Excerpts: His Highness the Aga Khan's advices for leaders which enables sound national and community progress and development

"[D]evelopment is only possible when the community is engaged at the grassroots level and is given the ways and the means to take responsibility for its own future."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2006 Address to the Conference on Afghanistan (London, UK)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/7646/

"I have seen situations where there has been an attempt to marginalise the intelligentsia of a given community and that of course is an extremely unwelcome feature of a society."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2015 Samuel L & Elizabeth Jodidi Lecture and apres lecture conversation with Diana L. Eck, Harvard University (Cambridge, USA) [Emphasis added]
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/10936/

"[T]he role of Civil Society is often misunderstood or taken for granted. At times, Civil Society has been marginalised, discounted, or dismissed.... Even more disturbing have been efforts in some places to constrain or even repress these institutions, stereotyping them as illegitimate, unelected and unaccountable. These attitudes may simply reflect a reluctance to share power and influence, or perhaps a feeling that the creative energy and sheer diversity of Civil Society is
daunting and dangerous. Such attitudes have been exceptional, but they are highly regrettable, discouraging the qualities of vision, innovation and forward thinking that progressive societies so badly need.”

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2016 Keynote Address to ‘Africa 2016: Business for Africa, Egypt and the World’ Conference (Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt) [Emphasis added]
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/10948/

"Trust in people. Trust in people. It’s an extraordinary phenomenon of development that the most powerful force is people changing their own environment.”

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/

"And I think one of the lessons we've learned in [our work] is to listen -- quite simply to listen and listen and listen and listen. The moment you become deaf in development activity, you're out of the park.”

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2008 Vancouver Sun Interview with Don Cayo (Vancouver, Canada) [Emphasis added]
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/9087/

"I have been amazed and thrilled frankly, at the capacities of even the completely illiterate populations, to express themselves about the correct priority that should be addressed. And if you follow their agenda, nine times out of ten, you'll get it right!”

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2002 Pakistan Television Interview with Talat Hussain (Pakistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/6224/

"[H]uman progress can only be sustained when people are able to participate in their own governance.”

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2005 Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat Foundation Stone Ceremony address (Ottawa, Canada)
"When an individual faces corruption, that’s a problem. When a village community faces corruption it’s a totally different issue. And in fact, corruption in civil society is probably one of the most damaging forces that we are trying to deal with everyday.... And what we’ve found is that the community organisations, when they come together, what do they look at? It’s very exciting. Their whole basis of hope is built around best practice. They reject all the things that have damaged them individually and they come together and say we want a new future built around new people whom we choose because we trust them."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2012 Acceptance Address and Interview - David Rockefeller Bridging Leadership Award Ceremony hosted by the Synergos Foundation (London, United Kingdom)

http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/7314/

"A vast decentralisation of decision-making is already occurring in many countries; it has the advantage of placing new responsibilities in the hands of local communities.... For the key to future progress will lie less in traditional top-down systems of command and control -- and more in a broad, bottom-up spirit of coordination and cooperation.... "Social progress, in the long run, will not be found by delegating an all-dominant role to any one player -- but rather through multi-sector partnerships. And within each sector of society, diversity should be a watchword.... The world ... increasingly resembles a vast web in which everything connects to everything else -- where even the smallest groups and loneliest voices can exercise new influence, and where no single source of power can claim substantial control.... [T]he key to intellectual progress will not lie in any single body of instruction, but in a spirit of openness to new expression and fresh insights.... [The Ummah] must become full and even leading participants in the Knowledge Society of the 21st Century. That will mean embracing the values of collaboration and co-ordination, openness and partnership, choice and diversity -- which will under-gird the Knowledge Society.... [I]n the Knowledge Society, productive research is most often partnership research ... sharing agendas and exchanging insights."
"The development process is enabling people to make permanent changes, to make choices of their own and that means building civil society and it means placing the pillars of civil society under the control of good leadership and enabling environments."

"The conviction that home-grown intellectual leadership of exceptional calibre is the best driver of a society's destiny, underpins the Ismaili Imamat's endeavour to create catalytic centres of educational excellence."

"You can always achieve results over a long period of time, but every time you do that you damage a generation and every time you move more quickly you bring hope to an earlier generation."

"I do pay attention to detail because I think ultimately one should address an issue once and try and get it right and not have to come back because you have been slip-shod or because you haven't taken into account something which you could have foreseen. There's so much that has to be done, it is better I think to try and do it once properly."

"[A]s Imam, I am concerned with the encouragement of all forms of
endeavour and, further, with the quality of its performance, because that affects the quality of human life. What is done must be done honestly, sincerely and well. We cannot afford to be incompetent, because if we are, we damage the people we seek to serve.”

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/

"How do we know whether these programs are actually working or not? How do we know whether they are improving? It would be very easy to mislead ourselves on this score and to assume that because we are trying hard, or spending significant sums of money, or are inspired by noble intentions, or are holding a lot of meetings -- we must therefore be making an effective impact. But this is not always the case. And that is why it is so important that all of us should be held accountable for the results we produce -- that our work should be measured by its observable, positive impact on the quality of people's lives.”

