



**COOPERATION
BETWEEN
THE EUROPEAN
COMMUNITY
AND GCC**

The Cooperation Council

EN

Brussels, 26 May 2008
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**18th EU-GCC JOINT COUNCIL AND MINISTERIAL
MEETING**

Brussels, 26 May 2008

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The eighteenth session of the Joint Council established in accordance with the Co-operation Agreement between the European Community on the one hand, and the States of the Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sultanate of Oman, State of Qatar and State of Kuwait) on the other hand, was held in Brussels on 26 May 2008. The GCC delegation was led by H.E. Ahmad Bin Abdallah AL-MAHMOUD, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Member of the Council of Ministers of the State of Qatar, and President of the Ministerial Council of the GCC. The GCC Secretariat was represented by H.E. Abdelrahman Bin Hamad AL-ATTIYAH, Secretary-General.

P R E S S

The EU delegation was led by Mr. Dimitrij Rupel, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia and President of the Council of the European Union, assisted by Mr Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Secretary General of the Council of the European Union. The European Commission was represented by Commissioners Benita Ferrero-Waldner, responsible for External Relations and the European Neighbourhood Policy, and Peter Mandelson, responsible for Trade.

The meeting took place in a friendly and constructive atmosphere. In preparation of this meeting, GCC and EU officials had met in Brussels on 15 April 2008 at the **Regional Directors' meeting** and on 6 May 2008 in the **Joint Co-operation Committee** respectively.

2. **Implementation of the Co-operation Agreement**

The Joint Council agreed that both sides need to take active steps to work thoroughly towards the **implementation of the 1988 Cooperation Agreement** in all areas covered. It expressed its appreciation for the work done by the 6 May Joint Cooperation Committee. It welcomed the initiatives launched by the Commission on **EU-GCC Public Diplomacy** and on development of **energy cooperation**. It welcomed the latest steps on **Research and Development** co-operation following the first R&D information day held in Riyadh and encouraged further effort to explore potential cooperation between the EU and the GCC in this area, in particular through a fact-finding mission to the region possibly in the second semester of 2008. The Joint Council expressed great satisfaction about the outcome of the second experts meeting on environment and **climate change** held on 11 February 2008 and welcomed the agreed actions to take the cooperation further by exploring ways to engage European research institutes in common projects with the GCC countries and potential cooperation in waste management and air quality. The Joint Council welcomed that a next experts meeting on environment will be held in early 2009. In this regard the two parties praised the initiatives and experiences on clean energy including "Masdar City" for renewable energy in Abu Dhabi-United Arab Emirates.

The EU and the GCC look forward to the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in 2009 and expressed determination to work towards a new global, comprehensive and ambitious climate change agreement to be agreed in Copenhagen.

Both sides agreed to take forward the cooperation on **energy** by facilitating the work of the identification study for a future EU-GCC energy cooperation project. The Parties encouraged holding an early formal or informal meeting between energy experts to help focus the objectives of the study. In the **education field**, the Joint Council agreed to hold an education information day in Brussels at the beginning of October to start discussions for a possible cooperation initiative in 2009. The Joint Council welcomed the envisaged second **Economic Dialogue** meeting and encouraged further exchanges on economic matters.

3. **Free Trade Agreement Negotiations**

The Joint Council reviewed the progress made on the negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement and noted that the parties are getting closer. They encouraged negotiators from both sides to further intensify their efforts to reach a mutually agreed text before the end of July 2008 and undertake to prepare the agreement for initialling before the end of 2008.

4. **Regional Issues**

The EU and the GCC reviewed **a number of international and regional political issues of mutual interest** and they reiterated their determination to develop and advance this **political dialogue** on the basis of mutual respect in order to seek common solutions to the common challenges facing their respective regions and peoples, fully respecting international law and the UNSC resolutions.

4.1. **Developments in the Middle East**

As regards the **Middle East Peace Process**, the EU and the GCC confirmed their shared positions not to recognise any change to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties.

The EU and the GCC expressed their full support to the Annapolis process and their commitment to support the parties in their negotiations with a view to achieve a two-state solution. They called on Israelis and Palestinians to pursue constructive negotiations including on all final status issues, with a view to concluding a peace agreement before the end of 2008. A just and sustainable solution to all aspects of the Middle East Peace Process can only be achieved through negotiation. 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. This would also be a step towards a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The GCC and the EU recalled their support for the Arab Peace Initiative as reaffirmed in the declarations of the Arab League Summits of 29 March 2007 in Riyadh and of 30 March 2008 in Damascus. They continue to support the Arab Peace Initiative as a major element in moving the Middle East Peace Process forward.

