



(13/5/2014)

RIYADH DECLARATION  
THE FIRST SESSION OF THE ARAB ECONOMIC and COOPERATION FORUM  
WITH CENTRAL ASIA COUNTRIES AND THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN  
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
May 13, 2014

The first session of the Arab Economic and Cooperation Forum with Central Asia countries and the Republic of Azerbaijan under the title "The Prospects of Investment and Trade Exchange", was held in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014, under the patronage of the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,

The Arab Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Economic and Finance, the Secretary General of the League of Arab States Dr. Nabil Elaraby, and the Foreign, Finance and Economic Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as representatives of Arab financial institutions and bodies, the chambers of commerce, business communities and their counterparts in Central Asia and the Republic of Azerbaijan have taken part in the Forum. The Forum featured various discussions and dialogues between representatives of governments and private sector. The participants emphasized their will to work on developing the economic relations and partnership between the two sides, contributing to achieve development and welfare, and in establishing peace and stability in their regions (attached list of participants).

The participants expressed their appreciation to the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud for hosting the first session of the Forum in the Kingdom, being the owner of the initiative to propose the cooperation and promoting the Arab relations with the countries of Central Asia and the Republic of Azerbaijan in the developmental and economic fields, and seeking to expand it including the political, social and cultural fields.

The participants emphasized the depth of the historical relations, religious and cultural ties, and the prospects of economic cooperation and the advantages that characterize the Arab countries and the Republics of Central Asia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, starting from its rich natural resources, through promising investment opportunities as food production, power generation, petrochemical industries, mining, tourism and others.

The forum held in an atmosphere of openness and cooperation. The participants reached consensus on the issues of mutual interest, whether on the bilateral or multilateral relations, particularly in the fields of trade, economic and cultural



relations. The participants stressed the importance of adopting the language of dialogue and openness with the others and the constructive engagement as a means to achieve peace, security and stability in the region and the world, and called their countries to strengthen their diplomatic and political presence.

The Ministers commended the signing of the memorandum of cooperation between the League of Arab States and the countries of Central Asia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, and expressed their aspiration that the launching of this memorandum will open new prospects for cooperation between them in various fields.

The Participants recalled their common positions in the framework of the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and its different mechanisms that aim to support the just causes, reiterating their welcome to the historic resolution adopted by the UNGA in November 2012 regarding the recognition of Palestine as a UN non-member observer state, and their support for the establishment of a viable, independent Palestinian State, based on June 4th 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in order to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict on its three tracks (the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese) based on the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant international legitimacy resolutions, and their support for the efforts exerted to the steadfastness of Jerusalem and the Palestinian people. In this context, the Forum called the international community in order to put pressure on Israel to halt the actions and activities in the city of Jerusalem aiming to Judaizing it and to stop adopting legislations that allow dividing the city. They also expressed their concern over the deteriorating situation in Syria and their support for the negotiated political solution in accordance with Geneva I Conference in order to protect Syria from the risks of sliding into scenarios of chaos and civil war. They also called for a peaceful solution to the issue of the three islands between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran, and recalled the necessity to resolve the Armenian-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by peaceful means based on the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The Ministers expressed their concern on the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and their impact on the security and stability in the Middle East. They stressed the need to hold the conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East as soon as possible, and on the right of all countries to develop nuclear energy for peaceful uses in compliance with their obligations under the NPT. The participants emphasized the importance of the contribution of all five Central Asian states in building a world free from the threat of nuclear annihilation, and highlighted the contribution of Kazakhstan, which dismantled the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal in the 1990s. They commended Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for the establishment of Central Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (CANWFZ) and supported their efforts in further institutionalizing this zone under the NPT. Taking note of May 6, 2014 the signature



of the Protocol to the CANWFZ Treaty by the five nuclear weapon states, and voiced support for the protocol's ratification by all involved countries. The participants also condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and welcomed the establishment of the International Centre for Fighting Terrorism under the umbrella of the United Nations in New York.

In this context, the participants stressed the importance of :

