

Departamento de Medio Oriente

GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

19th GCC-EU JOINT COUNCIL AND MINISTERIAL MEETING Muscat, 29 April 2009

1. Upon the invitation of the Sultanate of Oman, the current chair of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, the Nineteenth Session of the GCC-EU Joint Council, established in accordance with the Cooperation Agreement between the countries parties to the Charter of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf on one hand, and the European Community on the other, was held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman on 29 April 2009.

The GCC delegation was led by H.E. Yousuf Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman and President of the Ministerial Council of the GCC. The meeting was also attended by H.E. Abdulrahman Bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, Secretary General of the GCC.

The EU delegation was led by H.E. Karel Schwarzenberg, Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic and President of the Council of the European Union. The European Commission was represented by H.E. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the Commissioner Responsible for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy.

The meeting took place in a friendly and constructive atmosphere. The participants expressed their appreciation to the Government of the Sultanate Oman for the warm reception, excellent preparations and generous hospitality.

In preparation of this meeting, GCC and EU officials had met in Brussels on 17 March 2009 in the Regional Directors' meeting and on 18 March 2009 in the Joint Cooperation Committee meeting respectively.

2. Implementation of the Cooperation Agreement

The Joint Council welcomed the outcome of the 18th March Joint Cooperation Committee meeting. The two sides noted with satisfaction the progress achieved at the meetings held between the GCC and EU experts on energy, environment, climate change, economy and higher education. They welcomed the results of the ongoing activities to promote public diplomacy and outreach between the two regions. They also welcomed initiatives on clean energy technologies, scientific Research&Development, and exchanges on higher education between the two regions.

The Joint Council expressed its determination to further strengthen the GCC and EU relationship in all areas covered by the 1988 Cooperation Agreement.

3. Free Trade Agreement

The GCC and the EU reviewed their recent consultations on a Free Trade Agreement and agreed to continue these consultations between them on all outstanding issues towards the resumption of negotiations.

4. International and Regional Issues

The Joint Council reviewed a number of regional and international political issues of mutual interest. The GCC and the EU reiterated their determination to develop and advance the political dialogue between them based on mutual respect with a view to seeking common solutions to the, common challenges facing their respective regions, while fully respecting international law, the United Nations Charter and the relevant UNSC resolutions.

4.1. Developments in the Middle East

The Joint Council reaffirmed the GCC and the EU shared position that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East is vital to international peace and security.

The two sides reemphasized that peace in the Middle East can only be achieved through direct negotiations between the parties concerned and in all its tracks in accordance with the Madrid terms of reference and based on the principles of the land for peace, the two-state solution, the relevant UNSC resolutions, the Road Map, and previous agreements reached between the parties. In this regard, the GCC and the EU encourage Syria and Israel to resume their indirect peace-talks.

The two sides expressed their continued support for the Arab Peace Initiative as reaffirmed in the Arab League Summits held in Riyadh on 29 March 2007, in Damascus on 30 March 2008 and in Doha on 30 March 2009.

The two sides confirmed their joint position that the goal remains the end of the 1967 occupation and the creation of an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours.

The two sides reaffirmed their shared position not to recognize any change to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties. In this regard, they called on the parties not to undertake any action that would prejudice the outcome of the final status negotiations.

The GCC and the EU stressed their shared position that Israeli settlements anywhere in the occupied territories including in East Jerusalem are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace. In this regard they called on Israel to immediately end all settlement activities and dismantle all outposts.

The two sides condemned all violence and hostilities directed against civilians in the Gaza strip, and expressed their deep concern on the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Both sides deeply deplored the loss of life during this conflict, particularly the civilian casualties. They called for adherence to the provisions of international law. The GCC and the EU will follow closely the investigations into alleged violations of international humanitarian law.

They urged the concerned parties to ensure the immediate release of Palestinian, ministers and legislators as well as of the Israeli soldier.

The GCC and the EU welcomed the results of the International Conference in support of the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza held at Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt on 2 March 2009.

4.2. Iraq

The Joint Council took note with satisfaction of the improvement in the security situation in Iraq and welcomed the recent provincial elections held in Iraq in January 2009.

The GCC and the EU reconfirmed their positions to promote peace, stability and security in Iraq and underlined their full support for the central role of the UN/UNAMI in assisting Iraq in implementing relevant UNSC resolutions including 1830.

They reaffirmed their support to initiatives aiming at strengthening dialogue, co-operation and stability and welcomed progress made by the three working groups on security, energy and refugees. They underlined the need for all partners to support Iraq in its efforts to achieve stability and called for respect for the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Iraq. They also reaffirmed that national reconciliation is the key to the solution of Iraq's problems and underlined the urgency of making further progress in this regard.

They expressed support for the efforts of the UN Secretary General's High Level Coordinator, Mr. Gennady Tarasov, for the return of Kuwaiti prisoners and nationals of other countries or their corpses as well as other Kuwaiti property including its national archive.

