



Speech
of Arab League Secretary-General
Delivered on his behalf
by Ambassador Dr. Kamal Hassan Ali
Assistant Secretary-General Head of Economic
Affairs
at
The Second Arab-European Economic Forum
"Towards a Strong Alliance"
Athens, Greece
9th-10th November 2017

**In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Compassionate,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Peace, God's mercy and blessings be upon you.

At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the government and people of Greece for their warm reception, generous hospitality; for their efforts to host "the Second Arab-European Economic Forum: Towards Strong Alliance", under the auspices of President of the Hellenic Republic Prokopis Pavlopoulos and the European Union Parliament, in cooperation with the League of Arab States, the Federation of Arab Chambers, the Economy and Business Group and the Delphi Economic Forum for their leading role in organizing this Forum, for providing facilities to ensure its success; for the warm reception and excellent organization; and for the technical efforts exerted by the Federation of Arab Chambers to highlight the role of Arab private sector in the diverse areas of joint cooperation with the League of Arab States.

I would also like to express my sincere pleasure for participating in this Forum that aims to achieving a common vision on regional and international developments, as well as enhancing economic cooperation in vital sectors and important economic areas. On behalf of HE Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Arab League Secretary-General, whose prior meetings prevented him from participating in this significant event, wishing you every success.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Throughout history, the relations between the European Union and Arab countries have been characterized as profound and distinct, based on the geographical proximity, the political and economic cooperation at several levels, the human and cultural interaction, all of which have therefore created a common heritage and values between the two regions. However, the amassed legacy of challenges facing the two regions have affected the ability of Europe and the Arab world to achieve the maximum benefit from such important advantages in order to build a new phase of strategic partnership that would contribute to enhancing a long term stability and prosperity.

Both Europe and the Arab world bear a historical responsibility to overcome all obstacles, be it real or fabricated, and to exert further efforts to consolidate the pillars of this partnership, which would easily create one of the most distinctive regions in terms of political and economic cooperation in the world, given that the Arab world is the third largest trading partner of the European Union countries following the United States, China and Japan, whereas trade volume between the two blocs reached over US\$ 324 billion in 2016. There are also direct investments between the two blocs, estimated at hundreds of billions of dollars covering the most key sectors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Arab League seeks to strengthen cooperation with the European Union and its different bodies through the convening of ministerial, sectoral and technical meetings in all areas. In this context, the Arab Republic of Egypt shall be hosting the First Arab-European Summit during the

first quarter of 2018, whose agenda shall include means of developing political, economic and social relations between the two regions. Moreover, the Sixth Meeting of the Permanent Delegates to the League of Arab States and Ambassadors of the Political and Security Committee of the European Union Council shall also be convened, in addition to the Third Session of the Strategic Cooperation Working Groups in Brussels which shall be convened on 28th November 2017 to assess the Arab-European understanding and cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The agenda of this Forum focuses on the economic and politics aspects, addressing future challenges facing the Arab-European Union relations and their political and security dimensions, the foreign policy and European relations with the Arab world, the Arab-European cooperation in the energy sector, the development of investment and finance, the role of Greece as a crossroads between Europe and the Arab world, the economic alliances and means of increasing benefit from the potential in areas of infrastructure, tourism, trade and real estate. The Forum is also addressing the shipping sector, prospects of Arab-European future relations, and cultural and educational communication between the two parties. The Forum also emphasizes the importance of dialogue, cooperation and alliance between the Arab world and Europe to draw the common path towards a prosperous future for the two regions, with a view to consolidating relations, developing and enhancing economic partnership between Europe and the Arab countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Athens has been selected, once again, for hosting this Forum, due to the historical role of Greece as a bridge between the Arab and European worlds; which this Forum aims to preserve and highlight in order to ensure that Greece continues to undertake this role in the future, as Greece is the European country with the most geographical proximity to the Arab world, in addition to its tolerant political positions towards the question of Palestine. This Forum also represents a step towards openness, providing Greece with an opportunity to play an active role in fostering relations between the European Union and the Arab world, noting that the organization of this Forum by Athens contributes to highlighting the economic potential of Greece and underlines the excellent level which the political and economic relations between Greece and the Arab countries has reached.

Ladies and Gentlemen, ... Distinguished guests,

In conclusion, I wish this Forum every success and to achieve the outcomes that serve the interest of all. The Secretariat General of the League of Arab States, the Union of Arab Chambers, heads and departments of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture shall seek to benefit from this Forum's outcome so that we can all achieve the aspired progress and growth of our Arab, European and Greek nations.

**May God be with you,
Peace, God's mercy and blessings be upon you.**