1. Expanding trade and economic cooperation.
2. Encouraging mutual investments and creating a suitable environment to attract businessmen and investors from both sides, assessing any potential obstacles facing them and the means to remove them, as well as signing bilateral agreements to protect and encourage investment and prevent double taxation.
3. Promoting and strengthening cooperation in the fields of energy and renewable energy, nuclear energy for peaceful use, trade, transport, new communications (ICT), environment and sustainable development, agriculture, capacity building, training, tourism, statistics and data base, intellectual property rights, industry, and scientific research, as well as opening prospects for financing joint economic and investment projects.
4. Working to promote and develop the sectors of transportation including road transportation, air, maritime and railways between the member states of the League of Arab States and the countries of Central Asia and the Republic of Azerbaijan. In this regard, they welcomed all projects that aim to increase the volume of trade through developing the link among the Arab countries, the countries of Central Asia and the Republic of Azerbaijan.
5. Cooperating in the framework of the "Green Economy", including environmental issues, agriculture and energy, and stressing the importance of cooperation in this field and on the available potentials in the countries of Central Asia, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Arab countries; as a promising source for electricity, eco-friendly products, agriculture products and the food supply.
6. Welcoming the invitation by the Kingdom of Morocco to the countries of Central Asia to participate with the Arab countries in the forum of renewable energy which will be organized by Morocco in 2015, in which that will be an opportunity to exchange experiences and to establish networks and crystalizing joint projects in the field of energy, renewable energy and energy efficiency.
7. Examining the possibility of trade liberalization between their countries, which will have a profound impact on the expansion and increasing their economic relations and investment. They also emphasized that the revitalization of economic and trade relations between the two sides could contribute strongly in promoting peace and stability in the region, as well as increasing and supporting the flow of trade between



them, emphasizing the importance of the participation of the private sector and civil society in the activities of investment and trade.

8. Welcoming the declaration launched by the meeting of the Arab Chambers and federations and their counterparts from the countries of Central Asia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as the businessmen and investors from both sides, which was held in Riyadh on April 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>, 2014. In addition to, the welcoming to hold the first session of the Conference of the Arab and Central Asian businessmen and investors on 2015 in Beirut, and its second session in Tajikistan on 2017.
9. Congratulating the Republic of Kazakhstan on organizing the EXPO 2017 which will be held in Astana; with a view to explore the potentials for mutual cooperation in the areas of renewable energy and friendly environmental green economy, and also congratulating the United Arab Emirates on organizing the EXPO 2020, and inviting the relevant institutions in the member states in the forum to participate effectively in both of events; as it is an important opportunity to communicate and to establish new partnerships aiming to achieve sustainable development.
10. Coordinating their positions in the economic and commercial forums, and cooperate with the other international actors to contribute in the economic decision-making at the international level in order to serve their interests, which will have the greatest impact in increasing trade exchanges and developing investments, and establish strong and effective partnerships between them.
11. Adopting several activities that would reflect the role of the Arab countries and the countries of Central Asia and the Republic of Azerbaijan in the Arabic and Islamic cultures. They called for working on preserving the cultural heritage and cooperation to develop programs in the fields of culture, translation, educational institutions, through joint cultural exhibitions and art festivals, book fairs, and establishing links between research and studies centers, students' exchange, allocating scholarships to study the cultural commonalities between them. They also stressed on the importance of cooperation in the fields of health care, poverty reduction, the family and childhood, the empowerment of women, youth, sports, cultural development and media.
12. Encouraging further dialogue and understanding among peoples and respect their religious and cultural privacy, and the effective participation in regional and international initiatives, which aimed at promoting dialogue among civilizations, cultures, religions and tolerance. They welcomed the establishment of the King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz International Center for Dialogue among Followers of Religions and Cultures, which established in Vienna on 26/11/2012, and called for cooperation with the center. As well as the initiative by the King Abdullah II Bin Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly in 2010 to allocate a global week to devote interfaith dialogue and the spirit of moderation of the Islamic religion, which was included in



Amman Message. In addition to, holding the conference on “Dialogue of Civilizations and Cultures” which has been held on 8/5/2014 in the Kingdom of Bahrain under the auspices of King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah, and the establishment of the “International Center of Excellence for Countering Extremism and Violence” in Abu Dhabi on 14/12/2012. Furthermore the initiative by the leader of Khazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev to hold the “Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions”, and also welcomed the initiative by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev to conduct annual "Baku International Humanitarian Forum" and to create International Center of "Excellence for Research into the Problems of Multiculturalism". As well as, the proposal of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdualziz at the Fourth Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit Conference in Makah (August 2012), for establishing a centre for " dialogue among Islamic schools of thought to reach a common understanding" to be based in Riyadh. They also welcomed the invitation by King Mohammed VI to establish an International Charter to define standards and appropriate norms for exercising the freedom of expression as well as the commitment to respect religious symbols and sanctities, and the spiritual values and beliefs.

13. Holding the next meeting of the Senior Officials Committee (SOC) in one of the Arab countries or in one of the countries of Central Asia, or the Republic of Azerbaijan, or at the LAS General Secretariat in order to follow up the implementation of the Forum’s recommendations.
14. Expressing their appreciation for the SOC and the Secretariat of the League of Arab States for their efforts in the preparatory meetings that contributed in the success of the forum at its first session.
15. The participants expressed their sincere thanks and appreciation to the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the good organization of the Forum and the hospitality provided to the delegates at the first session of the Forum.
16. The participants decided to define the venue and the date of the second session of the forum during 2016 through coordination with LAS secretariat and by diplomatic channels.