

## Departamento de Medio Oriente

### GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

The Final Communiqué of the 29th Session of the Supreme Council of the Arab  
Muscat, the Sultanate of Oman

1-2 Muharram 1430 H, 29-30 December 2008

Upon a generous invitation of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, the Sultan of Oman, the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council held its 29th session in Muscat, the Sultanate of Oman on Monday and Tuesday, 1-2 Muharram 1430H, corresponding to 29-30 December 2008, under the chairmanship of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, the Chairman of the current session of the Supreme Council and in the presence of Their Majesties and Highnesses:

- His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al-Nahayan,  
President of the United Arab Emirates.
  
- His Majesty King Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifa,  
King of the Kingdom of Bahrain.
  
- The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz,  
King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
  
- His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani,  
Emir of the State of Qatar.
  
- His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah,

Emir of the State of Kuwait.

The meeting was also attended by:

- His Excellency Abdul Rahman Bin Hamad Al-Attiya,

The GCC Secretary General.

The Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council congratulated His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Sultan of Oman, for assuming the chairmanship of the current session of the Supreme Council. It hailed the contents and sound vision contained in His Majesty's speech and his keenness to activate the cooperation process between the GCC member states in all fields and push it forward to wider and stronger horizons during the next stage, God willing.

The Supreme Council expressed appreciation to the great efforts exerted by the State of Qatar under the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani during the chairmanship of the last session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council and his support for the joint cooperation process in all fields.

The Council expressed blessings for the establishment of the joint Saudi-Qatari Coordination Council, which reflects the great keenness of both the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of The State of Qatar to consolidate relations between both brotherly countries and develop them in all fields. The Council took note of the agreements reached during the first meeting of the joint Saudi-Qatari Coordination Council to boost fruitful cooperation between both countries in economic, trade, industrial, political, security, military, health, cultural and media fields.

The Supreme Council expressed appreciation to the great efforts exerted by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz King of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia to hold the International Conference on Dialogue, held in Madrid, with the objective being to promote dialogue among religions and cultures and the noble meanings meant in

them. The Council has also valued the generous initiative to convene the Conference on Dialogue between Followers of Religions and Cultures at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, which received full world support and interaction. It aimed at drawing attention to the importance of dialogue and called for the respect of humanity and the need to build bridges of convergence between peoples and civilizations and harness common human and religion values and correct wrong and prejudiced conceptions aimed at degrading the Islamic values.

The Supreme Council also welcomed the convening of the Arab Economic, developmental and Social Summit in the State of Kuwait, and stressed the importance of the economic and developmental dimensions of the summit in strengthening inter-Arab relations and activating joint Arab action.

The Supreme Council also congratulated His Excellency the Lebanese President Michel Suleiman on his election as President of the brotherly Republic of Lebanon. It also hailed the progress and harmony achieved at all levels in accordance with the Doha Agreement as well as the establishment of diplomatic relations between Syria and Lebanon. The Supreme Council is looking forward to continued dialogue between the Lebanese brothers in order to achieve all that could enhance security, stability and prosperity for the brotherly Lebanese people.

The Supreme Council expressed congratulations to US President-elect Barak Obama on his election as President of the United States, wishing him all success. The Supreme Council hopes that the term of President Obama would usher in a new era of security and prosperity for the friendly people of the United States, and contribute in achieving security and peace in the whole world.

The Supreme Council considered the global financial crisis, its consequences and its economic impacts. It directed the concerned ministerial committees to intensify coordination among the member states and take the necessary measures to limit its negative effects on the economies of the Council's member states.

The Supreme Council has also directed the concerned ministerial committee to exert every possible effort that would contribute in stabilizing oil prices in a manner that would achieve the pursued balance and joint interests of oil producing and consuming countries.

The Supreme Council reviewed the recommendations and follow-up reports submitted by the Ministerial Council and the progress achieved in the joint action march in all fields since the last session of the Supreme Council. The Supreme Council has also examined the developments of political, security and economic issues in the region and internationally in light of the current and rapid developments taking place in the world, and has taken the appropriate decisions thereon as follows:

First: Areas of joint cooperation

The economic fields

The Supreme Council has reviewed reports referred to it on the implementation of the proposal of the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques on accelerating the march of joint action and to remove all obstacles that hinder its development. The Council approved the proposed solutions in the economic fields. It directed the authorities and committees operating in the Gulf Cooperation Council to address these obstacles in light of the proposed solutions and guarantee their removal by not later than September 2009 and in such a way to enhance economic integration and deepen economic citizenship for all citizens of the Council. It also approved the proposed mechanism for the implementation of resolutions of the Supreme Council.

