



**COUNCIL OF
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**21st EU-GCC Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting
Abu Dhabi, 20 April 2011**

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

1. The 21st session of the Joint Council for the European Union- Gulf Cooperation Council, was held in Abu Dhabi on 20 April 2011. The GCC delegation was led by HH Sheikh Abdallah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates. The GCC Secretariat was represented by GCC Secretary General, Dr. Abdul Latif bin Rashed Al-Zayani. The EU delegation was led by H.E. High Representative Catherine Ashton.
2. The EU and GCC Ministers reviewed the state of play of the bilateral relationship. The Ministers expressed the view that further strengthening EU-GCC relations would be an effective and valuable contribution to regional security and stability. They reaffirmed their commitment to advance political dialogue, fully respecting international law, the United Nations Charter and the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. They endorsed the recommendations of the Joint Cooperation Committee, and noted with satisfaction progress on the implementation of the Joint Action Programme approved last year, and reiterated the importance to continue advancing with its implementation, with a view to promoting stronger links between their administrations, academics, scientific communities, students and people. The EU and the GCC reiterated their intention to continue their consultations with a view to conclude the Free Trade Agreement as soon as possible.

P R E S S

3. The Ministers discussed developments in the region, underlining its strategic importance. They condemned violence in all its forms and expressed their deep regret for the loss of life. They stressed their readiness to strengthen consultation and coordination and to mobilise appropriate support for countries across the region if and when requested. The two sides agreed that every situation was unique, but there was a common need for each country to find its own ways to enable people's aspirations to be addressed, peacefully and constructively, in full respect of the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The two sides recalled the importance for the respect for sovereignty of the GCC Member States and recognized that the GCC is entitled to take all necessary measures to protect the citizens of the GCC Member States. The two sides urged Iran to play a constructive role in the region and to cease interfering in the internal affairs of GCC Member States and other countries in the region. The Ministers called on Iran to fulfil its obligations under international law to provide protection for diplomatic missions in Iran.

4. The EU and the GCC reaffirmed their shared position that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East is vital for international peace and security and expressed their continued support for the Arab Peace Initiative. They called for the urgent resumption of negotiations on all final status issues, with a view to arriving at a two-state solution by September 2011, as set out by the Quartet. They agreed that a further Quartet Principals' meeting should take place as soon as possible. The two sides reaffirmed their shared position not to recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties including with regard to Jerusalem. The EU and the GCC stressed their common position that Israeli settlements anywhere in the occupied Palestinian territories are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace. In this regard they called on Israel to immediately end all settlement activity in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, including natural growth, and dismantle all outposts. They agreed on the need to continue to support Palestinian state-building efforts, both politically and financially.
5. The Ministers took note of the formation of the Iraqi government and stressed the importance of its completion. They also reaffirmed that national reconciliation is the key to the solution of Iraq's problems and underlined the urgency of making further progress in this regard. They condemned all acts of violence including those against ethnic and religious minorities, and underlined the importance that these acts do not deter Iraq from pursuing its ongoing political, economic and social development.

The EU and GCC underlined their full support for the central role of the UN in assisting Iraq in implementing relevant UNSC resolutions. They expressed their support for the UN efforts to finalize the issue of the maintenance of the international border posts between Iraq and Kuwait, for the return of Kuwaiti prisoners and nationals of other countries or their remains, as well as the return of Kuwaiti property including its national archive.

6. Both sides expressed their support for the continuation of efforts to engage Iran into meaningful negotiations, with the objective of reaching a peaceful, negotiated solution of the nuclear issue. They called again upon Iran to restore confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. The EU and GCC urged Iran to fully comply with the relevant resolutions adopted by UNSC and the IAEA and recalled their commitment to the full implementation of relevant UNSC resolutions. The EU and GCC underlined the importance of maintaining dialogue on this issue.
7. Ministers expressed their deep concern at the situation in Yemen. The current impasse between the various parties might decline quickly into more serious confrontation and conflict. The ministers condemned all use of violence. They reiterated their commitment to support Yemen's development as a unified, stable, democratic and prosperous state. They called on all parties in Yemen to urgently forge a meaningful, comprehensive and inclusive agreement on political transition. Dialogue is the only way to make progress on political, economic and social reforms acceptable to all Yemenis. Ministers exchanged views on current initiatives in support of Yemen's political transition. They welcomed and supported the ongoing GCC initiative and efforts to encourage concerned sides in Yemen to urgently reach a political settlement of the current impasse in Yemen.
8. The EU and the GCC underlined the importance of ensuring the unity and territorial integrity of Libya. They welcomed the efforts undertaken by the international community to ensure the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1970 and 1973 on Libya.

They welcomed in particular the establishment of the Libya Contact Group, which provides an important platform for the efforts of the international community, the progress made at its first meeting in Doha on 13 April, and the agreement to hold the second Contact Group meeting in Italy. They underlined the need for close cooperation with the Arab League, the African Union, and the United Nations, and expressed appreciation, in this regards, for the meeting convened by the United Nations in cooperation with the Arab League in Cairo on 14 April.

Calling for an immediate and genuine ceasefire, they stressed that Colonel Qaddafi's regime has lost its legitimacy and expressed support to the Transitional National Council as a legitimate interlocutor representing the aspirations of the Libyan people. They expressed their deep concern regarding the serious humanitarian situation in Libya and on its borders. They underlined the obligation to provide unhindered access for humanitarian assistance.

9. The Joint Council reiterated its concern about the threat of piracy, which disrupts economic activity, regional and international trade and maritime safety and security. Both sides share responsibility in fighting piracy and highlighted the importance of reinforcing maritime capacities and coordination in the broader region. They welcomed international efforts, including by the EU Operation Atalanta, and the international conference on Piracy, held in the UAE on 18-19 April 2011.

10. The Joint Council underlined that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security. The multilateral treaty system, in particular the NPT remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and the Additional Protocol are the key instruments for its implementation. The EU and the GCC 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.
 11. The EU and the GCC reiterated their continued commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and relevant international instruments. They agreed to identify possible ways to forge cooperation in this area.
 12. The EU and the GCC underlined the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, cooperation and respect for cultural and religious diversity, and condemned all forms of hatred and intolerance. The EU and the GCC expressed their joint commitment to the promotion and protection of the values of tolerance, moderation and coexistence and expressed their readiness to cooperate closely with existing international and regional bodies and fora, such as UNESCO, the Alliance of Civilisations and the EU-League of Arab States, in pursuance of these goals.
 13. Ministers agreed to hold their next meeting in the EU in 2012.
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