

SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS

MONTHLY UPDATE | Saudi Mission to the EU

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From the Ambassador

The historic EU-Saudi relationship has noticeably deepened in the past two months following the first-ever EU-League of Arab States (LAS) Summit in Egypt in February, as well as the numerous recent visits to Brussels by Saudi officials. Notable among these visits was **Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Adel Al-Jubeir**, who has frequently traveled to the Belgian capital for an array of productive meetings with EU officials and leaders.

Also in March, a delegation from **Majlis Al-Shura** met with Members of the European Parliament representing various political groups in the European Parliament.

Earlier, in February, an impressive contingent of Saudi Ambassadors accredited to Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Poland also convened for meetings at a variety of EU institutions.

Further solidifying the strength of the Saudi-EU bond, and the kingdom's status as a critical partner in the global fight against terrorism, officials from Saudi Arabia have engaged in a chain of meetings with EU institutions on its efforts in combating terrorism and money laundering.

Finally, Saudi Arabia and the EU share the same challenges and opportunities. The Implementation of the ambitious **Vision 2030** roadmap will be the driving force behind increasing cooperation between Saudi and the European Union.

Saad bin Mohammad Alarify

Head of the Saudi Mission to the European Union



HISTORIC EU-LAS SUMMIT: INVESTING IN GLOBAL STABILITY & DEEPENING PARTNERSHIPS

Leaders from the European Union and League of Arab States convened last month in Egypt for the first-ever joint EU-LAS Summit, titled "Investing in Stability," to deepen multilateral cooperation on trade, counter-terrorism and regional issues, including Israel-Palestine, as well as crises in Yemen, Syria, Libya.

"The Arab region was the only one in the world with whom the European Union did not have a summit before, which was sort of a paradox, as we are so close and we share so many challenges and opportunities," said High Representative Federica Mogherini upon her arrival at Egypt's Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh for historic EU-LAS Summit, 24-25 February.

In addition to Mogherini, the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, represented the EU alongside the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, who co-chaired the summit with the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el Sisi.

Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, also participated, along with other leaders from the 28 EU Member States and each of the 21 LAS countries, including Saudi Arabia, one of the six original founding LAS Member States.

At the opening of the Summit, The Custodian of the two holy mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud praised the EU's "progressive role" in defending the "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people." "The Palestinian issue is important not only for the stability of the Middle East but to the stability of the world and Europe in particular," the King added, noting the issue is Arab countries' first concern.

Separately, King Salman urged leaders at the Summit to apply pressure on Iran to cease its meddling support of militias in the region, notably in Yemen, where he underscored Saudi Arabia's commitment to "supporting Yemeni legitimacy and bringing the revolutionary terrorist Houthi militias supported by Iran to submit to the international community,".

THE LATEST : SAUDI ARABIA IN BRUSSELS



Saudi delegation convened 12 – 14 March for the third Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region.

At the Conference, 12-14 March, Saudi Arabia's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel Al-Jubeir emphasized the importance of finding a political resolution to the Syrian crisis that results in the withdrawal of Iran's forces and its "terrorist militias."

On the sidelines of the Conference, Al-Jubeir met separately with a variety of world leaders and Saudi allies, including Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Al-Safadi, UK Envoy to Syria Martin Longden, US Envoy to Syria James Jeffrey, and UN Under-Secretary- General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock.



Saudi Ambassadors to Eastern European Countries Visit EU Institutions and meet PSC Representatives

Their Excellencies, Saudi Ambassadors from Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Poland convened in Brussels for meetings at a variety of EU institutions to build bridges of cross-cultural understanding, discuss with their European counterparts issues of mutual interest, and gain greater insight into the EU decision-making process.

Of particular note, the Saudi Ambassadors also met with delegates and ambassadors of the European's Council's Political and Security Committee (PSC) to discuss issues of paramount mutual interest, chiefly: the Middle East peace process and regional crises in Yemen, Libya and Syria.



Shura Council Convenes for Saudi-European Parliamentary Friendship Committee Meeting

A Shura Council delegation, headed by Prince Khalid bin Abdullah, Chair of the Council of the Saudi-European Parliamentary Friendship Committee, met on 11 March with the Chair of the Sub-Commission on Human Rights of the European Parliament, Pier Antonio, and a number of European Parliament Members from various political groups and committees

The delegation briefed the MEPs on the great role played by the Kingdom in relief and humanitarian fields in Yemen and its continued support for Syrian refugees, as well as the kingdom's efforts in supporting peace, security and stability in the Middle-East.



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COMBATTING TERRORISM & TERROR FINANCING



PROTECTING AGAINST EXPLOITATION OF CHARITIES

Saudi Arabia is aware that terrorists often attempt to hide behind the guise of charitable organizations for funding, and has implemented strong controls to ensure that no charity can exploit the sympathies of Saudi citizens to fund terrorist acts.

It is for this reason that **Saudi charities cannot operate abroad except through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSRelief) or the Saudi Red Crescent**, which is under strict supervision from the government.

MAINTAINING STRICT FINANCIAL CONTROL SYSTEMS

Saudi Arabia has implemented robust policies across its banking and financial sectors that aim to stem the flow of any money into the pockets of terrorists and extremist organisations.

The Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) requires all financial institutions within the Kingdom's jurisdiction to implement all of the recent recommendations for combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism issued by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an intergovernmental organisation founded in 1989 on the initiative of the G7 to develop policies to combat money laundering.

Saudi Arabia earned FATF observer status in 2015 and, more recently, in Sept. 2018, the FATF praised Saudi Arabia for having consistently "demonstrated an ability and willingness to pursue terrorist financing," which resulted in over 1700 investigations and convictions since 2013.

Today, Saudi Arabia is currently a member of FATF's sub-set organisation, the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), approved by Saudi Arabia's Council of Ministers in 2005.

To further ensure compliance with FATF recommendations, Saudi Arabia established money-laundering units in SAMA and all local banks to ensure the banking system is not exploited by money-laundering operations and to report any dubious transactions to competent authorities.

COOPERATING WITH ALLIES & PARTNERS AROUND THE WORLD TO COUNTER TERROR FINANCING

The globalization of financial and banking networks necessitates effective coordination between governments to ensure that funds are not falling into the wrong hands. Saudi Arabia has always worked in close coordination with its allies on the international stage to stem the global flow of funds to terrorist organizations.

For instance, Saudi Arabia co-chairs the Counter ISIL Finance Group (CIFG) with the U.S. and Italy. First established in 2015 to disrupt ISIL's sources of revenue and its ability to move and use funds to wage its campaign of terror, the CIFG's 52 participating member countries continue today to share methods to disrupt cash flows and establish precedents for governments to follow.

Saudi Arabia has also ratified the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, and has supported the requirements of a number of UN Resolutions related to combating terrorist financing.

VISION 2030 CONTINUES TO EMPOWER SAUDI WOMEN, EXPAND GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

SAUDI WOMEN FLOURISH AS STEM GRADUATES

In the past few years, Saudi women have consistently comprised the majority (57%) of university graduates in the Kingdom. Now, women are also beginning to outnumber their male peers in STEM fields traditionally dominated by men around the world, such as biology, information technology (IT), mathematics and statistics, and physicians.

According to a 2019 survey by Dr. Fatima Alakeel, a cybersecurity expert and faculty member at King Saud University in Riyadh, "almost 80 percent of [Saudi] girls are keen to study STEM."

Dr. Alakeel's findings were confirmed in an Arab News interview, published 19 March 2019, featuring Maha Al Taleb, a 22-year-old who graduated earlier this year with a degree in IT networks and technology security from King Saud University and now works as junior information security analyst in Riyadh. In the interview, Al Taleb said:

"It's common for girls in the Kingdom to opt for STEM education. Saudi women are ambitious. We're acquiring high degrees and seeking successful careers. I don't know why the world assumes that Saudi women are a backward tribal species who have no say in these matters. This entire perception is flawed."



SAUDI WOMEN ARE OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE FOR A THRIVING ECONOMY

EFFECTIVE PRESENCE AND ACTIVE CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPMENT:

- HOLD HIGH DIPLOMATIC POSITIONS
- PARTICIPATES IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AND CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE
- 20% OF THE TOTAL MEMBERS OF THE SHURA COUNCIL
- 43% OF THE TOTAL NON-PROFIT SECTOR EMPLOYEES

THE MOST PROMINENT SYSTEMS THAT ENABLED WOMEN IN THE LABOR MARKET:

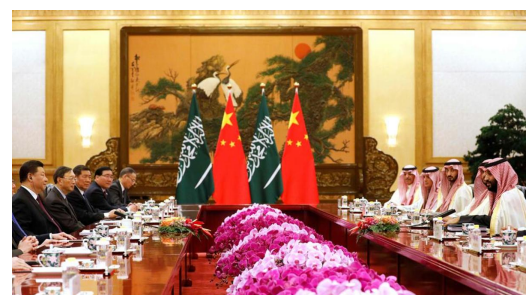
- GUARANTEED EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK BETWEEN THE SEXES
- GRANTED A -10WEEK 'PAID' LEAVE
- GRANTED MATERNITY LEAVE UP TO A MAXIMUM OF 3 YEARS
- PROVIDED A WORKPLACE DAYCARE IN ANY INSTITUTION WITH MORE THAN 50 EMPLOYEES
- PROHIBITED THE DISMISSAL OF A FEMALE EMPLOYEE FOR ANY REASON RELATED TO MARRIAGE OR MATERNITY

KSA'S SPEECH IN THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN AT THE 63RD SESSION OF 2019 DELIVERED BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL FOR FAMILY AFFAIRS DR. HALA TUWAIJRI - NEW YORK

SAUDI VISION 2030 TEAMS UP WITH CHINA'S BELT & ROAD

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has cemented a \$10 billion (8.8 billion euros) deal for a refining and petrochemical complex in China following his 21 February meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Saudi Arabia signed 35 economic cooperation agreements with China worth a total of \$28 billion at a joint investment forum during the visit to also discuss joint efforts to counter extremism and terror.



Along with the number of agreements signed, the Crown Prince's visit underscored the importance of the extended and renewable Saudi-Chinese strategic relations. The deals also shed light on the efforts put forth by officials from both countries to achieve convergence between the **Kingdom's Vision 2030** and China's Belt and Road Initiative, and to deepen cooperation in all fields in order to attain greater concrete results within the strategic partnership through the China-Saudi Arabia High-Level Joint Committee.