

Saudi Arabia in Focus

The monthly update from the KSA's mission to the European Union



May 2016 – No. 1

In this issue

- > Vision 2030 – a bright future
- > King's government confirms policy of international peace and security
- > UN World Humanitarian Summit
- > GCC-Russia Talks
- > Gilles De Kerchove praises Saudi deradicalisation programmes
- > Prince Sultan's plans to welcome tourists to Saudi Arabia



From the ambassador

Saudi Arabia in Focus

It is with great pleasure that I present the first edition of **Saudi Arabia in Focus**, the monthly newsletter of the kingdom's mission to the EU.

Following the launch of our new website www.ksamissioneu.net this month, the Saudi Arabia in Focus newsletter will provide you with a summary of the key developments and events from Riyadh, Brussels and beyond.

The mission has also launched its Twitter account [@ksamissioneu](https://twitter.com/ksamissioneu) where you can follow us for all the latest news on Saudi Arabia and the EU as it happens.



Abdulrahman S. Alahmed
Ambassador and Head of the
Mission to the European Union

Economics

Vision 2030

Saudi Arabia last month unveiled its ambitious plan to diversify its economy, tackle today's challenges head-on and allow the country to prosper in the years to come. The first steps of implementation are already underway.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz approved Vision 2030: an economic roadmap to end the Kingdom's dependence on oil, harness the full potential of the country and secure a bright future for Saudi citizens.

The scale of the challenge set is clear. This is no small feat, and includes a raft of goals and reform strategies for the Kingdom's future economic success, based on the three pillars of economy, ambition and society.

In order to achieve a thriving economy, Saudi Arabia will diversify its economy and create dynamic job opportunities for its citizens. This will happen through commitments to enhance education, entrepreneurship and innovation. By privatising state-owned assets such as Saudi Aramco and also refocusing on small and medium-sized enterprises through enhanced financial assistance the kingdom will unlock underdeveloped industries such as manufacturing, renewable energy and tourism and make our economy more robust.



To create a more ambitious nation, Saudi Arabia will focus on accountability, transparency and effectiveness in its governing strategy – boosting the efficiency of its civil service through the new King Salman Program for Human Capital Development

In order to achieve a vibrant society, Saudi Arabia will focus on its people and the Islamic faith, through a series of commitments to new cultural developments, improving access for visitors to the holy sites, and enhancing cultural opportunities for our young population.

The Vision 2030 plan is only the first step towards achieving Saudi Arabia's economic aspirations and transforming the lives of its citizens. But it's an important departure from the status quo that the kingdom is taking very seriously.

For more information on the Vision 2030 roadmap, go to <http://vision2030.gov.sa>



+32-2649-2044
contact@ksamissioneu.net



At the session of 16 May, chaired by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz at Al-Salam Palace in Jeddah, the Cabinet confirmed the Kingdom's continuing policy to achieve international peace and security, solving conflicts by peaceful means and respect human rights. Such direction was also expressed by the Kingdom at the high-level discussion session of the United Nations on "International peace and security in a world of risks: a new commitment towards peace".

The Kingdom confirmed that it would exert maximum effort to work collectively with international organizations and member states that believe in the collective action in order to achieve the good for all humanity.

The Cabinet was briefed on what took place at the meeting with officials responsible for the affairs of Hajj of Iran on the discussion of the arrangements and requirements of Iranian pilgrims affairs like other pilgrims from various countries around the world, during which the Iranian delegation refused to sign the minutes of the agreement to complete arrangements for their pilgrims. The Cabinet noted that the decision to prevent Iranian citizens from coming to perform Hajj rites was due to Iranian officials.

The Cabinet renewed the Kingdom's confirmation that it welcomes and is honored in serving pilgrims, Umrah performers and visitors of all nationalities and it does not prevent any Muslim from coming to the holy lands. The Cabinet appreciated the accelerating development of the march of relief and humanitarian relief works in the

Kingdom during the last period making it on the top of donor countries of humanitarian and developmental aid. It noted that development assistance provided by the Kingdom from 2005 to 2014 reached a rate of 9.1 percent of the Kingdom's GDP.

