

# Saudi Arabia in Focus

The monthly update from the Saudi mission to the European Union



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## From the ambassador

2016 is coming to a close, and we are now all beginning to look back on a year that has been marked by great challenges and successes.

Once again this month, both the Middle East and Europe find themselves the victims of senseless acts of terrorism and aggression. Our joint response must be to work together, harder than ever, to combat these threats head on. We will continue to collaborate with our allies to help bring dignity to those suffering and forge peaceful solutions to the conflicts raging in our region.

Meanwhile, the Kingdom's Vision 2030 roadmap for economic transformation is well underway, putting Saudi Arabia in the best possible position to pursue a bright, prosperous future.

As 2017 approaches, I would like to extend my wishes to you for a healthy, happy and peaceful holiday season and a successful start to the New Year.



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

## EU-League of Arab States Cooperation

### Arab and European foreign ministers express profound concern over situation in Syria



**The fourth joint meeting between Arab foreign ministers and their European counterparts took place at the headquarters of the Arab League in Cairo on 20 December under the co-chairmanship of Tunisia's foreign minister Khamis Jenhawe, the Arab ministerial council's rotating president, and Federica Mogherini, the High Representative for the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.**

Ahmed bin Abdulaziz Gattan, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Egypt and the Kingdom's permanent representative to the Arab League led the Kingdom's delegation to the meeting.

Ministers adopted a joint declaration to conclude the fruitful meeting in which they called for closer collaboration and proposed different mechanisms of cooperation in all fields and at all levels, including a regular Euro-Arab Summit.

Profound concern was expressed about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria, and the airstrikes launched by

the Assad regime against civilians in Aleppo. Moreover, they confirmed their determination to embark on a reconstruction program in Syria once a comprehensive political transitional phase has been reached.

Ministers expressed support for the Yemeni government, led by President Hadi, denouncing unilateral measures taken by Houthi militias and forces loyal to Saleh, referring to the formation of an illegal government recently.

Ministers were unified in reaffirming their adherence to the principles of international law, including the immunity of sovereign states. This immunity is clearly jeopardised by the US JASTA bill.

Finally, reflecting on the recent terrorist attacks across both regions, ministers agreed that, more than ever Europe and the Arab must show determination to jointly prevent and fight terrorism in our territories and globally.



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# Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques sees bright future for the Kingdom



In his annual address to the Consultative Council, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz underlined that Saudi Arabia remains fully committed to acting decisively to ensure its security and the security of the region while moving forward on the Kingdom's economic development and reforms.

King Salman presented an optimistic outlook for the nation's foreign and domestic policies, noting that Saudi Arabia has played an active and constructive role in the region. In important global undertakings with the international community, he said the Kingdom is proceeding with "firm steps" to maintain its important active role in the region and around the world.

Among the core foreign policy priorities, King Salman vowed to continue cooperating with the international community in combatting the extremism that threatens its borders and the region at

large. Political solutions to international crises can safeguard values of tolerance and coexistence, paving the way for nations to ensure peace and achieve development, King Salman said.

King Salman noted that economic reforms implemented to date have focused on diversifying the nation's economy and re-distributing resources to expand job opportunities. Saudi Arabia has "come out of [the past three years] with a strong economy and continuous growth; we have set out our reforms today to look forward to the future," he noted. The strength of these structural reforms fall under Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia's economic transformation plan.

"I am optimistic about a better tomorrow," King Salman said. "These conditions that we are now experiencing are not more difficult than their previous ones. We will overcome them for a better and brilliant future."

## They said...

>> "We are convinced that JASTA as it was written is a bad law. We were opposed to it. We remain concerned about its impact because we think there were ways to meet the needs of the victims without having a harmful effect on the long-established law and concept of sovereign immunity."

John Kerry, US Secretary of State

## In Brief

### >> Saudi Arabia recognised for its role in fighting Da'esh

At a White House press conference this month, Brett McGurk, Special Presidential Envoy to the Global Coalition Against ISIL, discussed his recent visit to Saudi Arabia, his meetings with Crown Prince Muhammad bin Naif and Deputy Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, and praised the Kingdom for its role fighting Daesh, "... Saudi Arabia also is in this fight [...] ISIL is a fundamental threat to Saudi Arabia."

### >> Saudi mission to EU returns to its newly renovated home

The Royal Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Belgium and the Mission to the European Union have relocated. Both are now operating from 45 Avenue Franklin Roosevelt, 1050 Brussels.