In order to strengthen economic integration among the GCC member states and complete its various stages, implement the time frames for the establishment of the Monetary Union, launch the single currency as approved by the Council during Muscat Summit in 2001, the Supreme Council approved the Monetary Union Agreement which covers the legislative and institutional framework. It also approved the Basic Statute of the Monetary Council and stressed the need to ratify the agreement as soon as possible in order to

establish the Monetary Council which would implement the technical requirements of the Monetary Union and make the necessary preparations for the establishment the Central Bank and launch of the single currency.

The Council reviewed the progress in the Common Gulf Market and approved the market document including its principles, requirements, objectives and implementation mechanisms and all the resolutions taken in this respect. The council stressed the importance of its implementation in a manner that achieves maximum benefit for GCC citizens.

The Supreme Council discussed the march of economic integration among GCC member states through follow up reports referred to it regarding the progress made in the customs union, the common market, the monetary union project, and the long-term comprehensive development strategy (2000-2025), water interconnection project between the Council states, the railway project and its feasibility study and the smart ID card which aim at facilitating movement of GCC citizens. In order to step up efforts to unify regulations in the member states, the Supreme Council has approved the law on seeds, fertilizers and seedlings and made it implementation mandatory.

Under the blessed march led by His Majesty King Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Supreme Council appreciated the economic vision of the Kingdom of Bahrain, which sets long-term scenarios for future trends of its national economy until the year 2030, and hopes that this vision which constitutes an integrated economic programme would modernize the Bahraini economy, increase productivity, innovation, economic, social and cultural growth and world competitiveness as part of enhancing the joint economic, social and cultural work among the GCC states.

On negotiations with states and economic groupings

The Supreme Council has welcomed the signing of the Free Trade Agreement between the GCC member states and Singapore, and expressed hope for the conclusion of the ongoing

negotiations on signing free trade agreements with friendly countries and groupings as soon as possible.

The Council regretted the fact that the European Union did not respond positively to the proposals of the Gulf Cooperation Council to conclude negotiations on the Free Trade Agreement between the two sides, which led to the suspension of such negotiations by the GCC member states.

#### On Security Coordination and Cooperation

The Supreme Council expressed satisfaction with the progress of security coordination and cooperation among the member states, and approved the updated and developed comprehensive security strategy for GCC member states. The Supreme Council has also approved the Articles of Association of the Criminal Information Center for Combating Drugs for GCC Countries to be established in the State of Qatar.

#### On combating Terrorism and Piracy

The Supreme Council reiterated the established and firm GCC positions on the rejection of all forms of terrorism of whatever source. In this connection, the Supreme Council hailed the efficiency and capabilities of the Bahraini security forces and the impressive success they achieved through the preemptive security operation which foiled a criminal terrorist plot that targeted the stability of the Bahrain and the security and safety the citizens. The Council stressed its support for the Kingdom of Bahrain and all the measures it takes to maintain security, stability and prosperity of the country. It called for increased international cooperation in combating terrorism through intensifying the sharing of information and not allowing the use of the territories of other countries to mastermind and incite committing terrorist activities and cooperate to hand over elements involved in terrorist activities.

The Council expressed concern at the growing acts of piracy perpetrated by irresponsible Somali elements in international waterways in the Gulf of Aden and in the Red Sea. It called for more regional and international coordination and cooperation to fight these acts with all possible means in order to eliminate such activities as per Security Council Resolution No. 1851 of December 16, 2008.

#### On military affairs

The Supreme Council reviewed the reports submitted by the Joint Defense Council on the development of the Joint Peninsula Shield Force in accordance with the resolutions taken by the Supreme Council at its previous sessions. It also took note of the extent of coordination and cooperation between the GCC member states to enhance and develop joint defense between the member states. The Council blessed the progress achieved in this respect and directed that all the relevant steps and measures be taken.

#### On human and environmental affairs

The Supreme Council discussed a number of issues related to joint action in the area of human and environmental affairs. It approved proposals on the implementation of work programmes to increase employment opportunities for national manpower. The Council has also approved the Cultural Strategy for the member states, stressing the need to establish programmes and activities for the implementation of the articles of the strategy.

