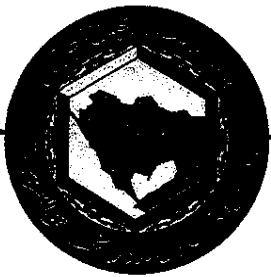


عناية / الأستاذ صالح كروى
مع التحية



The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
Secretariat General

Secretary - General's Office

Remarks by

HE Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Alzayani

Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council

[At the GRC Cambridge Conference]

[6th July 2011]

URH Mr Chairman; Distinguished Guests,

It gives me great pleasure (Particularly as I have only been in the appointment for three months) to be here today at this great and historic university, and to be among so many distinguished participants. I want, at the outset, to express my gratitude to the GRC and its Chairman, Abdulaziz bin Sager, for the kind invitation to take part in today's panel, and to speak on the GCC and its approach to developments and challenges in our region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the 25th of May, the GCC celebrated its thirtieth anniversary. At a time of considerable regional and international challenges, this historic occasion was a chance to reflect on our organization and its developing role both regionally and globally. Looking back, it is fair to say that the GCC and its member states have evolved into a cohesive and robust system, of which its citizens, neighbours, friends and allies can be pleased.

Moreover, looking forward the events of these recent months have demonstrated that the GCC can respond effectively and constructively to any challenges that arise, working together to promote the prosperity and wellbeing of all citizens of GCC states, without distinction.

Page | 1



**The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
Secretariat General**

Secretary - General's Office

In my view, the GCC's development over the past thirty years is based on three pillars that continue to guide us going forward: security, prosperity and resilience.

Security is the essential foundation for progress and development in all fields, and the basic guarantee of personal, social and economic rights and freedoms. Here, a secure environment at the individual, national and regional levels includes safety from internal and external threats, as well as preparedness for, and effective response to, both natural and manmade disasters.

An important source of security in the GCC is the remarkable cohesion of its people, who enjoy common ties of kinship, culture and shared history, and the strong historical and traditional bonds between rulers and their citizens in the GCC. These ties within and between our countries have been central to developing our concept of GCC collective security – the recognition throughout the region that the security of each country fundamentally depends on the security of all.

But we recognise that genuine security is built from the grassroots upwards, and that this requires sustained and equitable economic progress and development. Hence, the GCC countries have worked hard to encourage prosperity for all their citizens, promoting economic innovation and investing generously in human development – in their citizens' education, health and wellbeing. They are ahead of schedule in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Economically, we are moving from being "resource economies" to genuine "knowledge economies", a transition which fits well with GCC's small, highly educated and dynamic population. It capitalizes on GCC nationals' strengths and seeks to put them in command of their economic destiny. This process has accelerated over the past few years, even through the recent financial crisis, during

Page | 2



**The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
Secretariat General**

Secretary - General's Office

which GCC countries adopted some of their most ambitious development programmes.

We recognise also that the path of development is not always a smooth one, and that it will inevitably encounter challenges, whether internal or external, economic or political. Already, however, the GCC and its member states have demonstrated remarkable unity of purpose and resilience in facing such challenges. Indeed, the desire for greater resilience and the ability to “bounce back” from adversity has been a key driver of collective security, and is based on the recognition that strong and effective cooperation between the GCC countries provides both individual and collective strategic and economic depth. By working effectively together, GCC countries gain depth, resilience and capacities that would be beyond any country acting alone, while retaining the flexibility to respond quickly and effectively to challenges.

So how have these principles been reflected in practice?

The commitment of the GCC countries to their collective security has never been in doubt. On the occasion of the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, all GCC states and people stood by their Kuwaiti brothers, taking them in, providing support and allowing the country to overcome the crisis and rebound rapidly following liberation in February 1991. The GCC, as an organization, not only survived that crisis, but emerged stronger, demonstrating its value and showing remarkable resilience.

More recently, the GCC partners have demonstrated their full readiness to support Bahrain's moves to establish a national, comprehensive consensus



The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
Secretariat General

Secretary - General's Office

dialogue that will further advance the ambitious reform programme of HM King Hamad, so as to meet the aspirations of all its people. These efforts

have included the recent Royal initiative to establish an independent commission of eminent international persons to examine in full transparency issues raised by the events earlier this year. In order to assist in creating the environment necessary for the dialogue to succeed, the GCC countries have worked collectively to strengthen Bahrain's economy, and to deter any external interference that seeks to derail its course.

