

PRESS RELEASE

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Co-Chairs' Statement - 25th EU-GCC Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting

1. The 25th session of the Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting of the European Union (EU) and of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) was held in Brussels, Belgium, on 18 July 2016. The EU delegation was led by H.E. Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, and the GCC delegation was led by H.E. Adel Al-Jubeir, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as GCC rotating Presidency. The GCC Secretariat was represented by H.E. Dr. Abdul Latif bin Rashed Al-Zayani, GCC Secretary General.
2. In a challenging regional environment, EU and GCC Ministers underlined the importance of further strengthening their ties, to serve as a solid and effective foundation for sustainable regional and international stability and security. Both sides expressed their wish to further enhance their political dialogue and cooperation, notably through the holding of regular EU-GCC Senior Officials meetings, noting in particular the most recent one, held in Brussels on 14 April 2016.
3. The Ministers exchanged views and identified common concerns and priorities with regard to the situation in the region, notably on Yemen, Iran, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and the Middle East Peace Process. They underlined the strategic importance for the EU and the GCC to coordinate closely on these developments. They welcomed in particular the resumption of the UN-mediated Yemen peace talks in Kuwait on 16 July and reiterated their support to the UN Special Envoy for Yemen in facilitating a comprehensive and lasting settlement between Yemeni parties to restore peace and resume the transition in Yemen, in line with the GCC Initiative, the National Dialogue Conference Outcomes, UN Security Council Resolution 2216 and other relevant UNSC Resolutions. The Ministers also expressed their determination to sustain ongoing efforts to counter terrorism and terrorism financing, and defeat Da'esh and other terrorist organizations. They stressed the need to reach a solution to the Syrian crisis, based on the principles of the Geneva Communiqué, UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and other relevant UNSC Resolutions. They called for immediate country-wide humanitarian access allowing the delivery of aid to all besieged areas, emphasizing the importance of full and strict adherence to the cessation of hostilities arrangements. They supported the efforts for restoring stability and promoting reconciliation in Iraq and Libya and political stability in Lebanon. The Ministers discussed GCC-Iran relations and stressed that relations between all countries of the region should be based on the UN Charter and international law, and the principles of good neighbourliness, respect for the national sovereignty of states and non-interference in internal affairs, to refrain from the use or threat of force, and to resolve disputes through peaceful means.
4. EU and GCC Ministers reviewed progress in the EU-GCC strategic relationship and endorsed the minutes of the latest Joint Cooperation Committee held in Riyadh on 6 April 2016. The Ministers expressed their willingness to address together common political, social, economic, and security challenges, as well as macroeconomic stability and support for diversification strategies, such as the Saudi National Transformation Plan and similar plans in other GCC member states. The Ministers noted with satisfaction that two-way trade represented more than €155 billion in 2015, an increase of 55% since 2010.
5. The Ministers welcomed cooperation initiatives undertaken since their last Ministerial meeting, notably through the EU-GCC dialogues on the economy, air transport, the energy experts group, exchanges on railway transport, trade facilitation, as well as cooperation on economic diversification. Ministers welcomed the results of the visit of the GCC Parliamentary Committee to the European Parliament on 28 April 2016, helping to enhance mutual understanding at parliamentary level. The Ministers also noted the results of the EU-GCC Business Forum in Brussels on 23-24 May 2016, to promote economic, trade and investment opportunities.
6. The Ministers looked forward to expanded EU-GCC relations through increased people-to-people contacts, and further cooperation in the social, economic, educational, cultural and scientific fields, and human rights.
7. EU and GCC Ministers agreed to hold their next meeting in the Kingdom of Bahrain in 2017.

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