In support of joint action in human and environmental affairs, the Supreme Council has approved the following systems:

- 1- Guide of construction works and systems unit.
- 2- Guide of the conservation of architectural heritage.
- 3- Archaeological Guide.

The Supreme Council welcomed the content of the speech of His Majesty King Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain on the occasion of the Accession Day and National Day about initiating a law on family affairs as this stresses the care provided for Gulf women and the role they play in the development of the society.

#### On Media cooperation

The Supreme Council reviewed the media cooperation process between the GCC member states and expressed satisfaction at the current achievements in joint media action.

The Supreme Council took note of the steps taken to follow up the implementation of the Supreme Council's resolution on the initiative included in the letter addressed to His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, Chairman of the 28th session of the Supreme Council, the recommendations on the Satellites Forum, Value and Ethics Challenges Facing the Gulf Youths.

It also expressed appreciation to the efforts of the Higher Council for Family Affairs in the State of Qatar for holding the forum. The Council decided to refer the outcomes of the forum to the respective organizations, institutions and agencies in the member states.

#### On the work of the Consultative Commission of the GCC Supreme Council

The Supreme Council reviewed the views of the Consultative Commission on the issue of inflation and price hikes and its social effects on the citizens and economies of the GCC member states as well as the problem of job-seekers, its causes, effects and solutions. The Council approved the views and referred the same to the concerned ministerial committees in order to establish the necessary mechanisms for their implementation.

The Supreme Council authorized the Consultative Commission to study the following two subjects:



1- The global financial crisis and its impact on the GCC member states and the measures that may be taken.

2- Food and water security in GCC member states.

The Supreme Council hailed the efforts exerted by the Consultative Commission and its constructive views raised to the Supreme Council to enhance the blessed cooperation march in all fields.

The Council commended the outcomes of the second regular meeting of Chairpersons of Shura, Representatives, National and Ummah Councils in the GCC states. It hailed the efforts exerted by these councils and the views they referred to the Supreme Council, which aim at strengthening joint action, stability and welfare of the GCC countries and peoples.

#### On Cooperation with the Republic of Yemen

The Supreme Council examined areas of cooperation in the field of financing development projects and the progress achieved during 2008. The Council hailed the growing cooperation between the GCC and the brotherly Republic of Yemen. The Supreme Council approved Yemen's accession to GCC Standardization Authority, Gulf Organization for Industrial Consultancy, GCC Auditing and Accounting Authority and Gulf Radio and TV Authority. The Council issued directives that all the necessary legal and administrative measures be taken in this regard, and that Yemen would have the same rights and obligations of GCC member states in these institutions.

#### On the political front

The Palestinian Issue and Middle East Peace Process

The leaders reviewed the current painful events in Gaza Strip, as well as the destruction inflicted by the Israeli killing military machine without heeding any human considerations or international legitimacy laws.

The GCC leaders decided to initiate urgent contacts with UN Security Council's permanent members to urge the international community to bear its responsibilities.

The Supreme Council expressed its grave concern and great disappointment at the flagrant Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, which led to large number of deaths and injuries as well as the destruction of property and terrifying of innocent people without any deterrence by consciousness or observation of any ethical values, humanitarian considerations or the resolutions of international legitimacy.

The Supreme Council strongly condemns this brutal Israeli aggression and held it responsible for pushing the situation to this serious level because of its obstinate policies and its inhuman practices against the Palestinian people.

The Council requests Israel to refrain from the obstinacy of power, stop punishing the unarmed Palestinian people, and lift the unfair blockade imposed on all Palestinian territories especially Gaza Strip.

It calls upon the international community to bear its full responsibilities and move immediately to halt these massacres and attacks perpetrated by the Israeli killing machine, as well as provide the Palestinian people with the required protection.

The Supreme Council reiterated that the Palestinian national unity is the protective shield of the Palestinian people. It urged all Palestinian factions to speak in one voice during this critical stage in the Palestinian cause, in order to guarantee the territorial integrity of Palestinian people, restore their legitimate rights and establish their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Supreme Council reviewed the deterioration of the Middle East peace process as a result of Israeli government's continued blockade of the Palestinian people especially in Gaza, its flagrant defiance of the resolutions of the international legitimacy, the expansion of settlements, the construction of the separation wall and its continued digging works which would destroy Al-Aqsa mosque and change the Arab and Islamic features in Jerusalem.