The Cabinet concluded its session after discussing a number of domestic topics and adopted a number of decisions, including:

- recommendations of the Standing Committee of the Council of Economic Affairs and Development to provide free milk to medically needy infants to the age of 24 months and include the requirement in the health insurance policy coverage;
- authorized the Deputy Crown Prince, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, or his deputy, to discuss with China a draft agreement regarding the formation of high-level joint committee, sign it, and forward the final version to complete the legal procedures;;
- authorized the Minister of Labor and Social Development, or his deputy, to discuss with Korea a draft memorandum of understanding for cooperation in the areas of labor, sign it, and forward the final version to complete the legal procedures; and
- authorized the Minister of Education, or his deputy, to discuss with Belarus a draft memorandum for scientific and educational cooperation, sign it, and forward the final version to complete the legal procedures.

Humanitarian Relief

UN World Summit for Humanitarian Action

Addressing the UN's World Summit for Humanitarian Action, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir stressed that Saudi Arabia attaches great interest to Syrian refugees.

In an address to the participants in Istanbul, Turkey, Mr Al-Jubeir explained that since the beginning of the crisis, the Kingdom has been visited by as many as two million Syrians, and pointed out that "there is no camp or tents dedicated to Syrian refugees in the Kingdom, rather they enjoy the same rights to health care, education and employment."

Mr Al-Jubeir praised the inaugural World Summit for Humanitarian Action as the first of its kind and an important step made by the international community cooperating for the good of mankind in order to plug the gap in global spending in the field of charitable and humanitarian work.



The foreign minister also held a meeting with the Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon on the side lines of the Summit. During the meeting, they discussed topics on the agenda of the summit and Saudi Arabia's efforts to develop aspects of joint cooperation between the Kingdom and the United Nations and its various programs and agencies, especially in the humanitarian and development fields.

GCC-Russia Strategic Dialogue

Foreign Ministers meet in Moscow for high-level talks

Ministers of Foreign Affairs from the Gulf Cooperation Council member states and the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs met in Moscow on 26 May for a fourth round of Strategic Dialogue. The Ministers reaffirmed their shared intention to strengthen and develop friendship and collaboration between the two parties and to coordinate where mutually beneficial on topics on the international and regional agendas and enhance practical bilateral business and humanitarian cooperation.

With regard to the fight against terrorism, the ministers restated their commitment to preventing and suppressing terrorist acts through increased international cooperation. Ministers condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, reaffirming that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable regardless of their motivations, and rejected associating terrorism with any religion, culture or ethnic group. There was also consensus around forging ahead with concerted regional and international efforts to combat terrorism at its roots and to address factors conducive to its spread, eliminate the sources and any kind of support for terrorism and violent extremism including its funding, as well as combating organized cross-border crime.

The establishment of the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism was welcomed by ministers from both sides

who also supported cooperation between Russia and the US-led International Coalition against ISIS.

Emphasis was put on the need for more dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions as a strategic option, including seeking to preserve national identity and cultural norms, respect for cultural pluralism so as to renew the importance of universal values of peace, security and justice, promoting the values of tolerance and mutual respect, increasing mutual understanding among nations and peoples, confronting all forms of violence and religious extremism. This included addressing racist manifestations and racial or religious discrimination. The ministers also reaffirmed their support for the role in of the King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue.



De Kerchove: EU is stepping up its anti-terrorism cooperation with the Arab world

EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Gilles de Kerchove said on Tuesday 25 May that the EU is stepping up its anti-terrorism cooperation with the Arab world and praised the anti-radicalisation programmes in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries such as Saudi Arabia.

During a joint meeting of the European Parliament's committees on Foreign Affairs and Development, Mr De Kerchove, the EU's top anti-terror official, explained that more and more countries in the Middle East and North Africa want to engage with the EU in counter-terrorism and deradicalisation programmes.