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

"[F]or me the most important word is accountability. We must be accountable at all times to the organisations we serve and to the people we serve."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1986 CBC Interview (1st) with Roy Bonisteel (Canada)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/3268/

"That the holder of a political office is accountable for his actions, is part of our faith. As it says in the Qur’an."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2002 Spiegel Online Interview (1st), with Erich Follath (Germany) [Translation]
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/6515/

"Performance ... is to me a key word where both social institutions and commercial enterprise are concerned."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1982 Aga Khan Social and Development Institutions Luncheon address (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania)
"[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/

"[I]nstitutions are the vehicles to unleash the creativity and energy of billions of men and women.... 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."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1987 Keynote Address at the International Development Conference (Washington, D.C., USA)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/3381/

"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."

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/

"In the final analysis, no nation, no race, no individual has a monopoly of intelligence or virtue.... [We must] harness the very best contributions from whomever and wherever they may come."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2009 University of Alberta Graduation Ceremony address (Edmonton, Alberta) [Emphasis added] http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/9281/

"In everything we do we must look to the future, seeking always to think creatively, to innovate and to improve."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1983 address on the Acceptance of the Charter of the Aga Khan University (Karachi, Pakistan) [Emphasis added] http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/2817/

"[T]he best path to knowledge is to admit first what it is we do not know, and to open our minds to what others can teach us."


"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.”

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/

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“In a world of rapid change, an agile and adaptable mind, a pragmatic
and cooperative temperament, a strong ethical orientation -- these are increasingly the keys to effective leadership. And I would add to this list a capacity for intellectual humility which keeps one's mind constantly open to a variety of viewpoints."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2008 ‘The Peterson Lecture’ at the Annual Meeting of the International Baccalaureate (Atlanta, Georgia, USA)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/8435/

"[P]rogress is possible when complex issues are subjected to competent, intelligent, nuanced and sophisticated analysis, free from dogmatism, and based upon what I would describe as 'empathetic knowledge.' This happens best in open, meritocratic societies, where people's responsibilities are based on their competence."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2014 Stephen A. Ogden Memorial Lecture, Brown University (Providence, USA)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/10725/

"The best way to manage change, whether positive or negative, is to anticipate it and prepare for it."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2002 Aga Khan School Opening Ceremony address (Osh, Kyrgyzstan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/6386/

"An important thing is looking forward across time ... The reactive mode is a tremendous liability. Being in an anticipatory mode changes the whole nature of things, and the longer you have to change things, the better chance you have of making it work."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2008 Vancouver Sun Interview with Don Cayo (Vancouver, Canada)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/9087/

"Genuine hope ... has usually been rooted in a tough sense of realism -- a recognition that no one has all the answers, that today's answers may not
"work forever, that good people do not all think alike, and that we must constantly learn from one another ..."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2007 State Banquet address (Nairobi, Kenya)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/8187/

"There is never going to be consensus on leadership. There is always going to be differences of opinion and the concept of leadership by referendum is not necessarily the right decision. I think the role of leadership is to have the courage to live by certain objectives, certain standards. If they are challenged, let them be challenged."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1989 All India TV and Radio Interview with Rajiv Mehrotra (India)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/4296/

"Surely one of the most important tests of moral leadership is whether our leaders are working to widen divisions -- or to bridge them."

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

"Of one fact, my years in public life have convinced me: that the value of a compromise is that it can supply a bridge across a difficult period, and later having employed it, it is often possible to bring into effect the full-scale measures of reform which, originally, would have been rejected out of hand."

Chapter 9: The End of the Ottoman Empire (The Memoirs of Aga Khan III)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/9927/

"Whoever sets himself up as a leader of other people should start educating himself before educating others, and let him teach by his conduct before teaching by his tongue."

Hazrat Ali
Living and Dying with Grace, Counsels of Hadrat Ali, Thomas Cleary, pp 11

"By much silence, there comes to be awe. By justice, communications
increase. By generosity, worth grows. By humility, blessings come about. By taking burdens upon oneself, one attains leadership. By just behaviour, enemies are overcome. By forbearance in face of a fool, helpers against him increase."

Hazrat Ali
Living and Dying with Grace, Counsels of Hadrat Ali, Thomas Cleary, pp 42
See also: Hazrat Ali’s advice to his leader (2)
https://www.facebook.com/notes/nanowisdoms-archive/wisdom/309662422385282

See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on dogma, myopia & asphyxiating policies vs research, innovation, creativity & pragmatism

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

See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on thinking independently and the search for new knowledge -- the spirit of adventure

See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on embracing controversy in the search for new knowledge, truth and creative solutions
See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on the essence of the Enabling Environment: enabling and assisting individual creativity


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


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


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