The Supreme Council called for complete Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab lands in Palestine, the occupied Golan Heights to the June 1967 borders and from the rest of the occupied lands in South Lebanon in accordance with Security Council Resolutions 425 and 426.

In this respect, the Supreme Council expressed the hope that the US President-elect Barak Obama accords top priority in the American foreign policy to the Palestinian problem, and the Middle East peace process in order to fulfill the promises and commitment of the establishment of a viable Palestinian State living in peace and security alongside the state of Israel. The Council urged President Obama to help achieve just and permanent peace in the Middle East region. The Supreme Council stressed the importance of the contents of the message sent to him by the current Chair of the Arab Ministerial Council His Highness Prince Saud Al-Faisal, and the Arab League Chairman HE Amro Mousa, which detailed the Arab position regarding the developments of the Arab Israeli conflict. The message reaffirmed Arabs' willingness to establish just and permanent peace in accordance with the principle of land for peace, UN resolutions, the Arab peace initiative and its requirements.

His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of Qatar, the Chairman of the 28th session of the Supreme Council briefed Their Majesties and Highnesses the leaders of the Supreme Council on the his recent visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran, which contributed in stressing the importance of constructing dialogue in building trust and enhancing relations between the GCC member states and Iran in all fields in such a way to serve security and stability in the region.

On the issue of the Islamic Republic of Iran's continued occupation of the three UAE islands Greater and Lesser Tunbs and Abu Mousa, the Supreme Council reaffirms its established and known positions as expressed in all previous statements through the following:

- It supports the right of the United Arab Emirates to regain the islands of Greater and Lesser Tunbs and Abu Mousa, their continental shelves, territorial waters and the exclusive economic zone being an integral part of the UAE.
- It also expresses regret at the fact that contacts with Iran failed to reach positive results which would settle the issue of the three islands and contribute to enhancing the stability of region.
- It also expresses the need to look at peaceful means that may restore the UAE right in its three islands.
- It also calls upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to show positive response to the initiative taken by the UAE to resolve the issue through direct negotiations or revert to the International Court of Justice.

On the Iranian nuclear file

- Based on the established positions of the member states, the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council reiterated the importance of abiding by the principles of international legitimacy. It renewed its stance which calls for solving this crisis by peaceful means. The Council welcomed the consultations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Western countries and expressed the hope that a diplomatic settlement be reached in order to enhance regional and international stability.
- The Supreme Council renewed the call to turn the Middle East region including the Gulf to an area free from weapons of mass destruction. It acknowledged the right of the countries of the region to possess nuclear technology for peaceful uses within the framework of the relevant international agreements.

#### On Iraq

- The Supreme Council reaffirmed its firm positions on the respect of Iraq's unity, sovereignty and independence and non-interference in its internal affairs as well as the conservation of its Arab and Islamic identity.
- The Council stresses that the realization of security and stability requires the expediting in achieving the Iraqi national reconciliation to ensure the success of the comprehensive political process, which should involve all Iraqis without any exception or discrimination.
- The Council calls upon the United Nations and other relevant organizations to step up their efforts to conclude the issues of returning the national archive to the State of Kuwait, and knowing the fate of the remaining detainees and missing Kuwaiti nationals and other nationalities.

#### On Lebanon

The Supreme Council welcomed the entry of Lebanon into a new political phase to fully implement the terms of Doha Agreement, which was reached under kind patronage of the Emir of Qatar His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani. It also welcomes the preparatory measures to hold the general parliamentary elections next year. The Council hailed the efforts of the political leadership and all Lebanese parties to address the security situation in Lebanon, which created a positive atmosphere for dialogue and reconciliation between the Lebanese brothers, and the restoration of stability and welfare to the brotherly Lebanon.

In this connection, the Supreme Council also welcomed the historic step taken by Syria and Lebanon to establish diplomatic relations between the two brotherly countries.

#### On Sudan

The Supreme Council expressed regret over the continued human suffering in Darfur and praised the efforts of the Sudanese government and its cooperation with the efforts of the international community to put an end to the Darfur problem. The Council expressed solidarity with Sudan, and refusal of the unbalanced position of the Attorney General of the International Criminal Court.

