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ARAB WORLD

Arab leaders call for unity, reaffirm support for Arab Peace Initiative

The 19th Arab League Summit was held May 28-29 in Riyadh. At the conclusion of the summit, Arab leaders called for enhanced efforts to preserve Arab identity and promote unity among Arab countries.

In their statement, known as the Riyadh Declaration, Arab leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative as the way to achieve a just and comprehensive peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The Arab League previously adopted the initiative, proposed by then-Crown Prince Abdullah, in 2002.

The Riyadh Declaration also called for moderation, rejected all forms of extremism, condemned sectarian violence and advocated a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction.

In opening remarks at the summit on March 28, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz called for Arab unity and an end to the bloodshed and turmoil in the region. He urged an end to the international sanctions imposed on the Palestinian people in light of the positive development following the Makkah Agreement. He also addressed the situation in Iraq, warning that sectarianism in the country is threatening a civil war.

At the weekly Cabinet meeting April 2, King Abdullah expressed confidence in the resolutions reached at the summit. The Cabinet likewise welcomed the decisions taken at the summit, in particular those promoting Arab cooperation and efforts to resolve crises in Darfur and Somalia.

On the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the Cabinet called for a lifting of sanctions on the Palestinian people and urged Israel to end its aggressions against the Palestinians.

Foreign Minister: No timeline for Arab Peace Initiative

In a March 29 press conference at the conclusion of the Arab Summit in Riyadh, Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal said that the Palestinian issue was foremost among the issues discussed at the summit.

He also stressed the importance of Palestinian unity and peace as a strategic choice for Arabs within the framework of the Arab Peace Initiative. He also clarified that there is no fixed timeline for the initiative. Furthermore, Prince Saud



said that Israel's rejection of the Arab Peace Initiative was not surprising and that it is not the action of a country that wants peace.

Asked what position Arab countries would take in the event the United States launched military action against Iran, Prince Saud said that any war in the Gulf would have a large impact on the region and that every country would take its own precautionary measures to defend itself.

ENERGY

Joint ventures to expand refining, petrochemical production

On March 30, Saudi Aramco, ExxonMobil and China's Sinopec announced the establishment of two joint ventures in China's Fujian Province.

The joint ventures are the Fujian Refining & Petrochemical Company Limited and Sinopec SenMei (Fujian) Petroleum Company Limited. They will have a total investment of around \$5 billion.

The Fujian Petrochemical project in Quanzhou will expand the existing refinery's capacity from 80,000 bpd to 240,000 bpd. The upgraded refinery will primarily refine and process sour Arabian crude. The project also involves the construction of an 800,000 tons-per-year ethylene steam cracker, an 800,000 tons-per-year polyethylene unit, a 400,000 tons-per-year polypropylene unit and an aromatics complex that will produce 700,000 tons-per-year of paraxylene.

