

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

Joint Statement—United States-Gulf Cooperation Council Second Summit Leaders Communique

April 21, 2016

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

At the invitation of King Salman ibn Abdulaziz, heads of State and Government of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries and the United States convened today in Riyadh to reaffirm the GCC-U.S. strategic partnership in pursuit of a stable, secure, and prosperous region. They reviewed the substantial progress made since the first GCC-U.S. Summit in May 2015 at Camp David, including measures to strengthen GCC-U.S. cooperation and deepen the partnership between the GCC and the United States. Recognizing the scope of the region's challenges, leaders also committed to urgently undertake additional steps to intensify the campaign to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, Daesh) and al-Qa'ida; de-escalate and seek to resolve regional conflicts; strengthen GCC states' capacity to address external and internal threats; and address Iran's destabilizing activities, while also working to reduce regional and sectarian tensions that fuel instability.

Stabilizing the Region

The leaders discussed a shared vision for addressing the most pressing conflicts in the region, welcoming the important progress achieved since the Camp David summit, while also underscoring the need to solidify gains. To build on this progress, leaders reaffirmed their support for the common principles decided at Camp David, including a shared recognition that there is no military solution to the region's armed civil conflicts, which can only be resolved through political and peaceful means; respect for all states' sovereignty and non-interference in their internal affairs; and the need for inclusive governance in conflict-ridden societies as well as protection of all minorities and of human rights.

The leaders expressed solidarity with the Syrian people and emphasized the importance of the full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254, to include immediate humanitarian access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas and the release of any arbitrarily detained persons. Leaders also emphasized their resolve to strengthen the cessation of hostilities. They reaffirmed the need for a political transition away from Bashar Asad that preserves state institutions and sustains renewed focus on the fight against ISIL and the Nusrah Front.

The GCC and United States also expressed their deep concern for the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons. They welcomed plans by the United States to convene a High-Level Summit on Refugees in September 2016, recognizing the opportunity it affords to galvanize additional international support. Ahead of that Summit, the United States and GCC countries underscored the need to provide additional assistance for refugees.

The leaders encouraged additional Iraqi progress toward reducing sectarian tensions and promoting inclusive governance and reconciliation among all Iraqis, including by urgently addressing the legitimate grievances of all components of Iraqi society through the implementation of reforms. The leaders pledged to intensify support for Iraqi measures to put ISIL on a path to a lasting defeat. They called for intensified efforts to stabilize territory liberated from ISIL and deliver additional aid to Iraq's refugees and IDPs.

The leaders welcomed the cessation of hostilities in Yemen, pledged to support it, and urged all Yemeni parties to also abide by it. They expressed continued strong support for U.N. envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed's work and emphasized the importance of achieving progress in talks convening in Kuwait. They urged all parties to make the difficult decisions necessary to achieve a durable, inclusive political settlement of the conflict, according to the terms of UNSCR 2216 (2015), GCC Initiative, and Yemen's National Dialogue Outcomes. Acknowledging the tremendous human pain and suffering of the Yemeni people, GCC leaders pledged to further facilitate the unimpeded, timely delivery of humanitarian assistance, food, medicine, fuel, and commercial goods to all of Yemen, as rapidly as possible. They also undertook to support the long-term reconstruction of Yemen, including through its economic integration with the GCC economies.

Regarding Libya, leaders welcomed the recent seating of the Government of National Accord in Tripoli. They expressed the strong view that all Libyans throughout the country must overcome attempted obstructions by spoilers, respect the Government's authority and legitimacy, and embrace this important opportunity for a peaceful and more prosperous future. The GCC and United States called on the international community to assist the Government of National Accord's work addressing the challenges facing Libya, including the grave threat posed by ISIL.

The GCC countries and United States also underscored the necessity of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of a just, lasting, comprehensive peace agreement that results in a sovereign and contiguous Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel. Toward that end, the leaders reaffirmed the enduring importance of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and determined to remain closely coordinated on efforts to encourage the parties to demonstrate—through policies and actions—their commitment to a two-state solution.

Defeating ISIL and al-Qa'ida

Underscoring their shared commitment to defeat terrorism in all of its forms, both the GCC and United States welcomed progress reversing ISIL's territorial gains in Iraq and Syria. The United States welcomed GCC members' participation in and support for the international Counter-ISIL coalition and commended the rigorous efforts by GCC member states to prevent terrorist attacks, including by bolstering information sharing on foreign terrorist fighters, as well as actions by Gulf partners to counter ISIL's hateful ideology and message, and more broadly to counter violent extremism. Expressing concern at attempts by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIL to take advantage of the vacuum of authority in Yemen, they emphasized the importance of actions to counter this threat in parallel with progress reaching a political settlement of the conflict. Leaders received an update on the recently-formed Islamic Counterterrorism Coalition, and pledged to further strengthen their counterterrorism partnership.