In this connection, the Supreme Council expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Arab African Ministerial Commission, under the leadership of Qatar to arrange and sponsor peace talks due to be held in Doha between the Sudanese government and the armed movements. The Council is looking forward to the success of these talks and achieving the prospective Sudanese reconciliation.

#### On Somalia

The Supreme Council expresses deep regret at the continued deterioration in the situation in Somalia. It renewed its call on all Somali factions to stop violence, and abandon all operations that put obstacles on the way of national reconciliation. In this regard, the Council reiterated its support for the agreement reached in Djibouti on 9 June 2008, and urged all Somali parties to abide by the agreements and undertakings, signed in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, under the patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, which aim at ending the human suffering, and achieving security, stability and welfare for the Somali people.

The Supreme Council expressed deep appreciation and gratitude for the sincere and great efforts of His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of Qatar and Chairman of the previous Session of the Supreme Council and his rightly guided government during the period of his chairmanship of the 28th session, for his keenness on following up the implementation of the decisions of Supreme Council, the steps taken and the achievements which pushed the joint cooperation process to very advanced stages and wider fields, as well as more welfare to the GCC peoples.

In conclusion, the Supreme Council expressed its deep appreciation and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, the Sultan of Oman, the Chairman of the current session of the Supreme Council, and for his rightly guided Government and the dearly people of the Sultanate of Oman for the warm reception and generous hospitality and the brotherly feelings accorded to Their Majesties and Highnesses the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The Gulf leaders noted the great attention, wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos during this meeting, which were instrumental in the important outcomes and decisions taken during the summit. They expressed confidence that the Sultanate of Oman, would, through its chairmanship of this session, push the blessed march of the Council to realize more achievements and move towards more comprehensive and wider fields of cooperation under the accelerated local, regional and international developments and in a way that maintains security and stability for GCC people and the region as a whole.

The Supreme Council welcomed the kind invitation of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to host the 30th session in The State of Kuwait, in the year 2009.

Issued in Muscat,

The Sultanate of Oman

30 December 2008,

2 Muharram 1430 H

## Muscat Declaration

On the occasion of the twenty ninth session of the Supreme Council of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council, held in Muscat on Monday and Tuesday 1-2 Muharram 1430 Hijri, corresponding to 29-30 December 2008, and in the context of the achievements witnessed in different areas, under the wise leadership of their Majesties and Highnesses the leaders of Member States of the Council states.

The Sultanate of Oman expresses its appreciation of the steps undertaken by Member States in accordance with the decisions of the Supreme Council, which aim to consolidate relations between them in various fields, and strengthening the mutual ties among their peoples, in harmony with the noble principles and objectives of the basic charter of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council.

In view of the accelerated changes and various developments taking place in the world, and the subsequent effects on all States, there comes a need to exert further efforts in order to preserve the gains achieved by the Council, and deal with new developments in a manner that will allow Member States to continue their work in developing their individual capacities, through the application of knowledge and state of the art technologies, including intensifying efforts to develop their human resources and scientific research. This will enable Member States to transform into knowledge based economies, achieve sustainable economic and social development, prepare and enhance the climate for investment with a competitive edge and participate in the world economy on a solid and stable footing.

The Sultanate of Oman confirms its interest in conserving the environment. In view of events, which have taken place in the world over the last years, namely climate change and its various effects upon many parts of the Globe, Member States are requested today, more than ever , to develop forecasting methods and strengthen their collaboration, so as to contribute towards dealing with such circumstances more constructively, on the bases



of the "General Policies and Principles for Environment Protection" which had been adopted by the Supreme Council in its sixth session (Muscat, November 1985)

In this respect, the Sultanate praises the decision of the GCC Ministers Responsible for Environmental Affairs, in granting a periodical award in the name of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council for outstanding environmental activities. The award aims to raise the level of environmental understanding and awareness among the peoples of the region, and to encourage individuals and institutions to research, create, and innovate in order to devise suitable solutions for contemporary environmental issues.

In recognition of the joint efforts made in the Gulf on environmental issues, giving further incentives for generating more interest and productivity in this area, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the Sultan of Oman, has endowed an award for the Human Affairs and Environmental Sector, which represents a common link between Member States and their peoples.

Direct support for important scientific research which aims at developing effective plans and policies ,helps in preserving clean and safe environment, while taking into consideration natural trends of climate cycles throughout centuries.

May Allah grant us success

Issued in Muscat

2 Muharam 1430 Hijri

30 December 2008

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