The EU and the GCC stressed the need for swift and tangible results on the ground in order to sustain negotiations. The EU and the GCC underscored the importance of avoiding any action that could prejudice the outcome of permanent status negotiations. The EU and the GCC reiterated their previous position on the necessity for all parties to comply with international law and to implement their obligations with regard to the Roadmap, also with respect to settlements anywhere in the occupied Palestinian Territories including, East Jerusalem. They called on both parties for an immediate end to all acts of violence, and all other activities which are contrary to international law and endanger civilians. The EU and the GCC are deeply concerned by the unsustainable humanitarian situation in Gaza and call for the controlled and sustained reopening of all crossings in and out of Gaza. They called on Israel to take all necessary steps to ensure the humanitarian needs of the Palestinians are met. They furthermore called for the immediate release of Palestinian ministers and legislators as well as of the Israeli soldier.

The EU and the GCC welcomed the results of the **International Donor's Conference for the Palestinian State** last December, namely over 7,4 billion \$US in pledges and underlined the need to deliver on those pledges in support of efforts to build the future Palestinian State in accordance with the Reform and Development Plan presented by Prime Minister Fayyad. In this context the EU and the GCC recalled the utmost importance of full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access.

The EU and the GCC stated that peace in the Middle East requires a comprehensive solution through a lasting and just settlement of the conflict in all its tracks based on the principles of land for peace, the relevant UNSC resolutions, the Road Map, and previous agreements reached between the parties.

The EU and the GCC expressed their full support to the international conference in support of Palestinian civil security and the rule of law to be hosted by Germany on 24 June 2008.

The Ministers praised the invitation launched by H.H. Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa AL-THANI, Emir of the State of Qatar, to the Lebanese parties to hold the Conference of the National Dialogue in Doha, and H.H.'s great efforts to find a political solution to the Lebanese crisis. They also expressed their appreciation to H.E. Shaikh Hamad Bin Jassem Bin Jabor AL-THANI, Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar, for the great efforts he has made, together with members of the Arab Ministerial Committee, which have enabled the Lebanese parties to reach the historic "Doha Agreement" that ended the Lebanese crisis. The ministers affirmed their full support to this agreement and remained determined to reinforce Lebanon's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, unity and stability. They welcomed the election of Michel Sleimane as president of Lebanon and called on the parties to fully implement the "Doha Agreement".

The EU and the GCC welcomed the holding of an international donor conference on the reconstruction and recovery of Nahr el Bared Palestinian Refugee camp and its surrounding area, which will take place in Vienna on 23 June 2008.

4.2. Iraq

On **Iraq**, the EU and the GCC welcomed the outcome of the Third Expanded Ministerial **Conference of Iraq's Neighbouring States** with international participation, which took place in Kuwait on 22 April 2008. The EU and the GCC expressed their appreciation to the Government of Kuwait for hosting this important event. They reaffirmed their commitment to support all initiatives aiming at strengthening dialogue, co-operation and stability in and around Iraq and welcomed progress made by the three working groups on security, energy and refugees and the intention by partners to continue this process. 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. In this regard, they reaffirmed that national reconciliation is the key to the solution of Iraq's problems and underlined the urgency of making progress by calling on the Iraqi government to take further, immediate and concrete steps towards comprehensive national reconciliation that would include all Iraqis.

They reiterated their call on the Iraqi government to do its utmost for the establishment of a safe, stable, independent, prosperous and democratic Iraq that upholds international law and human rights.

They reiterated their commitment to promote peace, stability and security in Iraq and for the region as a whole and underlined their full support for the central role of the UN/UNAMI in assisting Iraq in implementing UNSCR 1770.

Both sides praised the continuous effort by the Iraqi government to confront those who foment violence throughout Iraq; commended the role of the Iraqi armed and security forces in confronting and deterring the recent threats posed by armed groups; and welcomed the Government's commitment to disarm and dismantle all militias and extra-governmental armed groups, rule of law, and ensuring the state's monopoly on armed forces.

The GCC and the EU condemned the aggression and war crimes of the former regime of Iraq against peoples of Iraq and Kuwaiti prisoners of war and nationals of other countries at the hands of the former Iraqi regime's converge of these crimes of over ten years, which is considered a violation of international humanitarian law, and invite all concerned parties to continue their cooperation with the international Red Cross Committee to uncover the fate of the rest of the missing Kuwaiti citizens and others.

The EU and the GCC welcomed the First Annual Review Conference of the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) to be held in Stockholm on 29 May and stressed their commitment to continue helping Iraqi political process and economic reconstruction, emphasizing the paramount importance of bringing renewed energy to the ICI process and strengthening the commitment to the principles of the ICI, both in Iraq and internationally.