Iran and Regional Stability

The United States and the GCC states reiterated support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran, noting that successful implementation of the JCPOA, thus far, has blocked Iran's pathways to a nuclear weapon and enhanced regional security and stability. Leaders reaffirmed the need to remain vigilant about addressing Iran's destabilizing actions in the region, including its ballistic missile program and support for terrorist groups such as Hizballah and other extremist proxies, in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, and elsewhere. To

help inform a shared approach to those activities, the GCC and the United States pledged to increase information sharing on Iran and other asymmetric threats in the region. GCC countries also committed to redouble their engagement on U.S. offers of maritime security cooperation, and to expeditiously reach consensus on steps necessary to implement an integrated ballistic missile defense early warning system. The United States and the GCC stressed the need for broader dialogue to resolve the region's conflicts, as well as their shared interest in reducing sectarian tensions. GCC countries reaffirmed their willingness to build trust and resolve longstanding differences through engagement with Iran; it being understood that Iran must engage the region according to the principles of good neighborliness, strict non-interference in domestic affairs, and respect for territorial integrity, consistent with international law, including the United Nations Charter.

Strengthening GCC Capacity to Address External and Internal Threats

The United States policy to use all elements of power to secure its core interests in the Gulf region, and to deter and confront external aggression against its allies and partners, as it did during the Gulf War, is unequivocal. The United States remains prepared to work jointly with the GCC states to deter and confront an external threat to any GCC state's territorial integrity that is inconsistent with the U.N. charter. GCC leaders, in turn, committed to strengthening their engagement on U.S. offers of security assistance, cooperation, and training aimed at enhancing the Gulf states' ability to play a larger role in addressing regional challenges.

Leaders were briefed on the April 20 meeting of U.S. and GCC defense ministers. Validating the importance of GCC-U.S. training exercises, they announced that GCC countries and the United States would immediately begin planning for a combined military exercise in March 2017, to showcase the full breath of GCC-U.S. security capabilities. GCC countries endorsed quick implementation of a new initiative to train specially-designated Special Operations Forces (SOF) units from each GCC country, in order to bolster interoperable counterterrorism capabilities. GCC countries also supported expanded cooperation on cyber security, endorsing peacetime cyber norms codified by Saudi Arabia, the United States, and other G-20 countries.

The U.S. expressed its readiness to support GCC efforts to diversify their economies, provide more effective governance, and adapt to economic challenges posed by low oil prices and changing demographics. Toward that end, GCC countries endorsed a U.S. proposal to inaugurate a ministerial-level GCC-U.S. economic dialogue in 2016, to supplement the activities undertaken under the GCC-U.S. Framework Agreement on Economic, Trade, Investment and Technical Cooperation of 2012. In addition to strengthening GCC-U.S. economic and investment ties, this dialogue would seek to assist GCC countries' implementation of economic and energy policies aimed at making available additional resources to meet their development needs. Leaders reaffirmed the mutual benefits of cooperation on climate issues, and committed to work toward the adoption of an amendment to the Montreal Protocol in 2016 to phasedown hydrofluorocarbons.

An Enduring Partnership

Leaders committed to continue coordinating closely on issues of mutual concern, including through meetings of GCC and U.S. foreign and defense ministers, and support for an annual leader-level Summit. The United States welcomed GCC interest in opening an office in Washington to advance cooperation, and will support efforts toward that end. Leaders also

directed that all U.S.–GCC working groups meet at least twice annually, to advance partnership on counterterrorism, streamlining the transfer of critical defense capabilities, missile defense, military preparedness, and cyber security. For continuity of those efforts, and speedy implementation of decisions expressed in the Camp David Joint Statement of May 14, 2015, its annex, and this communique, they directed their respective administrations to strengthen the framework of the GCC-U.S. partnership, including the Strategic Cooperation Forum.

Leaders expressed satisfaction with and stressed the central importance of an enduring GCC-U.S. partnership as a means to promote peace, security and stability in the region.

NOTE: The joint statement referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and U.N. Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Categories: Joint Statements : Gulf Cooperation Council leaders.

Names: Asad, Bashar al-; Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Ismail; Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, King

Subjects: Iran : Nuclear program, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action; Iraq : Political unrest and violence; Lebanon : Hezbollah political-paramilitary organization; Libya : Political unrest and violence; Middle East : Arab-Israeli conflict, peace process; Middle East : Gulf Cooperation Council; Saudi Arabia : King; Syria : Civil war and sectarian conflict; Syria : Jabhat al-Nusra terrorist organization; Syria : Refugees, humanitarian situation; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist organization; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; United Nations : Yemen, U.N. Special Envoy for; Yemen : Political unrest and violence; Yemen : U.N. Special Envoy.

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