



OCTOBER 28, 2008

FOREIGN RELATIONS

King Abdullah to attend UN interfaith dialogue next month

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz announced October 25 that he will attend an interfaith dialogue conference at the UN in New York this November.

"I will go to America for the dialogue of followers of religions currently under way," King Abdullah said. "The dialogue of followers of religions is a duty on every male and female human being."

The King noted that the interfaith dialogue comes at a time when the world is criticizing Islam.

"It is regrettable that some of our sons are tempted by Satan or brothers of Satan," he said. "This [dialogue] is in the interest of the world, not only in our interest. It demonstrates that Islam is a religion of dialogue, not a religion of force and violence. It is a religion of dialogue."

King Abdullah meets with EU foreign policy chief

King Abdullah met with Javier Solana, European Union High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, in Riyadh October 21 for talks about regional and international issues as well as EU-Saudi cooperation.

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal also held a separate round of talks with Solana to discuss developments in the Middle East and Gulf region, the Middle East peace process, the crisis in Afghanistan, and the progress on a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)-EU free trade agreement.

In a joint press conference after the meeting, Prince Saud confirmed that the Kingdom had hosted a meeting between the Afghan government and the Taliban at the request of President Hamid Karzai. He warned that any further attempts at mediation on the part of the Kingdom would require a readiness by the Afghan factions to renounce violence and participate in the political process.

On other issues, Prince Saud said that the opening of a Saudi embassy in Baghdad has been delayed for security reasons, not political ones. He also warned that Israel's policy of building and expanding settlements is a dangerous obstacle to peace.

ECONOMY

GCC holds extraordinary meeting on the global financial crisis

The finance ministers and central bank governors of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) held an extraordinary meeting in Riyadh October 25 to discuss the global financial crisis.

In a statement, they expressed confidence in GCC countries' stable financial sectors and strong economies, which will enable them to deal with any possible impact of the global financial crisis. GCC banking systems have sufficient liquidity and capital, they said.

They also noted that GCC countries are expected to continue experiencing economic growth, spending on development projects will continue, and private sector involvement in economic development will increase.

At an October 27 meeting, the Cabinet stressed the importance of continued cooperation among GCC countries to mitigate the impact of the financial crisis.

SAUDI-US RELATIONS

Saudi Ambassador hosts delegation of young Arab professionals

Saudi Ambassador to the US Adel A. Al-Jubeir hosted a reception for a Young Arab Leaders delegation at the Embassy in Washington October 23. The 12-member delegation is currently on a three-week visit to the US as part of the Arab American Business Fellowship program, which brings executives from leading Arab companies to the US to learn about American business, society and culture.

Saudi-American breast cancer conference concludes in Jeddah

A three-day international conference on breast cancer concluded in Jeddah October 25. The event was hosted by the Prince Sultan Center for Hemophilia and Cancer (PSHC) at Riyadh's King Fahd Medical City in cooperation with the Saudi Scientific Society for Tumors and the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

Participants underscored the importance of increasing awareness about breast cancer and extending support to women with the disease.