Economically, the GCC continues to move forward in promoting development and prosperity for all citizens, in line with its Charter objective of integrating member states in all areas of economic life.

The GCC Common Market, launched in 2008, has gone a long way towards achieving "GCC Economic Citizenship," allowing all GCC citizens and businesses to move freely, work and invest in any GCC country on an equal footing. In the three years since its inception, the Common Market has already resulted in growth of over 80% in intra-GCC investment, and a 30% increase in labour mobility of GCC nationals seeking work in other GCC countries.

In trade, the GCC established in 2003 a customs union, with the aim of allowing goods to move freely within the GCC. Its establishment has already led to an annual increase in intra-GCC trade of over 20%, much more than had been hoped for.

Thanks in part to these developments, the recent financial crisis demonstrated the GCC's strong economic resilience – the region was one of the few areas in the world that managed to maintain healthy growth. For



**The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
Secretariat General**

Secretary - General's Office

2011, for example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects the GCC countries as a group to grow at 8%, in other words, a return to pre-crisis levels.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having been given a superficial insight into the principles that have guided the GCC's development over the last three decades, and how they are helping us address current and future challenges, I now want briefly to address how the GCC sees its place in the region and the world, and how it works constructively with international friends and partners.

In its relationships, both with its neighbours and with the rest of the world, the GCC believes in "comprehensive cooperation." Indeed, the pillars of security, prosperity and resilience can only truly be achieved through such cooperation, within each state, between member states, and between the GCC and its friend and allies. While we strongly believe in cooperation, we also reject any interference in our internal affairs, and strongly adhere to the same principle in dealing with our neighbours.

Over the past decade, the GCC as a group has entered into collective trade negotiations and/or strategic dialogues with most of its key partners. Cooperation and "strategic dialogue" agreements that we have signed with those partners follow a "comprehensive cooperation" approach. They include coordination, integration and cooperation in almost all key areas. We are engaged in ongoing joint work with our partners on trade, education, culture, energy, the environment, as well as on security and political coordination.

Page | 5



**The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
Secretariat General**

Secretary - General's Office

As part of this comprehensive approach, GCC countries have for decades provided development assistance both in their immediate neighbourhood and beyond, and their development agencies are well known for their support of such programmes the world over. For example:

- Approximately \$1.65 billion dollars to finance projects in the Gaza Strip through the GCC Programme for the Reconstruction of Gaza;
- Some \$15 billion to Egypt in various forms to help meet economic challenges of transition;
- A leading role in providing humanitarian assistance in Libya;
- Significant international development aid and humanitarian assistance, including projects throughout Africa, and relief and reconstruction assistance to countries including Turkey, Iran and Pakistan following natural disasters;
- Assisting Yemen in meeting security and economic challenges, including approximately US\$3.75 billion in funds between 2007 and 2011.

Since recent events began in Yemen earlier this year, the GCC has worked closely with other international partners through the Friends of Yemen group, which sought to encourage Yemen to implement reforms in all areas. Further, in April, five GCC states launched an initiative that aims to bring about a peaceful transfer of power in Yemen. That initiative - which was fully supported by the international community - is still on the table, signed by the opposition and the ruling party, and awaiting approval by the President's in order for it to take effect.

Applying its principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of its neighbours, the GCC has respected the wishes of the people of those countries and provided support where it was needed and requested. In



The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
Secretariat General

Secretary - General's Office

Libya, the GCC was a leader in calling for a no-fly zone to protect civilians, a call supported by the Arab League and which resulted in the UN Security Council providing such protection.

Distinguished Guests,

All this gives me real confidence in the role of the GCC. I have no doubt that through the commitment of its member countries and the active engagement of all its people, the GCC will continue to progress, based on the pillars of security, prosperity and resilience. It will provide further opportunities and development to all its citizens while playing a constructive role both regionally and internationally.

Indeed, as I conclude, I can confidently say that while recent events have undoubtedly provided challenges, they have also provided lessons and historic and valuable opportunities. They have strengthened the bonds between member states and enhanced the role and cohesion of the GCC as an organisation. The fact that we have stood firm and united internally, while continuing to extend aid and assistance to our neighbours has proved that the GCC has been built on solid foundations.

Now, we must ensure that what we build onto these foundations is not only strong – but most importantly “flexible” enough to overcome the many and major challenges which we will certainly face in the near and distant future.