4.3. Iran

With respect to **Iran**, the EU and the GCC expressed their concern at the Iranian nuclear programme and their commitment to a diplomatic solution. They reaffirmed the importance of reaching a negotiated solution to the crisis and in this regard urged for full compliance with the requirements set forth by the IAEA and the UNSC. The EU and the GCC 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.

Both sides expressed concern at the lack of progress towards resolution of the territorial conflict between the United Arab Emirates and Iran over **Abu Musa and the Tunbs Islands**. They reiterated their support for a peaceful solution to the conflict in accordance with international law, either through direct negotiations or by referring the issues to the international Court of Justice.

5. Global Issues

5.1. Terrorism

The EU and the GCC reiterated their unequivocal **condemnation of terrorism in all its forms** and manifestations, irrespective of the motives of the perpetrators. Both sides acknowledged the importance of combating terrorism in full respect of international law, in particular human rights, international humanitarian law and refugee law.

The EU and the GCC reaffirmed their commitment to the further development of international standards for counter-terrorism within the framework of the UN. Both sides expressed a firm commitment to the implementation of the UN Global Counter- Terrorism Strategy and look forward to the review of implementation at the end of this year. The EU and the GCC appealed to all States to ratify and implement the 16 UN counter-terrorism Conventions and Protocols, and to implement all relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. They also agreed to continue to work towards conclusion of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism, including a legal definition of terrorist acts.

The EU and the GCC reaffirmed their commitment to combating the financing of terrorism. They welcomed the useful exchange of views on this subject at the **fifth EU-GCC countries Joint Workshop on Terrorist Financing (Brussels, 14-15 April 2008)** and looked forward to the 6th Joint Workshop on Terrorist Financing in Riyadh in 2009. Both sides welcomed the international conference which will be hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain on 16-17 June 2008, namely: Youth at crossroad: Violence Radicalization.

5.2. Non-proliferation

The GCC and the EU underlined that the proliferation of WMD and their means of delivery both to state and non-state actors continues to represent one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. The international community shares a responsibility for actively preventing these threats. The multilateral treaty system is the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation system. The GCC and the EU will ensure full compliance with, and national implementation of their existing obligations under non-proliferation and disarmament treaties and agreements and work for the strengthening and universalisation of these instruments including the IAEA Additional Protocol, in particular in view of the NPT 2010 Review process. The GCC and the EU stressed the importance of the establishment and implementation of effective systems of national export controls in accordance with UNSC resolution 1540. The GCC and the EU value and support the goals and principles of the Proliferation Security Initiative. The GCC and the EU reiterated their shared objective to pursue the establishment of a zone free of WMD and their means of delivery in the Middle East, including the Gulf region, inter alia through facilitating discussions on this issue among government officials and academics. They also call on countries in the region that have not yet done so to adhere to all treaties relating to weapons of mass destruction.

Taking note of the great interest of countries in the region in resorting to nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful purposes, the GCC and the EU underlined that when countries make the choice of nuclear energy, the nuclear energy programme shall be developed in accordance with the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation. The EU therefore welcomes the GCC's intention to closely cooperate with the IAEA in accordance with the international standards and regularisations in developing a joint programme for the region.

5.3. Human Rights

The EU and the GCC reaffirmed their respect for universal **human rights and democratic principles**, which form an essential element of their relations. They welcomed recent developments relating to representative bodies in the region, including those related to Al-Shura. Both sides reiterated their continued commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. They expressed their shared willingness to reinforce their dialogue and develop concrete cooperation on human rights, including the context of the UN Human Rights Council. The common wish for enhanced dialogue would lead to greater understanding and tolerance among civilizations and cultures. The two sides expressed their commitment to promote the universal values which they share, while bearing in mind the significance of national and regional particularities and their various historical cultural and religious backgrounds.

5.4. Dialogue between Cultures

The EU and the GCC agreed on the continued need to focus on and to promote values of tolerance and moderation. They were informed about the year 2008 is the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, the Euro-Mediterranean Year on Dialogue between Cultures, the initiative of King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques, for a dialogue between religions and that they see the celebration of the “Arab Capital of Culture 2008”. They reiterated their support to the Alliance of Civilisation (AoC) initiative as an important tool to build bridges between different cultures and to counter stereotypes and misconceptions of cross-cultural nature.

They welcomed the concrete results of the AoC Madrid Forum in January and restated their support to make the Alliance a strong and result-oriented network.

The EU and the GCC underlined the importance of dialogue between and respect for all cultures and religions, and condemned all forms of hatred and intolerance.

6. Yemen

The EU and the GCC reiterated their shared commitment to support Yemen's development as a stable and prosperous state. They welcomed the fact that the recent Qatari led mediation effort achieved a pause in the fighting in the Sa'ada region.

The **19th meeting of the Joint Council** will be held in the GCC in 2009.