4.3. Iran

The Joint Council stressed that Iran shall restore confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. The GCC and the EU reaffirmed the importance of reaching a negotiated solution to the nuclear issue. They welcomed the readiness of the USA to engage with Iran. They also urged Iran to fully comply with the requirements set forth by the IAEA and the UN Security Council. The GCC and the EU underlined that the international community is united and determined to uphold the authority of the IAEA and the UNSC. They emphasized their commitment to fully implement all relevant UNSC resolutions.

The GCC and the EU expressed concern at the lack of progress towards resolving the dispute between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran over the three islands of Abu Musa, Lesser Tunb and Greater Tunb. They reiterated their support for a peaceful settlement of this dispute in accordance with international law, either through direct negotiations between the parties or by referring the matter to the International Court of Justice.

They expressed their deep concern at the provocative claims that infringed upon the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Bahrain. They expressed satisfaction at the assurances of the Iranian Government regarding the respect of the sovereignty and independence of the Kingdom of Bahrain, non-interference in its internal affairs. They also called for the pursuance of policies that contribute to the building of mutual trust, good neighbourliness, and adherence to international and regional instruments and treaties.

4.4. Terrorism

The Joint Council reiterated its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, irrespective of motives. The GCC and the EU stressed the importance of combating terrorism in full respect of international law, human rights and international humanitarian law.

The two sides urged all states to ratify and implement the 16 UN counter-terrorism conventions and protocols, and to implement all the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. Both sides expressed their determination to support the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

They reaffirmed their commitment to the further development of international standards for combating terrorism within the framework of the United Nations. They also agreed to continue to work towards conclusion of a comprehensive international convention on terrorism, including a legal definition of terrorist acts.

The GCC and the EU reaffirmed their commitment to combating the financing of terrorism. In this context, they also welcomed the convening of the Joint GCC-EU Workshop on combating terrorism financing to be held in Riyadh in May 2009.

The GCC and the EU recalled the recommendations and decisions arrived at the Riyadh International Conference on fighting terrorism, including the call of the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, to establish an international center for fighting terrorism.

4.5. Non-proliferation of WMD

The Joint Council confirmed that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery to state and non-state actors by illegal means constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security.

The GCC and the EU renewed their determination to honour their commitments under WMD non-proliferation treaties and agreements and to work for strengthening these instruments globally.

The two sides called on the countries of the region that are not yet party to these treaties to accede to them, without delay and without conditions. They further expressed support for the realization of the Middle East, including the Gulf region as a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction, while recognizing the right of the states of the region to have access to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

The two sides took note of the interest of the GCC to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes in accordance with international standards and welcomed the GCC desire to cooperate with the IAEA in this respect.

4.6. Human Rights

The GCC and the EU exchanged views on human rights and reiterated their previous positions.

4.7. Dialogue between Cultures

The Joint Council highlighted the importance of promoting the values of tolerance, moderation and coexistence. In this regard, the GCC and the EU expressed their support to the initiative launched by the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia and his call for the convening of the International Conference for Dialogue and the Interfaith Intercultural Dialogue conference in the United Nations General Assembly and the positive outcome coming out of those meetings.

They welcomed the concrete results of the Alliance of Civilisations (AoC), and the work of the fora in Madrid (2008) and Istanbul (2009), restating their support to make the Alliance a result-oriented network.

The GCC and the EU underlined the importance of dialogue and the respect of all cultures and religions and peaceful coexistence. They also condemned all forms of hatred and intolerance.

4.8. Piracy

The Joint Council condemned all acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships off the coasts of Somalia. The GCC and the EU expressed their shared concern regarding the threat that piracy and armed robbery against ships and vessels pose to international maritime navigation. Both sides encouraged states to cooperate with each other, with the IMO and the relevant international organizations to combat piracy and armed robbery against ships and vessels.

The two sides commended efforts by the international community and states, including the EU, to protect ships and vessels off the coasts of Somalia and other initiatives aimed at the implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, while fully respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia, international law and the United Nations Charter.

4.9. Global Financial Crisis

The Joint Council expressed its deep concern at the impact of the global financial crisis on the global economy. The two sides welcomed the six key messages and recommendations of the G-20 summit held in London on 2 April 2009. In this regard, they called on the International Community and international financial institutions to take immediate and decisive measures to implement these decisions and recommendations in order to restore confidence to global markets and stability to financial markets. The GCC and the EU

agreed to further promote the global trade and investment without protectionism, to underpin prosperity.

4.10. Climate Change

The GCC and the EU share the view that climate change constitutes a threat to the global economy and the well being of many nations around the world.

The GCC and the EU expressed their determination to actively participate in the UN Climate Conference to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009 and to reach an ambitious agreement. Both sides agreed to enhance the implementation of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol in conformity with the UNFCCC principles including the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

The GCC and the EU underlined that cooperation should thus be significantly boosted to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

5. Yemen

The GCC and the EU reiterated their support to Yemen's development and in this regard they welcomed the London Donors Conference and its follow-up meetings.

The 20th meeting of the Joint Council will held in the EU in 2010.