During the debate, the chair of the Parliament's Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula, Michèle Alliot-Marie asked whether Mr De Kerchove planned exchanges with Gulf countries on the matter given their track record in deradicalisation and their position in the region and religion?"

In response De Kerchove said "We have much to learn," and noted that he has visited the Saudi de-radicalisation centre in Riyadh.

"They have an impressive success rate. We can draw inspiration from their experiences.



We want to and do cooperate with Saudi Arabia on many fronts. However, Europe has to define its own model," he added. "Let us explore with our partner countries in the Arab world how together we can connect our thoughts in the fight against this perversion of Islam and Daesh."

To address the problem of terrorism at its root, Saudi Arabia in 2005 launched a large-scale national campaign to raise public awareness of the risks of extremist ideology, which continues to this day. Through cooperation, European countries stand to benefit from the Saudi experiences of fighting extremism and radical thought. For instance, there is rich expertise to be tapped from the Prince Mohammed bin Naif Counselling and Care Centre which rehabilitates extremists and the Assakina Campaign for Dialogue, which works to correct misinterpretation of Islamic doctrines about violence, reject excess and promote moderation.

They said...

>> "Yemen would have faced a much worse fate had Saudi Arabia not intervened."

John McCain, Former US Presidential candidate and current chairman of the US Senate's Armed Services Committee

In Brief

>> **GE to invest €2.7bn in Saudi Arabia**

US manufacturing company General Electric has committed to investing up to €2.7 bn in industries across Saudi Arabia as the kingdom begins to diversify its economy as part of Vision 2030. GE will collaborate with the Saudi Arabian Industrial Investments company to pump €0.9 bn into the local market by the end of next year. This could be followed by another €1.8 bn invested in water, energy, aviation, and digital projects in subsequent years. GE also plans to invest €360 million in a forging and casting factory in Saudi Arabia that will help double the company's workforce to 4,000 by 2020.

>> **May is Europe Month in Riyadh**

The launch of our website and newsletter also coincides with Europe Month in Riyadh, where the EU's delegation and the national embassies of the 28 EU Member States have organised a series of Europe-inspired cultural events in the Saudi capital – from classic cinema to music and art exhibits.

>> **Inaugural EU-GCC Business Forum in Brussels**

Ambassador Abdulrahman Alahmed participated in the inaugural EU-GCC Business Forum in Brussels on 23 & 24 May at the European Economic and Social Committee. Amongst the panellists were Mr Imad Al Abdul Qader, Director Investor Attraction, SAGIA and H.E. Mr. Nabil Molla, Secretary General, Gulf Standard Organisation, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who spoke in a panel on enhancing trade, investments and competitiveness, as well as Mr Tarik Al Haidari, Board member, Council of Saudi Chambers, who intervened in a panel on fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.

Tourism

Plans to welcome tourists to Saudi Arabia

As part of our Vision 2030 roadmap, Saudi Arabia plans to issue select visas to welcome tens of thousands of tourists a year as part of a national reform plan aimed at showcasing the country's rich heritage, including pre-Islamic sites, and encouraging Saudis to spend some of their tourist money at home.

At the Arabian Travel Market exhibition in Dubai, Prince Sultan bin Salman, head of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, explained that the country is open for people doing business, people working in the Kingdom, individuals investing in Saudi Arabia, and those visiting for special purposes. Now, it will be open to tourism again on a selected basis.

According to the Saudi tourism commission's figures, approximately 245,000 Saudis work in the tourism sector. The target is to boost that to 352,000 by 2020 and to see investment in tourism upped by \$8 billion (€7.2bn) to reach nearly \$46 billion (€41bn).

Promoting domestic tourism among Saudis also aims to enhance a stronger national identity among the country's youth. "Smelling and hearing the sounds of their country and tasting this fantastic multicultural country is something that's important for any nation that wants to go to the future confidently," Prince Sultan said.

