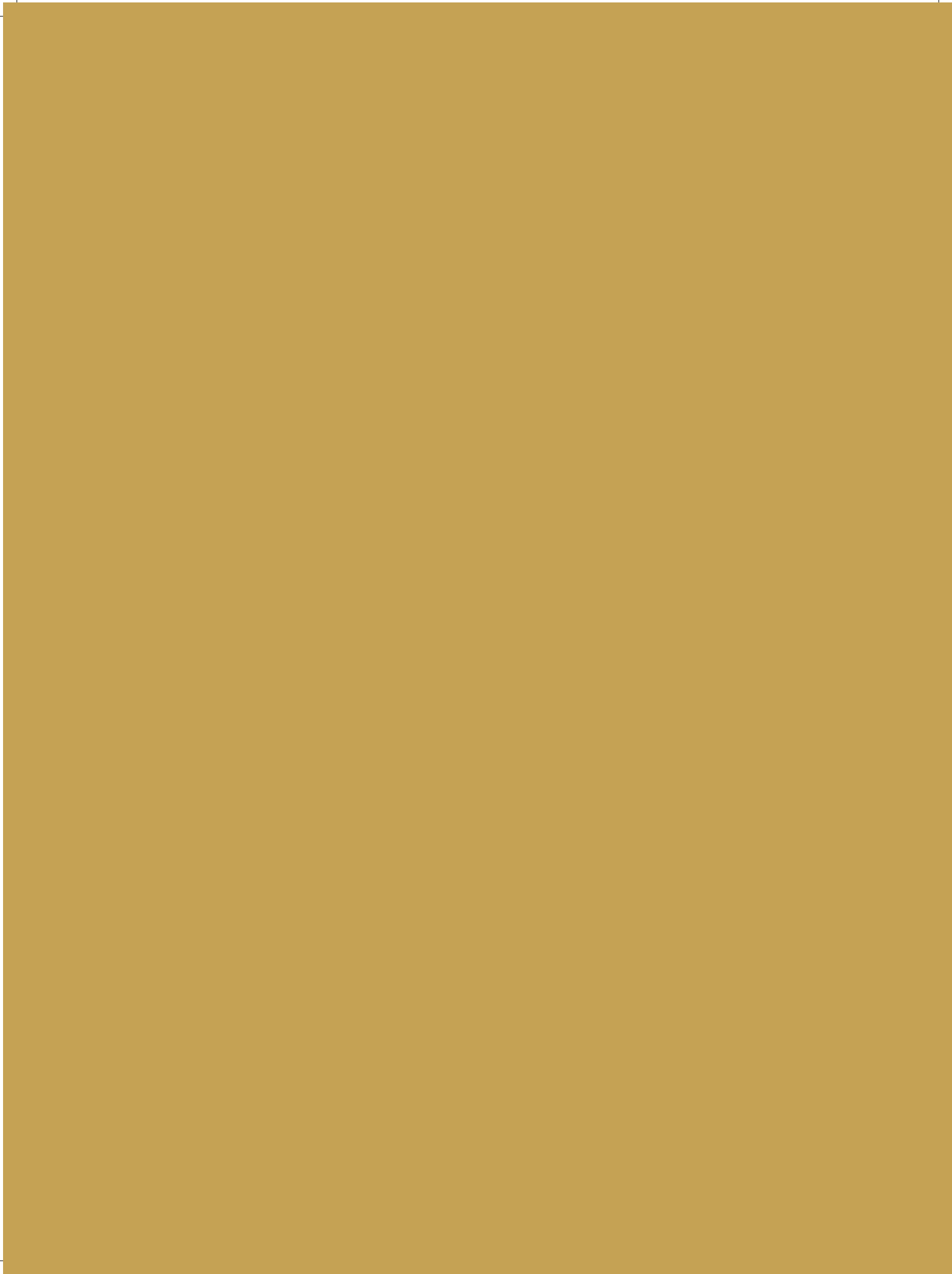


Ajman





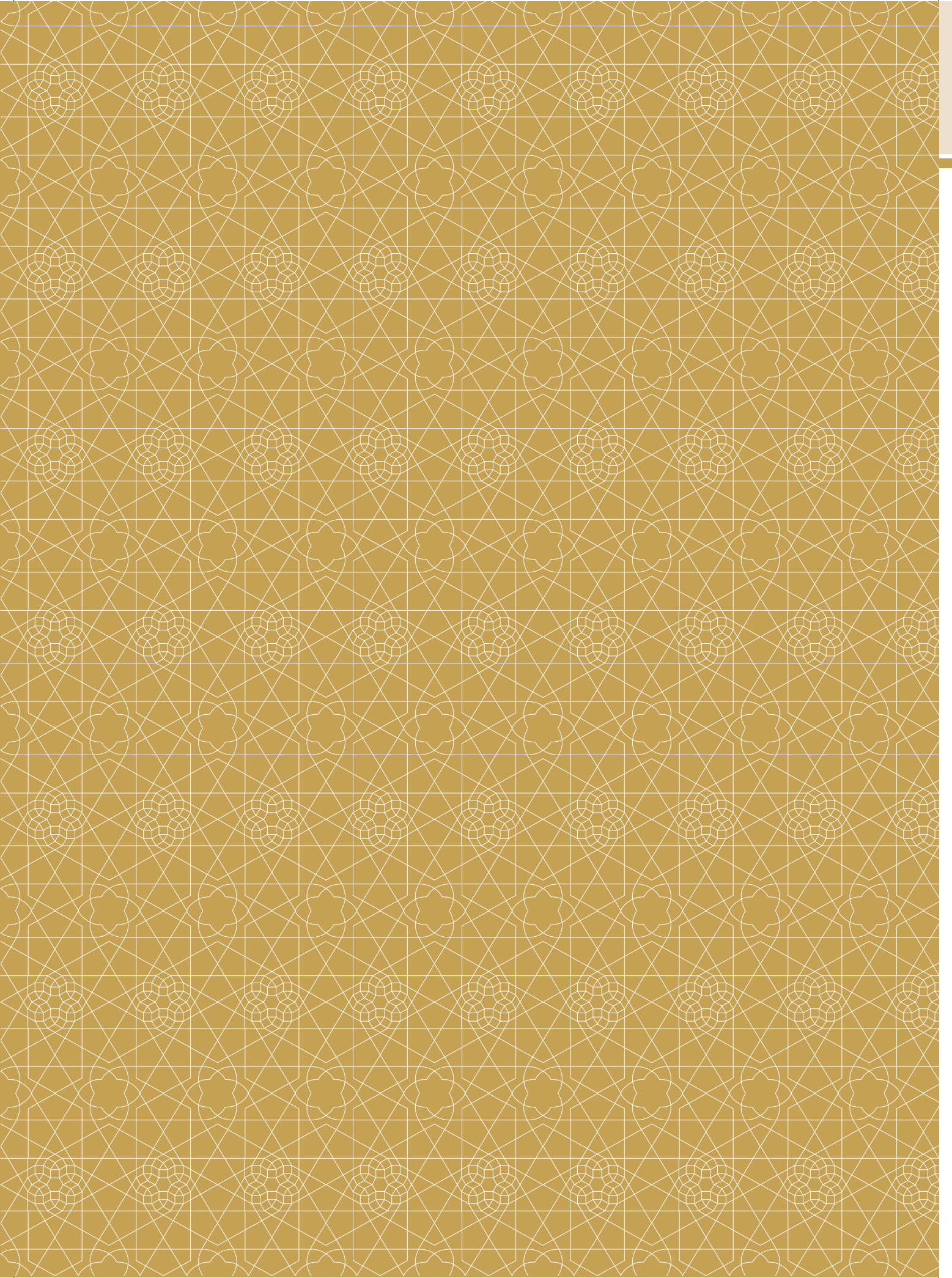
Fujairah





Umm Al Quwain







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*Translator's Note: Many of the items listed below, with the exception of UN reports and references originally written in English, do not actually exist in the English language; the titles have been translated from the Arabic only to give the English-language reader an idea about the Arabic-language literature that was used in writing this book. The references are not ordered alphabetically; they appear in the same order as in the Arabic edition. The names of some Arab authors have been transliterated to our best approximation and, thus, may not represent the actual spellings in Latin alphabet.*

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