

SAUDI ARABIA IN FOCUS

WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE
INFORMATION OFFICE OF THE
ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA
IN WASHINGTON, DC

MARCH 22, 2005

HUMAN RIGHTS AND REFORM

KINGDOM ADDRESSES UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Nizar Madani, addressing the 61st session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva on March 15, affirmed that respect for human rights constitutes a fundamental component of Saudi Arabia's policies, and listed the Kingdom's achievements, such as the National Human Rights Association (NHRA), which protects human rights independently and transparently; the ongoing series of national dialogue forums; the increased importance of the Consultative Council (*Majlis Al-Shura*); the instigation of municipal elections that will eventually include women; and reforms in education that are producing a new generation of highly educated, trained and knowledgeable citizens, women as well as men.

Referring to terrorism as "the greatest challenge at the present time", Minister Madani reiterated that Saudi Arabia, as a target of terrorists, has been denouncing, condemning and deploring terrorism in all its forms. Nations everywhere, he said, must work together to deprive terrorists of safe refuge, and to clarify that associating terrorism with any religion only strengthens the position of extremists. Declaring that security, stability, and peace are essential for development, he commented that the Middle East in particular is suffering from their lack because of Israel's occupation of Arab territories.

The Council of Ministers endorsed this statement at its meeting on March 21.

SAUDI ARABIA AFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS

On March 21, Saudi Arabia affirmed its full commitment to human rights and, in particular, to the fight against all kinds of racism, in a speech to UNCHR by the Kingdom's representative in Geneva Dr. Abdulwahab Attar on the occasion of the 'International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination'. Saudi Arabia, he declared, has concerns about racism in certain societies where discrimination targets religion, as for example when a hypothetical link is drawn between Islam and terrorism.

ENERGY

KINGDOM PROMOTES OIL AT PARIS SYMPOSIUM ON NUCLEAR ENERGY

Addressing a symposium in Paris on March 21, Prince Turki bin Saud bin Muhammad Al-Saud of the King Abdulaziz City for Sciences and Technology (KACST) affirmed that petroleum would remain an important source of energy; pointed out that Saudi Arabia's oil reserves, the largest in the world, are expected to increase; and declared that the Kingdom opposes the discrimination against petroleum products effected by certain consuming countries through the imposition of high taxes. Saudi Arabia also opposes financial assistance to energy sources such as coal or nuclear energy, both of which can pollute the environment, while petroleum products are now environmentally friendly.

* * *