Excerpts: His Highness the Aga Khan on the essence of the Enabling Environment: enabling and assisting individual creativity

"[I]nstitutions are the vehicles to unleash the creativity and energy of billions of men and women.... The business and voluntary sectors can work together to unleash the creative energies of the informal sector, the many millions of tiny producers....

"It is my profound conviction that steps to strengthen institutions and the linkages between them are critical to the freedom of the individual to be creative and productive in a socially responsible manner. This is the essence of the Enabling Environment. In the textbooks, most discussion of freedom centres on the prevention of absolute power. It is about checks and balances. The time has come to evolve concepts and practices of 'positive freedom,' the links between individuals and institutions and the rules of the game that encourage mutual trust, promote co-operation, unleash human potentials and make possible a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts....

"An Ayat in the Qur'an says: 'Verily, God does not change man's condition unless they change that which is in themselves.' We must show greater faith in the ability of the individual to be creative. We may be at a point in history in which the people of the Third World are both willing and able to act. We all share a responsibility to help create an environment to make this possible."

His Highness the Aga Khan's 1987 Keynote Address at the International Development Conference (Washington, D.C., USA)  
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/3381/
"Trust in people. Trust in people. It’s an extraordinary phenomenon of development that the most powerful force is people changing their own environment. What they need in many cases is the wherewithal to change. But the will to change, very often the capacity to change well -- because they live in that context -- that's an extraordinarily powerful force."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2005 remarks to the press at the inauguration of the Aga Khan Agency For Microfinance (Geneva, Switzerland)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/7211/

"[M]an is an extraordinary creature, a creation, and that assisting him to become creative, productive within his national context, is the most productive thing an institution can do."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1981 Pakistan TV Interview with Javed Jabber (Karachi, Pakistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/2174/

"This reversal from fear to hope is rooted in individuals, in the leadership that they provide to the overall impact of civil society. Governments and institutions must create an Enabling Environment in which hope can flourish. But the actual process of replacing fear with hope rests with every individual in his or her society."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2014 Aiglon College Graduation Ceremony address (Chesieres, Switzerland)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/10824/

"I think private initiative is absolutely fundamental, absolutely fundamental [to meeting the needs of the developing world]. You are talking about countries with numbers of people which are just
incomparable with the Western world. You have got to mobilise these people to look to improve their lot because it is physically, and just in sheer numbers, impossible for a government to be the motivator, the exclusive motivator ... the issue of standards is fundamental. That's where private initiative can really contribute in a substantial way."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1979 The Age Interview with Geoffrey Barker (Melbourne, Australia)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/10329/

"Human genius is found in its variety which is the work of Allah. Harnessing that genius to the fullest should be one of the goals of all modern societies and nations in addition to mobilising creative capacity from all segments of society. It is essential to nurture it, by providing a variety of educational opportunities suited to the talents of different individuals and the demands of a rapidly changing world."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1998 Address to the Gorno-Badakshan Assembly (Khorog, Gorno-Badakshan, Tajikistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/5445/

"[L]et me emphasise that healthy institutions will tap the widest possible range of energies and insights. They will optimise each society’s meritocratic potential, so that opportunity will reward competence, from whomever and wherever it may come -- independent of birth or wealth or theology or physical power."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2010 10th Annual LaFontaine-Baldwin Lecture, Institute for Canadian Citizenship (Toronto, Canada)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/9601/

"Generally speaking, the most successful developing countries are those which have engaged actively with the global knowledge society, those
which have accepted and defended the value of pluralism, and those which have created an Enabling Environment for human enterprise, rather than indulging in asphyxiating policies which discourage human endeavour."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2007 Masters of Public Affairs Programme, Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po). Graduation Ceremony address (Paris, France)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/8092/

"... when all is said and done, it is first and above all else, up to the governments of developing countries to recognise that they can never -- now nor at any time in the future -- be a total substitute for the individual private initiative which they have at their disposal ..."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1976 Address to the Swiss-American Chamber of Commerce, ‘The Role of Private Initiative in Developing Countries’ (Zurich, Switzerland)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/1750/

"In the end, human progress must grow out of the human heart and soul. The environment enables -- but it is the human spirit, guided and supported by the Divine Will, which eventually triumphs. What a sound Enabling Environment must do is to create a favourable framework in which human creativity can flourish."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2007 Address to the Enabling Environment Conference (Kabul, Afghanistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/8072/

"In the end, human progress must grow out of human inspiration and endeavour.... A sound Enabling Environment must create a favourable framework in which people’s energy and creativity can be motivated, mobilised and rewarded.... [E]ffective governmental efforts can take us
only so far. And that is why I so often talk about the role of 'Civil Society'; the capacities of the private sector, and the value of partnerships among these various institutions."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2007 Address to the Conference on Central Asia and Europe (Berlin, Germany)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/8292/

"When they can be creative, people are far and away the Third World’s largest resource. Obviously individuals cannot realise their potential unless governments provide an environment which enables them to do so."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1985 Ismaili Centre Opening Ceremony address (London, United Kingdom)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/3127/

"The response of the Third World in trying to make people, institutions and enterprises more productive is perfectly logical, but I have never seen it pursued so vigorously as it is today. In fact not only is a premium being put on creativity, there is a premium on locating it, and on harnessing it to the national endeavour. This premium includes providing a new legal framework in which creativity can operate: what I would call an Enabling Environment."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1982 Aga Khan Social and Development Institutions Luncheon address (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/2521/

"The basic topic of our discussions, therefore, is how to create the conditions of confidence, predictability and mutual trust that will enable people and institutions to realise their full potential...."
"My third question concerns ways to improve the process of learning from the experiences of the voluntary sector. Traditionally jealous of their independence, many voluntary agencies are cautious about allowing scrutiny and promoting the replication of successful projects on a large scale. If the potential of private development agencies is to be realised and confidence in them is to grow, this must change. How can we improve the process of self-analysis, evaluation and the exchange of experiences without diminishing the autonomy and creative initiative of voluntary agencies? How can they learn from their own experiences in order to improve the management of their programmes?"

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1986 Aga Khan Development Network’s Enabling Environment Conference, Opening Session Address (Nairobi, Kenya)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/3331/

"[A]nd this brings me to the final point I wish to make, creative activity and higher standards can only flourish if the national environment enables them to do so. This environment, which I call the 'Enabling Environment', is made up of many elements. Political stability and confidence in the future. Protection of the rights of citizens. Democratic institutions, such as India enjoys. A system of laws which encourage initiative and enterprise. A civil service which is performance oriented and answerable for its action on all fronts including the economic one. These are the kind of factors which attract investment and stimulate the creativity of people in all walks of life."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1983 Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce Luncheon address (New Dehli, India)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/2707/

"Even the materially rich countries are rethinking the notion of the State and are emphasising the State’s role in helping to free and mobilise the energy and creativity of civil society to meet the challenges of development. The importance of private initiative has become clearly
evident in economic development.”

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2003 Ismaili Centre Foundation Stone Ceremony address (Dushanbe, Tajikistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/6717/

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See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on ideas and innovation: on nurturing, respecting, harnessing them from whomever they come

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See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on ensuring civil society’s creativity and autonomy is not suffocated

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See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on the fuel of progress: harnessing private initiative through public-private partnerships

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See also: His Highness the Aga Khan explains progress depends on trusting people: delegating authority, discretion and decision making