

SAUDI ARABIA | IN FOCUS

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SAUDI ARABIA-US

Saudi, US trade officials meet in Riyadh

Undersecretary of Commerce and Industry Abdullah Al-Humodi met with Assistant US Trade Representative Shaun Donnelly in Riyadh February 10 to discuss issues related to trade and investment.

They agreed to hold the first meeting of the Trade and Investment Council during the first half of 2008 and explored new ways to increase the volume of trade between Saudi Arabia and the US.

In 2006 the Saudi-US volume of trade totaled \$41.9 billion [SR 157 billion], with 521 joint projects in the Kingdom and a total investment estimated at \$20.3 billion [SR 76 billion].

FOREIGN POLICY

King Abdullah consults with Egyptian president on Middle East issues

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz telephoned Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak February 10 to discuss developments in the Middle East. The two leaders also covered bilateral relations and ways of enhancing them.

This week, King Abdullah met with British Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs David Lidington for talks on issues of mutual interest. The Saudi-British meetings were also attended by Chief of General Intelligence Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz, Saudi Ambassador to Britain Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf, and Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel A. Al-Jubeir.

In addition, the King received Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim, who delivered a message from President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Cabinet follows situation in Gaza and the West Bank with concern

At the February 11 Cabinet meeting chaired by Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz, the Cabinet said that it was following the situation in Palestine with concern. It condemned Israeli aggressions against innocent civilians in the West Bank and Gaza and called on the international community to protect the Palestinian people.

The Cabinet expressed the hope that a recent visit to the region by Quartet envoy Tony Blair would play a positive role in ending the blockade of Gaza and restarting the peace process. It also reaffirmed Saudi Arabia's support for all efforts to move the peace process forward and achieve global stability.

Kingdom's policy on Lebanon one of unity, non-interference

Saudi Ambassador to Lebanon Dr. Abdulaziz Khojah issued a statement February 6 clarifying Saudi Arabia's policy on Lebanon.

Dr. Khoja said that Saudi Arabia has a firm policy on non-interference in the internal affairs of all nations. The Kingdom's support for Lebanon is based on its concern for the country and its desire to encourage dialogue and rapprochement among the various Lebanese factions so that they can put an end to the political crisis, he noted.

The Kingdom continues to seek Arab unity and to eliminate differences, not promote them, Dr. Khoja said, adding that Saudi Arabia's foreign policy over the years bears out these positions.

In its February 11 meeting, the Cabinet urged all Lebanese parties to return to dialogue and implement the Arab League initiative to resolve the political crisis there.

